

Happy Birthday, Helping Hands

By BARBARA BURKLO
Sentinel Staff Writer

No matter what your age, economic status, race, creed or color, you might one day need the helping hands of the Visiting Nurses Association.

This week, it is celebrating its 30th birthday in Santa Cruz County.

Many misconceptions surround the types of care which the VNA provides. Often, people perceive it to be a service which renders only simple and fleeting care or help.

Others have the notion the VNA assists only the elderly, or the needy — or the affluent.

First, according to Vivian Logan, executive director, it is important to know that the VNA is the only non-profit home health services agency in the county.

It gives intermittent care, on a seven-day-a-week basis, in the home.

Persons who have no governmental agency to pay their health care bills are charged on a sliding scale according to their economic position, and the difference is made up from United Way funds, private gifts and memorials. Another small source of revenue is the agency's new thrift shop in Capitola.

Here's what the Visiting Nurse Association offers, with an explanation of each service — all under direct orders from a physician:

First level is skilled nursing, and there are 14 registered nurses now on the payroll.

"We do much more than taking someone's pulse or blood pressure," Vivian explains, "We have patients coming home from hospitals with open wounds which need dressing. For instance, we recently had a patient come home with an open wound from an infected gall bladder. It had to remain open and heal from the inside out, requiring a nurse twice a day for irrigation and dressings."

Other typical skilled nursing might include caring for a stroke victim who needs to be ambulated seven days a week, or a colostomy patient who needs both care and education, or a diabetic patient who must learn about insulin care and, along with his family, be instructed in giving injections.

Vivian also notes that in this area, where there is a high concentration of elderly patients, the nurses are often requested to give enemas.

"The older generation has a concept of daily, routine bowel habits and they become upset if they are not regular," she says. "Much of this problem is due to faulty diet, lack of exercise and immobility."

Eye care is often needed after cataract operations. "A shaky old person may not be able to hit his own eye

with his eye drops, and no one might be in the home to help him," Vivian says.

Good nursing and proper education can also prevent bed sores, a common problem which can come on very quickly if not watched.

Visiting nurses are not private duty nurses — they go into the home perhaps for daily visits or two to three times a week.

Vivian says these nurses often become quite emotionally involved with a family in crisis — much more so than would a hospital nurse because the visiting nurse is into the home and the family situation.

Next level is that of the Home Health Aides, of which VNA has 10. They work under the direct supervision of a registered nurse and have completed the home health aide training and been certified by the State Department of Health.

Their duties might include personal care, bathing, meal preparation, ambulation, working as team members with physical therapists, doing laundry, bed changing and light housekeeping. They might work as much as two hours a day, seven days a week, in a given home.

The Homemakers service, with 15 workers, performs light housekeeping, shopping, assisting with baths, and are mainly needed when patients are at the maintenance stage. This service is only five days a week.

Fourth service is Meals on Wheels, with 25 drivers delivering 300 meals per day, seven days a week. Of these, some 100 meals are special diets.

Additional funding for this service comes from revenue sharing, for low-income people.

The meals are prepared in the kitchen of the Palomar Hotel, under the direction of the Food and Nutrition Agency — which is under contract to the VNA.

Last is a service entitled Discharge Planning, and three registered nurses perform this duty. It involves working in convalescent and acute hospitals to prepare patients for going home, so when they do arrive home there is no gap in services.

These nurses work closely with social services or charge nurses in the facilities.

The VNA also has contractual arrangements with physical, occupational and speech therapists, mainly arranged under Medi-Cal or Medi-Care.

Real complications set in when someone tries to explain the eligibility requirements for each level of service — that is, who has Medi-Care, who has Medi-Cal, who has private insurance — and who has no coverage of any kind. The VNA helps them all.

There are many people whom, as VNA business manager Corky Kniffin says, "fall in the crack" between the eligibility stages.

For instance, recently the VNA provided nursing service for a young mother who had returned home from the hospital with terminal cancer. Hospital expenses had used up the family's resources. The husband had stayed home, unable to work, because he was trying to take care of her.

In their case, they were not eligible for any outside coverage, and their service from VNA was free to them. Funding came from VNA resources described earlier in the article.

Corky further explains, "If a party doesn't have potential for rehabilitation and is strictly main-

What does VNA
do? "It gives
intermittent, seven-
day-a-week care
in the home,"
says Vivian Logan
executive director.



Martha Clark, Homemaker's supervisor, shows that personal care is part of the service offered by her department.

tenance, Medi-Care won't cover his needs; and if his income is such that he can't get under Medi-Cal, he falls in the crack in society. These are the sad ones because they have no coverage.

"Cancer, heart and lung agencies do not provide funds for nursing in the home — just research and training. It's a heartbreak.

"Cancer, however, does supply equipment such as dressings, beds, wheelchairs and transportation to radiation centers."

For people like these, along with other variations, VNA charges on a sliding scale.

In 1976, 23 percent of the total patients served by VNA paid on a sliding scale. Of these, 2 percent had nursing care, 83 percent had homemaker care and 42 percent received Meals On Wheels.

No matter who the prospective recipient of VNA services is, he is required to fill out the same forms. From these forms, the same process is carried out — finding out if there is any kind of governmental or private insurance which will cover the service. If there is not, the sliding scale is applied to the patient's financial condition.

It's easy to find the VNA when you need it.

The phone number is 688-6434, and is answered on a 24-hour a day basis. There is someone in the office on Park Avenue, Soquel, seven days a week from 8 to 5.

HEAVY HIPS

SCIENTIFIC HOME METHOD TO REDUCE HIPS, STOMACH, LEGS, THIGHS, KNEES, CALVES, ANKLES.

LOSE UP TO 10-20-30 LBS. WITHOUT DRASTIC DIET OR EXERCISE OR PAY NOTHING!

THE FIRST PLACE THAT FAT SETTLES TO IS THE LOWER PART OF YOUR BODY. THIS IS ALSO THE FIRST PLACE THAT CAN LOSE THAT STORED UP FAT. THE "CALADINE FORMULA" IS HERE NOW! USE IT.

A brand new remarkable 100% effective true hip reducing pill that really works has recently been developed. That will help curb your desire for food and still allow you to enjoy most of the foods you are used to. You won't suffer hunger pangs. "The Caladine Formula" is one of the strongest appetite suppressors available. You can lose as

INTRODUCING

Rosalind Mervel

Award winning
stylist with
12 years experience
in

**ENGLAND
& PARIS**



INTRODUCTORY SPECIAL!

**1/3 OFF BLOWER CUTS
PERM WAVES
FROSTING**

February 8th. thru March 8th.

**Charisma STYLING
SALON**