



LEADERSHIP



COUNCIL

2010

Awards

# Recognizing

*Inspiration & Excellence at VITAS*

2010 VITAS National Recognition Program Winners



*“I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.”*

—Henry David Thoreau

A serene sunset over a calm body of water. The sky is a mix of deep blues and oranges, with the sun low on the horizon. The water is still, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the foreground, there are many smooth, dark rocks scattered across the shore.

What inspires you  
in your work at VITAS?



*“The winners of the Leadership Council represent every level within our company—direct patient care, administration and marketing—and strive daily to achieve ‘excellence’ within their areas of expertise.”*

—Tim O’Toole, CEO

When we launched the 2010 Leadership Council last fall, I shared with you my thoughts on what I believe a true leader is.

A true leader is not necessarily the person at the top of a team, department or company. A leader is someone who, no matter his or her position within an organization, consistently “does his or her best today and even better tomorrow,” and in turn, inspires others to do the same. When people feel inspired to do their best, everyone benefits.

The winners in this year’s Leadership Council represent every level within our company—direct patient care, administration and marketing—and strive daily to achieve “excellence” within their areas of expertise. In keeping with the theme of the 2010 Leadership Council, “Recognizing Inspiration and Excellence,” we have tried to capture in the following pages the stories and thoughts that most poignantly illustrate each winner’s “inspiration and excellence” in his or her work at VITAS.

As I read our winners’ stories and comments about what inspires them to be excellent, I, too, feel inspired. Their stories demonstrate conviction, dedication, commitment and teamwork—all for the greater good and all for VITAS patients and families. I hope their stories inspire you, too.

Please join me in congratulating our 2010 Leadership Council winners and join me in recognizing them for their continued inspiration and excellence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy J. O'Toole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy O’Toole

CEO



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## Clinical and Operations Awards

The winners in the Clinical and Operations portion of the National Leadership Council are selected based on peer nominations. The nominations are submitted to the VITAS corporate office, where a National Selection Committee composed of the VITAS Vice Presidents of Operations and the VITAS Senior Executives review the nominations. Following are brief stories about the winners, based on the information shared in their peers' nomination forms.



### Always Advocating for Patients

**Naum Krimerman, MD**

*Cincinnati, Program 51 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Team Physician

Dr. Krimerman daily exemplifies the VITAS Values. He anticipates the needs of each patient and his or her family, teaches them about the patients' condition and care options and delivers top-quality care.

Although he also works at an area hospital, Dr. Krimerman is dependable and generous, often working extra shifts for other doctors and quickly answering his pager—day or night.

“While he’s working at the hospital, he advocates for enhanced patient care and tells his physician colleagues about VITAS,” says Team Manager Jeanne M. Longbottom. “He has even gone to court to advocate on behalf of a patient whose family member was diverting his pain medications.

“After Dr. Krimerman testified so a social worker could place the patient in a safe environment, the judge stated his was the most complete and professional expert testimony she had ever heard,” says Jeanne. The verdict is in—Dr. Krimerman is a winner!



### A Pure Heart, a Great Mind

**Charlene Landry, RN, BSN**

*San Antonio, Program 29 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—RN

According to a former Pentagon-level profiler, Charlene has a “pure heart and great mind.” Who could ask for a more reliable source?

“The patient, Ms. L., served in the U.S. Air Force and was a profiler for the Pentagon,” explains Community Liaison Kathy Phoenix. “Her work made it difficult for her to bond with or trust others.” Ms. L. thus had no family and only a few acquaintances.

“Ms. L. dismissed one nurse after another,” recalls Kathy. “Within moments of meeting Charlene, however, Ms. L. said, ‘I like you.’” Charlene remained as Ms. L’s nurse, even accompanying her on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., where she pushed Ms. L’s wheelchair and carried her oxygen.

Charlene is trustworthy not only because of her “pure heart” but because of her expert clinical skills. “She acts quickly and efficiently but with tender support and immense patience,” says Kathy. “Her clinical skills are to be admired.”



### Earning Her 'Brownie' Points

**Helen Kingstorf, RN, BSN**

*Hartford, Program 42 • Year joined VITAS: 2006*

**VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—RN**

In her role as a primary care nurse for home care and assisted living facility (ALF) patients, Helen serves as caregiver and comforter, but also shopper, chief brownie baker and Santa Claus.

Helen regularly purchases food and other necessities for patients who have limited family involvement and keeps long-term care facility staff steeped in home-baked brownies and other goodies. Each holiday season, she spearheads a drive to provide gift cards to co-workers in recognition of their hard work throughout the year.

Helen is also a guardian. Once, after a patient died, she followed the elderly spouse home from the ALF. When the grieving man was pulled over for poor driving, Helen intervened with the police officer, explained the situation and ensured the loved one got home safely.

Helen does this all with a deep sense of humility. "I am only successful because we work together as a team," she says.



### VITAS Brand Ambassador to All

**Jacqueline "Jacquie" Coronado, RN**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

**VITAS Award Winner for Outstanding Service—Admissions Nurse**

Whether she is mentoring new admissions nurses or assisting a patient's case manager at one of her assigned facilities, Jacquie's customer service skills are exceptional—even when she's "off the clock."

A dedicated team player, Jacquie often takes phone calls during her "off" time and is able to resolve patients' and families' unanticipated needs quickly and efficiently. As a result, she has gained additional referrals.

"Families frequently call and ask to speak with Jacquie if they have questions and if they previously met with her," says Admissions Nurse Debra Van Note. "She is a positive VITAS role model. She's always supporting her team members by assisting them with their patients."

Jacquie always puts patient's needs first, resulting in her facility's case managers and hospitalists seeking her out to talk to patients. Though she has two small children, she frequently stays late or works on her days off to accommodate the facility's needs.

**"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."**

—Winston Churchill





## A Heart for Hospice

**Nadege Salomon Jacques, RN**

*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year joined VITAS: 2008*

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service—Admissions Nurse

Nadege helps patients nearing the end of life and their loved ones navigate the emotionally charged issues surrounding their care choices. As a Haitian-American, she also extends that help and cultural empathy to South Florida's large Creole-speaking population.

Nadege passionately cares about her job and the people she serves daily. As a result, she does much more than “just” admitting patients. Recently, during her off time, she helped a 26-year-old woman reconcile with her estranged family so the woman wouldn't die alone. The atmosphere in the room during that reconciliation was “magical,” recalls Nadege.

When a young, Creole-speaking mother faced the difficult choice of hospice care for her dying newborn, Nadege gracefully stepped in and served as translator between the mother and her baby's doctors, ensuring that the mother fully understood her options.

“Nadege truly has a hospice heart,” says Admissions Manager Jacqueline Smith.



## Snakes, Rats and Rabbits—No Problem!

**Frances Napolitano, LPN, CHPLN**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

### VITAS Award Winner for Outstanding Service—LPN

Nothing daunts Frances, an Intensive Comfort Care® LPN—not even pet snakes in open cages nor their nearby future meals of rats and rabbits. For Frances, patients and families come first, even if she has to carefully step around whatever stands in her path.

Frances often receives thank-you letters from families after a patient dies. While providing quality, professional care to a patient, she also takes time to explain to the patient's family the entire dying process.

Frances is dependable and trustworthy, making her a favorite among VITAS' registered nurses. “Our RNs love to follow Frances after her shift because they know she will have set up and met their patients' immediate needs. Everything will be in its place,” says Beverly Smith, Frances' supervisor.

“Patients and families frequently ask Frances to return because they are comforted and confident their loved one will receive the best care possible,” adds Beverly.



## Breaking Down Emotional Barriers

**Holly Olson, LPN**

*Chicagoland NW, Program 42 • Year joined VITAS: 2006*

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—LPN

The patient's family caregiver, also a nurse, had definite ideas about her loved one's care. But Holly knew it was hard to be a clinician and the daughter of a dying man all at the same time.

Holly gently convinced the daughter to let go, let Holly “be the nurse” and focus on “just being a loving daughter” for the time her father had left.

“This allowed her to bring down the protective barriers she had created,” Holly recalls. “She was able to express her love and emotions through laughter and tears, making his passing a beautiful and memorable experience.”

A former hospice volunteer, Holly is inspired by the love exhibited by the families of her patients and the wonderful stories about their lives.

“Holly is always looking to help and to serve others,” says Roberta Haring, Holly's supervisor.





### Using the Language of Caring

**Juan Carlos Diaz, MDiv**

*Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97 • Year joined VITAS: 2005*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service—Chaplain

A 2-month-old dying infant, grieving parents and a 4-year-old sister who blames herself for her brother's condition ... such a scenario is challenging for most hospice professionals. But when the hospital contacted VITAS for help, Senior Patient Care Administrator Belinda Hodge knew to call Juan.

Speaking in Spanish, his and the family's native language, and using his immense sense of empathy, Juan was able to advise the parents on how to reach out to their frightened daughter. After the baby died, Juan, at the parents' request, gently broke the news to the little girl.

"The parents were so grateful for Juan's help," says Belinda. "Juan is consistently amazing as he gives more and more each day."

"In hospice care, we often arrive in situations not knowing what will be required of us," says Juan. "We must be open to experience the discomfort and pain of others so we can provide care and comfort."



### A Gift for 'Showing Up' Just in Time

**Rev. John M. Nganga, DMin, BCC**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Chaplain

John was assisting a VITAS Admissions Nurse with a hospital patient who needed to be extubated, when he noticed another family nearby in distress.

"He consoled the family," says Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor Misti Johnson-Arce. "The son was so drawn to John's kindness, he wanted his mother, also on a ventilator, to be signed onto VITAS' services. Within two hours, the man's mother was admitted to VITAS. She later died, without pain, as her son wished."

John has a gift for "showing up" at just the right time, often without being asked, to offer comfort and support—like when he took a patient's husband to lunch two months after the patient died. "Everyone had gone back to their lives, but John did not forget," notes Mercedes Reynolds-Robinson, RN. "The husband was so grateful."

John's care for others extends beyond VITAS. In 1998, he founded Marafiki Global AIDS Ministry in his native Kenya, providing food, clothing, education and medical care to children affected by HIV/AIDS. He regularly visits and raises funds for the ministry.



### A Cool Head in a Crisis

**Matthew "Matt" Cavanaugh, LSW, MSW**

*Pittsburgh, Program 62 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Social Worker

The patient lived alone and was in respiratory distress. She needed oxygen but often refused to use it, which caused her to slip into a state of delirium. Consequently, she would forget to use her oxygen, thereby perpetuating a precarious cycle.

The day after Matt learned of this situation, he got up early to visit the patient. She was medically and emotionally unstable, so he called a mental health crisis team, which—within minutes—transported her to a hospital for medical treatment. Within days, the patient was back home, safe and breathing comfortably.

This is typical of the resourceful Matt, who begins solving patients' and families' problems as soon as they are shared during team meetings, explains Team Manager Kathleen Casey.

"He also often makes visits with our admissions nurse—especially at night—to explain our services to families and to provide immediate support if they have any psychosocial issues," says Kathleen.



## She's Simply 'the Best'

**Alma Aranda, CHPNA**

*San Antonio, Program 29 • Year Joined VITAS: 2004*

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Hospice Aide

It doesn't matter if it's 102 degrees outside, the patient often feels cold. So before bathing time, Alma is careful to preheat the bathroom by turning on the heater. She then keeps the patient under the heater while she bathes and dresses her.

"The bathroom is like a sauna but Alma never complains," notes Team Manager Shelley Peeler Georges.

Alma's compassion for her patients is limitless. She has made communication boards for her amyotrophic lateral sclerosis patients to use when they cannot speak, and she's accompanied patients' family members to the nursing home to visit their loved ones, even on her days off.

At the office, Alma helps with filing or answering the phones, retrieving charts or making photocopies. She also mentors new hospice aides and is often the person new nurses, chaplains and social workers shadow during orientation. "Admissions has all new employees spend time with her because she's the best," confirms Shelley.



## Hitting Home Runs with VITAS Patients

**Jorge Baldarrago, CNA, CHHA, CHPNA, CPT**

*Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Hospice Aide

Jorge's kind and thoughtful manner hit a home run with one grateful patient who was a fan of the San Francisco Giants.

Though the patient's communication skills were hampered by a debilitating disease, Jorge could see the joy in his eyes when his favorite baseball team won the 2010 World Series. Jorge quietly sought to create an ongoing remembrance.

The patient's VITAS team responded by sending the patient a box full of World Series memorabilia and a message acknowledging the patient's lifetime loyalty to the Giants.

"The patient was most moved by Jorge's recognition and understanding of how much the Giants' victory meant to him," said Volunteer Manager David Lackey, one of several people who nominated Jorge for his award. "Because of his sensitivity, Jorge transformed what had been a lone moment cheered for in solitude into one celebrated with a community."



## No 'Cookie Cutter' Calls for Hollie

**Hollie Hawkins**

*Admissions Call Center, West Coast Region • Year Joined VITAS: 2002*

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Admissions Coordinator

There have been times when Hollie has been on the phone with a patient's family member for more than an hour.

"That family member might be crying, needing someone to listen and maybe cry with them," says Hollie. "I try my best to make sure the person isn't crying when I hang up. I then know that I have made a difference."

Hollie is patient and detailed in her explanations of VITAS' services to new or potential patients and their families. "Her approach is not cookie-cutter, but personalized," remarks San Francisco Admissions Manager Roger Ruina.

Hollie is so thorough she often works longer than she's scheduled to ensure every patient has been contacted and every question has been addressed. She leaves no pending cases untouched and no data fields empty that might delay an admission.

"She believes in our services and is compassionate about every case," concludes Roger.



### Providing Solid Guidance to Her Staff

**Karen Mikula, RN, BSN, CPHQ**

*VITAS Senior Director of Quality Initiatives • Year Joined VITAS: 1998*

#### VITAS Award for Excellence in Management

When Chicagoland South Performance Improvement Specialist (PIS) Amy Manikowski started her job, “Karen spent several days, sitting on the floor of my office, helping me go through three cabinets’-worth of files,” she recalls.

Karen, who led the development of VITAS’ Quality Assessment and Performance Improvement (QAPI) initiative, tirelessly supports the PIS staff, most of whom work solo at their programs and sometimes feel isolated, says Coastal Cities PIS Pam Weber.

To help her team coalesce, Karen holds monthly PIS teleconference meetings, where she encourages the exchange of ideas. This has fostered “a feeling in the PIS community of working together and a freedom to communicate with each other,” says Pam.

Karen is also “skilled at simplifying complex issues” by breaking them down into digestible parts, notes Sacramento PIS Debra Lum.

“Karen is kind, compassionate and patient and provides solid guidance to her staff,” concludes VITAS QAPI Compliance Advocate Andrea Adkins.



### Taking One for the Team

**Douangsyvanh “Dee” Phavilay**

*Patient Care Secretary, West Coast Telecare • Year joined VITAS: 2005*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service

Whether she’s coming in early, staying late or helping to train co-workers, Dee does it for one reason: “My patients need me.”

When Vx went down for more than four hours during one of her recent shifts, Dee provided a quick refresher course to new nurses on how to do their work on paper instead of on computer, recalls Jose Son, Dee’s supervisor.

“She took the initiative that night,” says Jose. “She’s always willing to take on different assignments or to step up for the team, no matter the circumstances.”

A dedicated night shift worker, Dee regularly stays after her shift to complete her paperwork. “Since I’ve already established a good rapport with the family, I feel I need to complete the order instead of handing it over to another secretary,” she says.

“Dee is a true role model in our department,” notes Jose.

“Have a heart that never hardens,  
a temper that never tires, a touch  
that never hurts.” —Charles Dickens





## Caring and Responsive, 24/7

### Lino "Adam" Vargas

*Network Systems Engineer • VITAS Information Technology • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

#### VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service

Though he's not involved in direct patient care, Adam strives each day in the VITAS Information Technology Department to take care of the computer-related needs of his team and field staff.

Adam faces every request and demand on him with a positive attitude and a sense of urgency—and he gets the job done. "I believe my role is to assist field staff so they spend less time dealing with computer issues and more time with their patients," he says.

Adam's commitment to VITAS translates into 24/7 customer service, even answering his cell phone when he's off duty and driving to support the Telecare and Admissions Call Center in Lombard, Illinois, at any time. He is lauded by team members for his responsiveness and caring manner.

"No one in our program is more respected and trusted than Adam," says Chicagoland Northwest General Manager Sharon Rostoker. "Adam is the best NSE."



## A Grateful, Gracious Peacemaker

### Charles Rohloff

*Fort Worth, Program 24 • Year joined VITAS: 2007*

#### VITAS Award for Volunteer Achievement

The patient took great pride in his native country, its culture and traditions. He longed to share that pride with members of his VITAS team, particularly the volunteer.

But could the VITAS volunteer, a Vietnam War veteran, put aside his own war experiences to provide a compassionate and listening ear to David, a dying Vietnamese man? If the volunteer is Charlie Rohloff, the answer is yes.

"Charlie, a retired U.S. Army Major who flew helicopters in Vietnam, graciously and gratefully accepted the assignment," says Volunteer Manager Kathy Campbell. "He humbly asked through an interpreter if David was OK with Charlie's assignment. He wanted to be very upfront about his status.

"Charlie's ability to communicate was very endearing to the family," continues Kathy. "There was absolutely no animosity, only bonding and a sense of wonder and fascination about their shared history. Charlie commits himself 100 percent to any assignment he accepts."



## Bringing 'Sweet' Music to Patients' Ears

### Joan Sweet

*San Diego, Program 95 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

#### VITAS Award for Volunteer Achievement

The patient was suffering from leg tremors. Joan began by matching the rhythm of her harp music with the tremors; once the two were "in sync," Joan slowed the music down. The tremors slowly stopped. The patient fell asleep.

Certified in 2005 by the Music for Healing Transition Program, Inc., Joan, a harpist for 25 years, started volunteering for hospice "because I was with my mother when she passed away in a hospital emergency room. I felt there had to be a more peaceful way to die," she explains.

"Joan focuses on pain and symptom control or creating a peaceful environment," notes Volunteer Services Manager Alex Silva. He adds that although Joan regularly visits eight VITAS patients, she will, on a moment's notice, play for any actively dying patient.

Playing her harp wherever VITAS needs her, including VITAS functions or at patients' funeral services, Joan brings "sweet" music to everyone's ears.

## Sales & Marketing Awards

The winners in the Sales and Marketing portion of the National Leadership Council are selected primarily by the VITAS Sales and Market Development Department based on their achievement of specific performance goals and objectives.

The winners in this portion of the Leadership Council are listed first by rank according to their job title, then alphabetically by their names. The thoughts they share on the following pages reflect their responses to the question: **What inspires you in your work at VITAS?**



*“As a young girl, I always knew I was going to be a nurse, and I can pretty much solve any problem. I stay motivated by knowing we are giving the absolute best care to our patients.”*

**Maureen Knips, RN, BSN, Senior General Manager**

*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 1986*

Maureen has fully dedicated herself to VITAS. “I’ve never looked back,” she says. Now, 25 years later, with several promotions under her belt, Maureen has won the Leadership Council several times.

Despite some minor turnover in 2010, Maureen’s program had a “tremendous” year, exceeding 1,500 in its patient census. “There are no trade secrets, just an art to multitasking,” she says.



*“Our program has had an amazing year. We have exceeded our admissions, provided excellent patient care and managed our expenses. To this day, I remain in awe of our staff—for their humility and for all they do for our patients and families.”*

**Beatriz “Betty” Bel, General Manager**

*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 2003*

Before joining VITAS, Betty had several successful businesses, including a series of healthcare-related companies and a home decorating store. Her business experience, combined with her background in nursing, has translated into success for her program.

“Understanding our market is one of the most important parts of my job,” she says. “It ensures the optimization of our sales force and therefore results in exceeding admissions numbers.”



*“There is nothing that compares to the great work, exceptional care, outstanding commitment and superb dedication of our hospice staff. We work hard to make sure we meet all of our patients’ and families’ needs.”*

**Patricia “Trish” Bernstein, General Manager**

*Northern Virginia, Program 63 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

Prior to joining VITAS, Trish worked in healthcare sales and marketing. In 1999, she was recruited into the hospice field and has since become a strong “advocate and educator for end-of-life care.”

“I believe the excellent care we give our patients has allowed our program to grow,” says Trish. “Outstanding patient care translates into increased business which translates into increased revenue.”



*“The general manager role requires both leadership and servant-hood. The support of my many committed, loyal and passionate staff members, my family and my faith help create a balance in my life that enables me to lead effectively.”*

**Donna Borland, RN, BSN, General Manager**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 1997*

“The challenge of giving consistent excellent customer service is very critical to the success of our business,” says Donna. Under her leadership, “the program continues to experience outstanding growth.”

Donna piloted what proved to be a popular program called “One Day in the Life of a VITAS Worker,” in which senior managers shadowed staff members. “The staff members were inspired and energized by the support and care they received,” says Donna.



*“I enjoy the unique opportunity to work both intellectually and compassionately. VITAS allows me to work with my heart and my mind!”*

**Dawn DaSilva, General Manager**

*VITAS Palliative Care Solutions • Year Joined VITAS: 2002*

In less than three years, VITAS Palliative Care Solutions<sup>SM</sup> has expanded into five markets (in Florida and Pennsylvania) with 25 clinicians and five administrative staff. And it plans to keep going. “Our growth has truly been a team effort,” says Dawn.

While balancing all the duties of an established VITAS program as well as those of building a new business, Dawn sees each day’s challenges “as opportunities to creatively overcome them while exercising solid time management.”



*“Having received this recognition two years in a row reflects, in my mind, the work of the entire East Bay program, for it has shown significant improvement over the past year.”*

**Bruce Davis, General Manager**

*East Bay, Program 91 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

A background in home healthcare sparked Bruce’s interest in hospice. “Once I had the opportunity to work in hospice care, it was clear to me it was the area I wanted to be in,” he says. “Hospice care pulls at the heartstrings of our being and our communities.”

Hospice care can be challenging, notes Bruce, “so we have to come up with solutions every day. But it’s worthwhile knowing our patients and families are receiving the best care possible.”



*“Every time I hear about how we’ve helped a patient, I’m overjoyed and thankful. I have a terrific staff that is highly supportive. I am grateful to know we’re making a difference in folks’ lives.”*

**Michelle Hanlon RN, BSN, General Manager**

*Hartford, Program 42 • Year Joined VITAS: 1998*

The year 2010 was a challenging one for Michelle. In addition to her general manager duties, she took on the role of team manager to help offset a few staffing changes.

Through Michelle’s leadership, the program grew by 209 percent from 2009 to 2010 and increased its average daily census by 53 percent. “I was very proud and excited,” says Michelle.



**Sherri Taylor, RN, Senior Director of Market Development**  
*San Gabriel Cities, Program 96 • Year Joined VITAS: 1995, 2001*

*“I am on a mission to serve the community I live in and to educate the medical community and its customers on the importance of excellent end-of-life care. I have lived in this community most of my life and have grown up with the doctors and nurses we call on regularly. I fully believe VITAS has the very best hospice services. I have been told I am the ‘cheerleader’ of the office. I carry the VITAS torch with pride!”*



**Lemar Beamon, Director of Market Development**  
*Volusia-Flagler, Program 10 • Year Joined VITAS: 2010*

*“Before I joined VITAS, my father had received hospice care near the end of his life, and it was so beneficial for him. His personality changed, and the pain he had been experiencing went away. My job is unique because I have the opportunity to create value for our most important customers—our patients. And I am proud of my team ... they are motivated and inspired to do the best they can for patients and families.”*



**Tamara “Tammy” DeCaro, Director of Market Development**  
*Collier County, Program 19 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“If we can remove the myths, barriers and fears associated with hospice care, we can bring this wonderful level of care to those who need it most. It’s about getting the VITAS brand recognized in the community and helping to restore dignity to patients at a time when their focus should be on quality time with their family.”*



**Kristen “Kris” DeVitto, LCSW, Director of Market Development**  
*Brevard, Program 18 • Year Joined VITAS: 2003*

*“I am inspired every day by the wonderful care our clinical staff provides to our patients and their families. There is a sincerity that comes from feeling passionate about providing superior end-of-life care, and our staff is committed to doing whatever it takes to get the job done.”*



**Harlyn Kaplan, Director of Market Development**  
*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 2010*

*“Each and every day at VITAS is a rewarding challenge. I am part of a great team! When you are dealing with patients, their families and the professionals outside of VITAS, you encounter many challenges. These challenges are opportunities to educate and help people at their most painful stage.”*



**Forrest Beaty, MD, Medical Director**

*East Bay, Program 91 • Year Joined VITAS: 2004*

*“I have been helped enormously by the presence of an outstanding general manager and patient care administrator. Our challenges are endless, but I remain energized by the work we do. I especially enjoy the challenge of ‘difficult’ cases and I enjoy taking care of military veterans. I am honored to be able to serve the veteran population.”*



**Paul Pugliese, MD, Medical Director**

*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 2000*

*“The idea of leading the way to allow people to die with dignity and comfort and to care for families and loved ones is natural and necessary. The key is to be innovative and to continue to educate ourselves as to what is available.”*



**Alen Voskanian, MD, Medical Director**

*Coastal Cities, Program 94 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“I am inspired by the desire to make a meaningful impact on my patients’ lives and to eliminate their suffering. I always remember our company’s mission statement; it guides and inspires me in challenging times.”*



**Aruna Wadhwa, MD, MPH, Medical Director**

*New Jersey Shore, Program 65 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I strongly feel that every challenge presents an opportunity! I feel humbled to have been exposed to such a wide array of situations, from experiencing the joy of holding a newborn to being able to comfort and ease the life of a dying person.”*



*“Nothing is impossible.  
The word itself says ‘I’m possible!’”*

*—Audrey Hepburn*





**Catherine "Cathe" Carlson, RN, Senior Patient Care Administrator**  
*Chicagoland South, Program 37 • Year Joined VITAS: 2000*

*“I go to work every day with the intent of providing the best care possible to our patients and families. I feel fortunate to have great team managers and to be surrounded by compassionate people who provide excellent care. I consider it a privilege that patients and families allow us into their homes during this very difficult time in their lives.”*



**Laurie Fitz, RN, MPA, Senior Patient Care Administrator**  
*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“I am motivated to live by the VITAS Values every day, and I love seeing my employees grow and thrive. There’s a difference between good and great hospice care, and VITAS is the perfect example of great hospice care!”*



**Susan Griffith, RN, CHPN, Patient Care Administrator**  
*Northern Virginia, Program 63 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“Every day we meet new people who need our services and each patient is different. What remains the same is that we provide them with the best quality care possible! I’m inspired by seeing my teams working together towards the good of the patients and families and knowing they do a great job.”*



**Debra Jackson, RN, Patient Care Administrator**  
*Dayton, Program 50 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

*“It’s such an amazing privilege to make a difference in the lives of our patients and families. I strive each day to make a positive difference in at least one person’s life, whether that’s an employee, a patient or a patient’s family.”*



**Eileen McDermott, RN, Admissions Manager**  
*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2000*

*“I started at VITAS working part-time in admissions. When my father became hospice-appropriate and was on VITAS’ care, he got such wonderful care, I felt encouraged to seek full-time employment. What keeps me inspired today is the support of my fellow team members, who never hesitate to go above and beyond for patients and their families.”*



**Roger Ruina, RN, BSN, CHPN, Admissions Manager**  
*San Francisco Bay, Program 98 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“I believe in providing the choice of compassionate medical care to those who seek and need it. At VITAS, we continue to raise the bar to provide even better care, faster reaction time and improved services to our patients and their families. Every patient receives the same level of outstanding quality care.”*



**Phillip Aguilar, Team Manager**

*San Gabriel Cities, Program 96 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“I put myself in our patients’ or families’ shoes and think about what I would need or want if I were one of them. VITAS’ reputation as an empathetic, professional and reliable organization can only serve to enhance our image in the community and make VITAS the company everyone wants to use.”*



**Patrice Anderson, RN, Team Manager**

*Chicagoland South, Program 37 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

*“I feel blessed to be part of such a wonderful organization that truly lives up to its mission. The difference we are able to make in the end-of-life experiences for our patients provides the inspiration that energizes me every day.”*



**Roberta Anderson, RN, Team Manager**

*Palm Beach, Program 16 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“I feel rewarded knowing that a patient’s whole family is being cared for to the best of our ability. Placing myself in the position of the patient, family or a team member helps me make the best possible decisions.”*



**Teresa Berger, RN, Team Manager**

*San Diego, Program 95 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“Visiting patients in the field reminds me why we all do the work we do. My inspiration comes from knowing I am guiding others through the journey of caring for patients and families at a vulnerable time in their lives.”*



**Lawanda "Toni" Drost, RN, Team Manager**

*Sacramento, Program 99 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I am motivated by my love for our patients and their families. I enjoy advocating on their behalf and helping them. Every day has challenging moments, but the satisfaction of resolving issues is very rewarding.”*



**Robert Haring, RN, Team Manager**

*Chicagoland NW, Program 31 • Year Joined VITAS: 2010*

*“I watched both of my parents pass away without the aid of hospice care and I saw the great benefit of educating others on how hospice can help them. I am proud to be a VITAS employee and I am thankful to be working side-by-side with a great, dedicated staff.”*



**Marly Hernandez, RN, BSN, Team Manager**  
*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 1999*

*“To me, inspiration is linked to innovation. I want to make hospice an innovative service that goes beyond the boundaries of life. Hospice enables me to understand the very essence of my patients and their families.”*



**Michelle Lucas, LPN, Team Manager**  
*Volusia-Flagler, Program 10 • Year Joined VITAS: 2003*

*“When I started at VITAS, our program’s average daily census was 13. Today, we have an ADC of more than 300. I have shared in my program’s growing pains, laughter, tears and hard work with all disciplines, facilities and patients and families. I would not change a single experience because each one has motivated, empowered and educated me.”*



**Beverley McLarty, RN, BSN, CHPN, Team Manager**  
*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“I’m thankful to work within a network of very supportive staff, who have guided and encouraged me throughout this journey. My goal is to express to all the patients and families we serve that they are important to us.”*



**Karen Prioleau, RN, BSN, Team Manager**  
*Atlanta Metro, Program 70 • Year Joined VITAS: 2008*

*“Hospice allows me to make a difference in people’s lives by helping them deal with pain. What keeps me inspired is the fact that the people affected by hospice will keep those memories for the rest of their lives. That’s so powerful. I want to ensure that every anniversary for our patients’ families—that snapshot of memory—is a favorable one.”*



**Karene Scott, RN, CHPN, Team Manager**  
*Pittsburgh, Program 62 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“Education of my staff is ongoing—at team meetings, during on-site visits, while on the phone or doing in-services. Everyone, from the patient care secretary to the hospice aides, understands they are marketers and that how they present themselves has an impact on referrals. By doing patient visits, I ensure my staff sees that I ‘walk the walk’ and ‘talk the talk.’”*



**Meredith Spencer, RN, BSN, Team Manager**

*Dallas, Program 21 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I feel fortunate to lead such a fantastic team. I hope to be able to touch others just as our patients and their families have touched my life. I love being a leader and taking care of others, and I especially love to come to work because I know that I will have support.”*



**Joyce Stowe, RN, CHPN, Team Manager**

*Orange County, Program 93 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“Each day that I am able to comfort a patient or a patient’s family member is a rewarding day. As a manager, you cannot expect your employees to deliver compassionate care if you do not have compassion and set the bar.”*



**Lucille “Ceil” Stanco, RN, BSN, CHPN, Team Manager**

*Central Florida, Program 17 • Year Joined VITAS: 1997*

*“Like many of us, I had seen far too many patients and families suffer needlessly at the end of life. I find it rewarding to see our team working hard to help patients and their families stay comfortable.”*



**Pamela “Pam” Struzinski, RN, CHPN, Team Manager**

*Brevard, Program 18 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

*“My motto is ‘Excellence is not a skill—it is an attitude!’ I truly believe bedside care has to be top-notch, and I strive every day to create that environment for our patients and their families.”*



**Bernadette Giesler, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Houston, Program 27 • Year Joined VITAS: 1991, 2002*

*“I am sincere in my concern for the patients and families we care for. What inspires me is the knowledge that we are helping patients and their families at a very difficult time in their lives.”*



**Jill Lyons, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 1998*

*“When I learned about hospice, I knew I could make a difference. Though every day is a challenge, the support from my team motivates me. VITAS offers a great service. It is up to me and the other representatives to make sure doctors recommend VITAS when the time comes.”*



**Heather Mullally, Senior VITAS Representative**

*East Bay, Program 91 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“It’s very rewarding to support patients and families during the most important time of their lives. It has always been important for me to build a relationship with my co-workers, and I feel the support from all of my team members. Working for VITAS is not just a job, but a chance to support and comfort patients and families.”*



**Delia Murillo, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Dallas, Program 21 • Year Joined VITAS: 1993, 2002*

*“Hospice care is my calling. It is gratifying to know our patients and their families trust us to provide the support and care they long for during the most challenging time in their lives. The drive to continually explore new ways to touch patients’ lives and share the gift of the hospice benefit is very gratifying.”*



**Candace Natale-Lee, RN, BSN, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 1994*

*“Over the years, VITAS has cared for many of my family members and never let me down. I am on a mission to have others experience the same compassion and care my family and I received during a very trying time.”*



**Karen Rionda, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 1986*

*“Educating others about hospice and VITAS is my passion. When I’m ‘painting a picture’ for a physician on what a hospice-appropriate patient looks like, or when I’m explaining what hospice is to a family and they ‘get it,’ my mission has been accomplished. I’m always looking for new ways to reach as many people as possible and spread the VITAS news. When VITAS’ numbers grow, I know more patients are receiving VITAS’ care.”*



**Gail Weishaus, RN, Senior VITAS Representative**

*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 1999*

*“Leadership is not attained alone. As a VITAS representative, I realize that our customers do not give referrals because I asked for them; rather, someone in the community had a great experience with VITAS and recommended us, so our collective teamwork contributed to a successful outcome. Teamwork is the key to leadership!”*



**Jodi Anderson, VITAS Representative**

*Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I am inspired by knowing I am part of a team that will bring comfort and support to patients and their families during a very difficult time in their lives. I take solace in knowing I am helping to bring clarity, comfort and support to patients and their families at a time when they often have been thrust into uncertainty.”*



**Pamela Derrama, RN, VITAS Representative**

*San Francisco Bay, Program 98 • Year Joined VITAS: 2002*

*“I was inspired to go into hospice care because I believe in the services we provide. I continue to be inspired by this very reason and seek to educate every facility I touch and every patient and family I meet. I start and end my days with a personal goal to exceed the expectations of my customers by ensuring I provide the best and highest quality service.”*



**Larry Endacott, VITAS Representative**

*Sacramento, Program 99 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I have always felt comfortable with my ability to build relationships and I am proud to be a part of this team. I feel I am providing a much needed service, educating physicians and long term care facilities as to how VITAS can meet the needs of their patients and residents.”*



**Kathy Evans, VITAS Representative**

*Central Florida, Program 17 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

*“I look at the patients we serve as if they are my family, and I am extremely proud to do what I do. I always want to be a resource to my patients, whether it is hospice-related or not. I want to help my community by providing quality care, and I know VITAS is the answer.”*



**Thomas Kasubaski, VITAS Representative**

*Milwaukee, Program 39 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“In my territory, I rebuilt relationships to restore confidence with our referral sources about the great services VITAS provides. It is a privilege to work in hospice, and I believe the greatest gift I can give anyone at the end of life is to guide them to VITAS.”*



**Meredith Kelley, VITAS Representative**

*Atlanta Metro, Program 70 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“When my family experienced the loss of a loved one who was under VITAS’ care, I became inspired to ensure that others would receive the superior care that we received. I am honored to have the opportunity to bring hope to our patients and their families.”*



**Emily Madison, VITAS Representative**  
*Brevard, Program 18 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“My grandfather’s death helped me recognize the deeper importance of quality end-of-life care—the importance of advocating for what is best for our patients, allowing them autonomy, preserving their dignity, honoring their choices and providing the best possible care.”*



**Kimberly Martin, VITAS Representative**  
*Dade-Monroe, Program 11 • Year Joined VITAS: 2002*

*“Eventually everyone will come to the end of his or her life ... while this is not an option, hospice is. I believe everyone should have the option to choose a better quality of life at the end of life.”*



**Ida McQuilliams, VITAS Representative**  
*San Francisco Bay, Program 98 • Year Joined VITAS: 2005*

*“I believe the end of life is about love and happiness, not pain, sorrow or tears. I want my patients to know we are here to accompany them on their journey and provide them with the best quality of life possible.”*



**Shanna Midland, VITAS Representative**  
*Orange County, Program 93 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“My focus each day is to be the light for others. The biggest lesson I have learned in hospice care is to be a good listener, never assume and always do my best to provide a solution. Sales representatives wear many different hats ... we are counselors, business developers, friends and problem-solvers. I never have a dull day!”*



**Herman Miller, Jr., VITAS Representative**  
*Chicagoland Central, Program 38 • Year Joined VITAS: 2004*

*“In hospice, we only get one chance to provide our patients and their families with the best care at the end of life; we don’t get a chance for a do-over. I take pride in making a difference in the lives of patients and their families. I know it’s not about me ... it’s about helping people.”*



**Heather Pryer, VITAS Representative**

*Milwaukee, Program 39 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

*“At VITAS, I never forget there is a patient and family behind each number. When I succeed at educating a referral source, I know I am having an impact on at least one patient and family. In my role, I do not often come face-to-face with our patients and their families. When I do, I take those images with me to my next call, and I share their stories with others to demonstrate the important work VITAS does.”*



**Georgeanne Romeo, VITAS Representative**

*Collier County, Program 19 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“Without question, if we didn't have a fabulous clinical care team, we would not be successful in our market. I enjoy the challenge of helping my customers keep their residents in their buildings and care for them through the end of life.”*



**Yvonne Smith, VITAS Representative**

*San Gabriel Cities, Program 96 • Year Joined VITAS: 2006*

*“What makes this job unique is how we are able to reach out to patients and families at such a difficult time and make a difference. I feel blessed to have the opportunity to work for a company that allows me to provide for my family while being able to give back to others in need.”*



**Evelyn Subido, VITAS Representative**

*San Francisco Bay, Program 98 • Year Joined VITAS: 2007*

*“What a wonderful experience hospice care provides, not just for the patient but for the families who are going through emotional trauma. I know no other hospice care service provides anything similar to VITAS. I believe in our service, and I enjoy and love what I do.”*



**Alice Zirolì, VITAS Representative**

*San Gabriel Cities, Program 96 • Year Joined VITAS: 2009*

*“I am motivated each day by my compassion, understanding and desire to help others. My personal goal is to make a difference and help families understand the benefit of hospice and everything available to the patient and his or her loved ones.”*





**Claudia Casey, Senior Community Liaison**  
*Central Florida, Program 17 • Year Joined VITAS: 1998*

*“I’m always humbled by the people who approach me and share their stories with me that always end with, ‘I wish I could have had my mom/dad on the program much sooner, because you all are angels.’ I enjoy creating dialogue about health conditions, identifying challenges and finding ways that we can help and have a positive effect.”*



**Deborah Mizell, RN, BS, Community Liaison**  
*Broward, Program 14 • Year Joined VITAS: 2001*

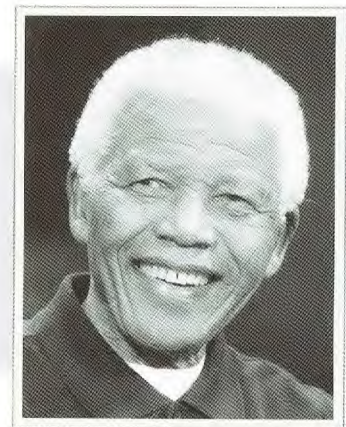
*“I believe that if an individual is going to sell an idea or product, he or she should believe in that idea or product. It is challenging yet unique to sell an idea about life and death because it touches the soul of the client. My belief in discussing hospice care is to meet people where they are and gently and confidently help them reach where they need to be.”*

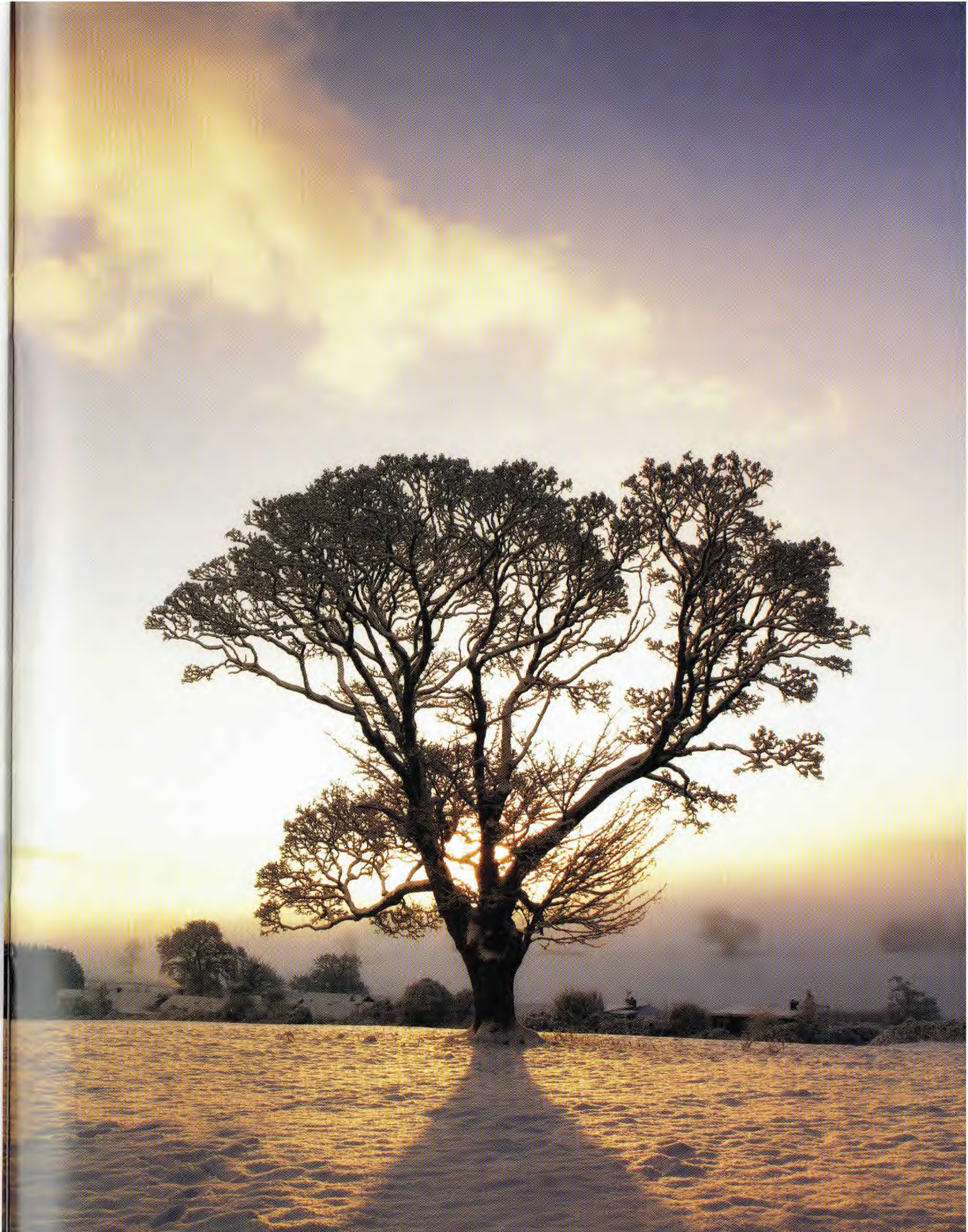


**Kathy Phoenix, LMSW, Community Liaison**  
*San Antonio, Program 29 • Year Joined VITAS: 2000*

*“VITAS’ values, innovation and creativity inspire me, as well as knowing that I work for a company that allows me to truly do the right thing for our patients. Each admission represents a person who has just been told he or she is dying and a family that is losing someone they love. Serving more patients means we have helped more lives, and that is my most important goal.”*

*“And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.” —Nelson Mandela*





# 2010 Gold-Level National Leadership Council Winners

## Clinical and Operations Awards

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Team Physician

- **Frank Mazzotta**, DO, Philadelphia, Program 61

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—RN

- **Terri Johnston**, RN, Pittsburgh, Program 62
- **Pedro Morales**, RN, Dade-Monroe, Program 11
- **Magdalene Vukelic**, RN, Chicagoland Central, Program 38

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— LPN/LVN

- **Odette Barthelemy**, LPN, Dade-Monroe, Program 11
- **Ashlee Pence**, LPN, Dayton, Program 50

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Chaplain

- **Russell Hurst**, MDiv, Milwaukee, Program 39

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Social Worker

- **Sharman French**, LCSW, Waterbury, Program 41

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Hospice Aide

- **Tabitha Breen**, Waterbury, Program 41
- **Diamantina Soward**, CNA, Sacramento, Program 99
- **Cindy Pitcher**, CNA, Hartford, Program 42
- **Cecil Wilson**, CNA, CHHA, Palm Beach, Program 16

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Admissions Nurse

- **Dana Human**, RN, Chicagoland NW, Program 31

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Admissions Coordinator

- **Andrea Belanger**, Midwest Admissions Call Center—Lombard

### VITAS Award for Excellence in Management

- **Alexandra Cotton**, Volunteer Manager, Dallas, Program 21
- **Edward Stewart**, HME Manager, HME—Santa Fe Springs

### VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service

- **Lenworth Black**, Medical Service Technician, HME—Broward/Palm Beach
- **Jody Grosek**, Patient Care Secretary, Dallas, Program 21

### VITAS Award for Volunteer Achievement

- **Nancy Crow**, Atlanta, Program 70
- **Helen Streich**, Dade-Monroe, Program 11

## Sales & Marketing Awards

### Patient Care Administrators

- **Donna Sessa**, RN, Senior PCA, Broward, Program 14
- **Jennifer Gibson**, RN, San Francisco Bay, Program 98

### Medical Directors

- **Irene Prather**, MD, Dallas, Program 21
- **Chalat Rajaram**, MD, Orange County, Program 93

### VITAS Representatives

- **Lois Garner**, RN, Senior VITAS Representative, Houston, Program 27
- **Leigh Hamilton**, Senior VITAS Representative, Cincinnati, Program 51
- **Laurie Nichols**, MSW, Senior VITAS Representative, Brevard, Program 18
- **Concepcion Tovar-Bas**, RN, Senior VITAS Representative, Dade-Monroe, Program 11
- **Cathy Band**, Dade-Monroe, Program 11
- **Daron Darnell**, Dallas, Program 21
- **Kimberly Jackson**, Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97
- **Connie Morgan**, Dallas, Program 21
- **Wrendi Morris**, Palm Beach, Program 16
- **Victor Ojeda**, St. Louis, Program 33
- **Valerie Paikin**, Broward, Program 14
- **Jennifer Pouliot**, Volusia-Flagler, Program 10
- **C. Andrew Roginson**, Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97
- **Diane Slabaugh**, East Bay, Program 91
- **Anshe Sledge**, Atlanta, Program 70
- **Patricia Tracy**, Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97
- **Frances Varner**, Washington, DC, Program 68

### Team Managers

- **Diana Bliss**, RN, BSN, San Gabriel Cities, Program 96
- **Barbara Driver**, RN, CHPN, Fort Worth, Program 24  
(recently promoted to Admissions Manager)
- **Christie Glanton**, RN, BSN, Central Florida, Program 17
- **Diane Robbins**, RN, Chicagoland South, Program 37
- **Helen Roberson**, RN, BSN, CHPN, San Antonio, Program 29
- **Lisa Vershaw**, RN, Dallas, Program 21
- **Sandra Weishaar**, Coastal Cities, Program 94
- **Kathleen Wengert**, RN, Broward, Program 14

### Community Liaisons

- **Francisco Acosta**, Palm Beach, Program 16
- **Mary-Ellyn Blake**, RN, BSN, Waterbury, Program 41
- **Norma Trabanco**, LCSW, Dade-Monroe, Program 11

### Admissions Managers

- **Nancy Cordova**, Sacramento, Program 99
- **Veronica Gavin**, RN, MSN, Philadelphia, Program 61
- **Jill Heifetz**, LCSW, East Bay, Program 91
- **Lesley Nicholson**, BSN, CHPN, Brevard, Program 18



*“We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

—Aristotle



