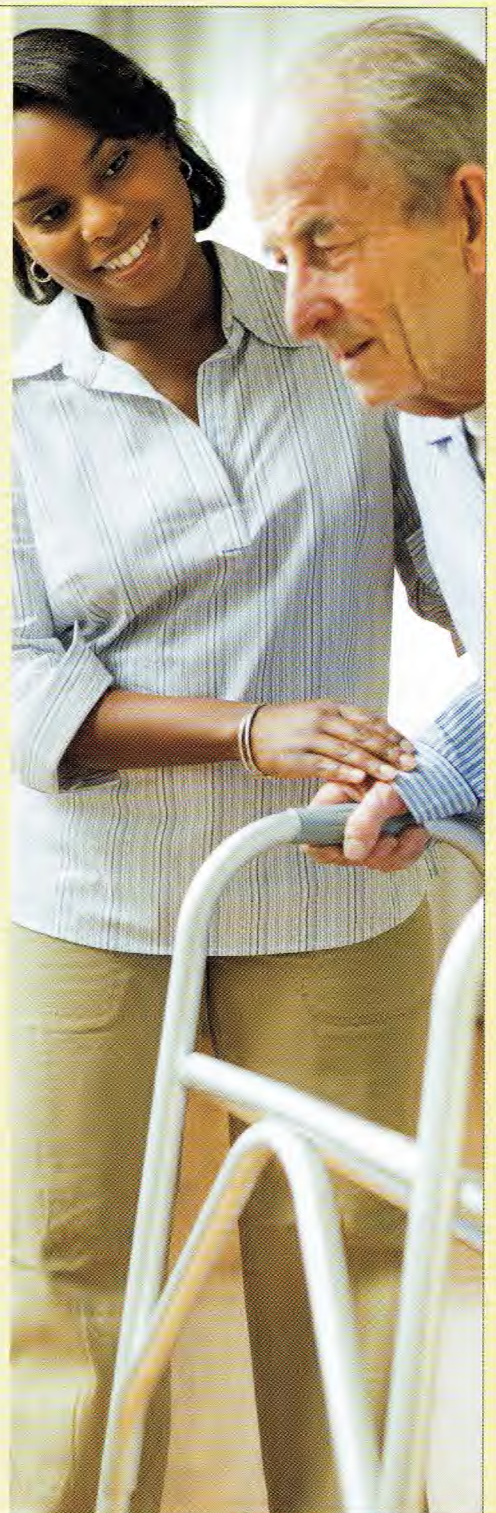


Honoring the Best of the VITAS Best



The Who
What
When
Where
Why

& How

of the 2009 VITAS National Recognition Program winners



VITAS Values

Patients and families come first.

We take care of each other.

*I'll do my best today and do
even better tomorrow.*

I am proud to make a difference.

VITAS[®]
Innovative
Hospice Care[®]

Honoring the Best of the VITAS Best



VITAS has thousands of wonderful employees. Each year, some of those employees are honored for consistently going above and beyond the written bounds of their job descriptions to contribute to VITAS' mission of providing the highest quality end-of-life care possible.

In the following pages, you will find brief yet poignant stories about the 2009 National Leadership Council winners. I hope you will take the time to read these stories, because they demonstrate just how outstanding and dedicated our employees are, from our VITAS representatives to our patient care hospice aides to our office support staff.

I have read these stories, and I was impressed. There's the nurse in the San Gabriel Cities program who makes little translation cards for her Vietnamese patients who don't speak English. There's the team manager at a Broward inpatient hospice unit who didn't hesitate to say "yes" when a team social worker asked if the IPU could accommodate a homeless patient who had a mentally disabled daughter with her, as well as a dog. When the patient died, the IPU found housing for the daughter and the dog. Then there are all of the VITAS representatives, directors of market development, general managers, administrative and team managers, who daily strive to educate their communities about hospice care and its benefits and to bring the best in hospice care to patients and families.

While I was moved by these stories, I must admit that I wasn't surprised. I know our employees are the best in the hospice care field. The employees profiled in this booklet are simply the "Best of the VITAS Best" for the 2009 National Leadership Council. I hope you join me in honoring and thanking them for their dedication and commitment to VITAS patients and their families.

Tim O'Toole, CEO



“While I am impressed by the accomplishments of our 2009 National Leadership Council winners, I am not surprised by them. VITAS has the best employees and volunteers in the hospice field.”

Tim O'Toole, CEO

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Clinical & 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 and select the winners.



'Dr. G' Paints a Whole Patient-Care Picture

Aireen Gutierrez, MD
San Diego, Program 95
Year joined VITAS: 2004

*VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—
Team Physician*

She's known as "Dr. G," and she's a primary reason patients are referred to VITAS, claims Chaplain Michelle Tiernan.

"Dr. G offers compassionate bedside care, provides counseling to families and frequently orchestrates patient care conferences at homes or facilities," says Michelle. "She sees the whole patient care picture and understands how the pieces are interrelated."

Dr. G respects everyone's role on Team 952. "She consults directly with team members for their expertise. If tense family dynamics impact a patient's care and safety, she contacts our social worker or me to discuss interventions," explains Michelle.

To foster team unity, Dr. G infuses "fun" into team meetings. She's organized breakfast outings where she's challenged attendees with VITAS trivia quizzes, and she's introduced a "compliments" box in which team members drop notes of appreciation to each other.

"Dr. G helps to create a positive team energy that flows into the whole patient care picture," says Michelle.



Going Out of Her Way for All

Daria Akers, RN
Broward, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 2001

*VITAS Award for
Outstanding Service—RN*

A young mother died, leaving her three children in great need. Daria came through for them.

"She spearheaded our team's efforts to help the kids," says Team 172 Manager Ron Borans, RN. "She personally assisted the children on her own time, evenings and weekends, to assure that they had sufficient clothing, food in the home and resources to keep them safe and provided for."

For Daria, such actions are all in a day's work. She goes out of her way for everyone—patients, their families, team members, even colleagues from other VITAS programs.

"Daria has gone twice to Collier County, Florida, to share her expertise with fellow nurses there," says Ron. "And she recently took a surveyor out in the field for an entire day, which is nothing less than heroic! She exemplifies our VITAS Values. We are fortunate to have her."

Clinical & Operations Awards



Never Without a Smile

Minh Dang, RN
San Gabriel Cities, Program 96
Year joined VITAS: 2007

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—RN

Whether it's taking ethnic food to patients who cannot get it themselves, or driving out of her area to help patients and families who speak only her native Vietnamese, Minh "looks for ways to make a difference, not just 'do her job,'" says Team 961 Manager Robin Page, LVN, CHPN.

"She sets up visits to suit her patients' and families' needs, not just when it's convenient for her," continues Robin. And for patients and families who speak only Vietnamese but must interact with members of the VITAS care team who do not speak the language, Minh makes translation cards for them to use.

"We get letters from families who express appreciation for her care," remarks Robin.

Minh's concern for quality care goes beyond her patients; she also helps to ease VITAS hospice aides' work load by pitching in from time to time on their tasks. "And she's never without a smile," says Robin.



Every Patient is 'Extra Special'

Jacquelyn "Jackie" Johnson, RN
Kansas City, Programs 30 & 32
Year joined VITAS: 2008

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Admissions Nurse

Whether it's 5 p.m. on Friday or 4 a.m. on Tuesday, Jackie is there for her patients, answering questions and making sure their needs are met.

"She makes each patient feel as though they have her undivided attention when she's with them," says an admiring co-worker. "She once admitted an indigent patient on a cold, rainy Saturday evening. She went and bought groceries and supplies that the family needed, then tucked the patient in for the weekend."

Another time, Jackie outfitted a Memory Bear with clothing bearing emblems of the patient's favorite sports team so the family would have that extra-special memory.

The Kansas City Regional Home Care Association recently recognized Jackie's devotion to her patients and co-workers by naming her as an Outstanding Associate Award Winner for 2009. "Jackie is a strong support to many and always projects a smile and willing attitude," says her co-worker.



The 'Go-To' Gal in Admissions

Christine "Chris" Ramos, RN
Broward, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 2008

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Admissions Nurse

Chris is the person VITAS' Kathleen Wengert looks for when a complicated admissions case arises.

"She is so professional and so compassionate," says Kathleen, team manager of the VITAS inpatient unit at Memorial Hospital in Pembroke Pines, Florida. "The hospital staff seek her out to evaluate patients, and

patients' families ask for her specifically. In the admissions arena, she is the go-to gal."

No case is too complicated for Chris, says Broward Admissions Manager Eileen McDermott. "She was once given a high-profile case in which a patient was in a coma following a plastic surgery procedure.

"It was determined that the patient couldn't be admitted," notes Eileen, "but Chris sat with the family, anyway, and offered them her support. The patient's attending physician was so impressed, he made a donation to the VITAS Hospice Charitable Fund."

Even when they aren't her own, Chris puts patients and families first.

Clinical & Operations Awards



Answering the 'Call' of Duty

Karen Piet, LPN
Telecare Call Center,
Lombard, Illinois
Year joined VITAS: 2004

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—LPN/LVN

Karen got the call at home at 2 a.m. A co-worker was ill and the department was short-staffed. Could Karen come in? Of course.

The VITAS Values are ingrained in Karen, and “We take care of each other” is a solemn vow to her. “She

was scheduled to work later that day but considered the patients’ and her co-workers’ needs first,” says Belinda Griffin, LPN, the staffer Karen filled in for that night.

Karen has a great bedside manner as well—even over the phone.

“Karen comforts our callers with the ease of her voice,” says Cheryl Peterson, Karen’s supervisor. “She shows true compassion by listening to their concerns and develops trust by resolving their issues.”

“As a former bedside nurse, Karen understands what the situation in our patients’ homes must be like and she responds with heartfelt sensitivity and empathy,” says Call Center Senior General Manager Julie Dayiantis.



Making Dreams Come True

Justin Ray, MDiv
Waterbury, Program 41
Year joined VITAS: 2006

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—Chaplain

A patient loved religious choir music and Justin wanted to take him to a concert at Yale University, so he drove the patient to the performance.

“The patient loved it,” remarks Medical Director Clare Cherney, MD. “He and Justin were exhausted by the end of the night, but it was the patient’s last outing before his death. It was a dream come true, thanks to Justin.”

Justin has taken patients out for special events on many occasions—on his own time—especially if a patient was lonely or the family was unavailable. “Justin always puts patients and families first,” says VITAS Representative Darren Hale. “He’s also there to listen to his co-workers regarding any issues they might bring to him.”

When he’s not working for VITAS, Justin serves as a local pastor, is a certified Emergency Medical Technician, is a volunteer fireman and serves as goalie for the Firemen/Policemen’s ice hockey team.



She Holds Her Team Together

Billie Jo Weinberg, LMSW
Houston, Program 27
Year joined VITAS: 2007

VITAS Award for Outstanding—Service Social Worker

Until her recent promotion to team manager, Billie Jo served as her team’s interim manager five times over the past two years. Each time a new TM was hired, Billie Jo reached out to train him or her and helped to keep her team working as a cohesive unit.

“She was the glue that held us together,” says Chaplain Chris Nagle, MDiv.

Described as confident and reliable, Billie Jo has always led by example. She’s helped other teams when they were short-staffed, and she trains social work students, many of whom have expressed an interest in hospice careers after working with her. She did this while never letting her own duties slip.

Because she’s had prior experience with children, Billie Jo’s colleagues consult her when they encounter challenges with younger patients. “A team was unsure of how to care for a teenage patient’s emotional needs,” says former Patient Care Administrator (now Admissions Nurse) Maureen Courmier, RN. “Billie Jo offered to help and provided ongoing support.”

Clinical & Operations Awards



Hospice is her 'Duty in Life'

Pramila Desai, CNA
Dade-Monroe, Program 11
Year joined VITAS: 1990

*VITAS Award for
Outstanding Service—*

Hospice Aide

It was summer, and it was hot. Pramila and her husband used their own money to buy a ceiling fan for a patient who lived in a poorly ventilated house.

"The patient's son had left his job to care for the patient, and he couldn't afford to buy a fan. Pramila also bought food and clothing for the family," notes Patient Care Administrator Patty Perry, RN. "She has done similar acts of kindness for other families."

Pramila accepts all assignments and changes without hesitation, continues Patty, for "she sees taking care of patients and families as her duty in life." A 20-year veteran of VITAS, Pramila handles difficult cases with ease.

"She smiles and has a loving attitude for everyone, especially her team, which she treats like family," concludes Patty.



Her Caring Never Ends

Carol Lynne Wilkins, CNA
Chicagoland NW, Program 31
Year Joined VITAS: 2004

*VITAS Award for Outstanding
Service—Hospice Aide*

A patient's wife mentioned to Carol Lynne that one unfulfilled wish she and her husband shared was to be married by a Catholic priest. The wife hadn't expected anything to come of her disclosure—but she didn't know Carol Lynne very well yet.

Carol Lynne rallied her VITAS team members into action and arranged for a cake, photographer, flowers, music, and a Catholic priest to conduct a wedding for the couple. "When the ceremony was over, the patient's wife had tears of joy," says Team 703 Manager Patricia "Patte" Knuth, RN.

Whether it's buying a body pillow, picking out special hair clips for thinning hair, or holding a patient's grieving child until she stops crying, Carol Lynne does whatever it takes to provide high-quality comfort and support for her patients and their families.

"She provides impeccable care and never 'speeds through' her duties," says co-worker Amelia Giacobbe, RN. "Her caring never ends."

The Ambassador of VITAS

Terrill "Terri" McGuigan
Southeast Admissions Call Center,
Miramar
Year Joined VITAS: 1981

*VITAS Award for Outstanding Service –
Admissions Coordinator*

After 27 years in admissions, Terri could probably do her job in her sleep. But she takes nothing for granted.

"Terri never says she's done her best—she always says, 'What more can I do for you?'" notes Waterbury General Manager Theresa Bachhuber. "And she always makes sure all our patients' needs are met before she



leaves so our assignments are set for the next day."

Terri is an effective ambassador for VITAS, adds Theresa. "She knows patients and families are fragile and need extreme care and compassion when they talk to her. She has a gift for reassuring them that VITAS will take care of them, so they feel they've made the right decision."

At a time in people's lives when hope seems lost, "Terri gives them hope," says Theresa.

Terri also supports her co-workers, notes Customer Service Supervisor Rayda Lamboglia. "When a peer is overwhelmed, she immediately jumps in and helps."

Clinical & Operations Awards

'Just the Right Person'

Alex Silva, CVA, CRT, RCP
Volunteer Services Manager
San Diego, Program 95
Year Joined VITAS: 1999



*VITAS Award for
Excellence in Management*

Alex's admiration for his volunteers is of "Presidential" proportions.

For his April 2009 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, Alex wanted a proclamation signed by President Obama recognizing his volunteers' service. He sent dozens of appeals to the White House. In November, a letter arrived—late, "but the President signed it ... it was not a

rubber-stamp signature," he says.

Since assuming his current VITAS job in 2003, Alex has used creative marketing and advertising tactics to increase his volunteer base by 30 percent. Given this success, he's spoken at local and national conferences on innovative recruitment techniques.

"Alex also focuses on retention," notes Business Manager Pam Poe. He regularly calls or emails his volunteers and sends them birthday or anniversary cards. He organizes support meetings, mentoring services and ongoing training.

Caring and compassionate, "Alex listens when staff members tell him about a patient's special volunteer needs," says Pam. "Everyone knows Alex will find just the right person."



Managing 'People' from Behind the Scenes

Dennis Gingrich
Manager, PeopleSoft Programming
VITAS Corporate
Year Joined VITAS: 2003

VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service

Most VITAS employees don't know it, but they depend on Dennis for their paychecks and their VITAS benefits.

Dennis manages PeopleSoft, which captures, processes and synchronizes all employee data, including work hours and payroll codes, 401(k) payments and employee contributions to health insurance and other plans.

"He also reprograms PeopleSoft when we create new or adjust existing benefits plans and labor-management systems" such as 2009's automatic Applicant Tracking System, says Chief

Administrative Officer/Senior Vice President Kal Mistry.

To effectively manage labor, wages and costs, Human Resources relies on Dennis to provide accurate and meaningful reports on those areas. And he delivers those reports on time—no matter the deadline, says Senior Director of Recruitment Marc Grad. "He's unflappable," says Marc.

Dennis came to VITAS through co-worker Lois Chambers, senior director of payroll. "I'm grateful to Lois for enabling me to provide—from behind the scenes—quality hospice care to people at the end of life," he says.



Clinical & Operations Awards



Relentless in Helping Others

**Ann Heilbron, Case Worker
Central Florida, Program 17
Year joined VITAS: 1999**

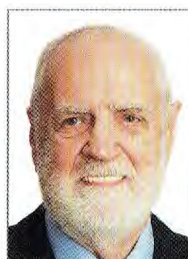
*VITAS Award for
Outstanding Customer Service*

The patient was homeless and nameless. He had no ID and used an alias he found in a book; even his prison records were in his alias. He had been discharged from the hospital and rejected by other hospices. With no name, he had no benefits or income.

What seemed to be an impossible task—identifying the patient and gaining benefits for him—became “mission possible” for Ann.

“In the pouring rain, Ann attended an outdoor fair for homeless people looking for ways to find their birth certificates and other identification,” explains fellow caseworker Izarys Kraft. “It was fruitless, but she did not give up. She kept contacting agencies and lawyers until she was able to get our patient the benefits he was entitled to, including Social Security.”

“Ann knows the value of doing the right thing for patients and families, regardless of the sacrifices she has to make,” adds Izarys.



Giving ‘Life’ to Hospice

**Kevin Quin
Broward, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 2008**

*VITAS Award for
Volunteer Achievement*

Kevin specializes in Veteran visits, but he’ll take any assignment. He currently sees 15 VITAS patients.

Volunteer Services Manager Anne Warren describes a case that illustrates Kevin’s dedication. The patient was 98 years old, had congestive heart failure and was bitter after his wife died; he figured his hospice journey would be short because, as he stated in a letter to Anne, “I planned to stop eating.”

VITAS and Kevin changed all that. Kevin, whom the patient called “an educated visitor,” weekly played chess and “traded insults” with the patient and brought him engaging reading materials. “Hospice changed from death to life!” the patient wrote.

In another instance, “Kevin weekly drove 72 miles round trip to visit a blind patient,” says Anne. “He spent a day helping the patient’s caregiver at the county Social Services office, and he traveled to the Veteran’s Hospital to get the patient medical care and coverage.”



Sales & Marketing Awards

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

The winners in this portion of the Leadership Council are listed first by rank according to their job title, then alphabetically.



General Managers



Right Mission and Values Reap Success

Susie Fishenfeld, RN, MSN
Senior General Manager
Los Angeles/Ventura
County, Program 97
Year joined VITAS: 1997

There have been so many special patients and families for Susie.

“There was the Veteran who we were able to present with a Purple Heart prior to his death ... the patient who we transported to join his family on the East Coast before dying ... an infant who was held in the mother’s arms and our nurse’s arms for hours at times ... and for me personally, there are the visits to see patients on Christmas Eve and Mother’s Day,” she recounts.

Under her leadership, the program has opened two satellite offices and boasts nearly 50 years of senior management team tenure.

In Susie’s opinion, her program’s growth and success “is about working in an organization with the right values and mission. We have been able to build significant growth, program expansion, quality hospice services and patient, family and physician satisfaction because ... we’re all about making a difference!”



No Hat She Hasn’t Worn

Kathleen “Kathy” LaPorte, RN, BSN
Senior General Manager
Brevard, Program 18
Year Joined VITAS: 2002

Hospice care requires clinicians to use all of their skills, including their critical-thinking skills. Kathy has certainly done that—and much more—since she started at VITAS as a team manager.

When Kathy joined VITAS, she was one of Brevard’s first three staff members. She managed hiring, education, quality improvement, compliance, documentation, marketing and admissions. Having previously worked in medical/surgical, oncology and hospice nursing and administration in both Brevard county and New York, Kathy was up for those challenges.

Today, the Brevard program has more than 260 employees and opened a new inpatient hospice unit in January 2010. Kathy, a three-time Leadership Council appointee, says she and her staff are always looking for innovative ways to reach out to new referral sources.

“We give back to the community through multiple partnerships with local organizations, and we use our volunteer and bereavement programs to spread the word about VITAS while providing valuable services,” she says.



Please, 'One More Visit by Theresa'

Theresa M. Bachhuber, RN, MPH
General Manager
Waterbury, Program 41
Year Joined VITAS: 2006

She couldn't say "no." As the new general manager of a small start-up, Theresa had taken on a few patients, intending eventually to transfer them to another registered nurse.

"After my initial visit with George, the family asked three or four times for 'one more visit by Theresa,'" she says.

"Needless to say, the relationship was established. George wasn't going to transfer. He was with us for 10 months!"

When Theresa arrived at Waterbury, the staff's morale was low due to previous multiple changes in management. She immediately introduced "Making a Difference" (MAD), an employee rewards program that promotes staff recognition at all levels. "MAD has helped to boost morale" and instill a sense of unity, she says.

Waterbury now boasts steady census growth and is looking to expand its services. "My secret to success really isn't a secret," says Theresa. "I empower my team to do what is right and lead by example."



The Right Managers Make Success Possible

Bruce Davis
General Manager
East Bay, Program 91
Year joined VITAS: 2008

Bruce says there are two points in the healthcare system that bring the deepest sense of satisfaction: "At birth and in hospice—the opposite ends of the life continuum."

Having built his career in the visiting nurses field as a business manager, Bruce had had some exposure to hospice care and "found it to be very rewarding." Thus, he next chose to focus on hospice.

Bruce's background in accounting and his experience in healthcare have helped him keep his program running smoothly. But, he says, it's his success in choosing the right leaders that keeps his staff motivated.

"Having a high-quality team of managers makes achievement possible," he says. "I find it rewarding and satisfying knowing that I have been a part of helping patients and families at the end of their lives—even if it is behind the scenes."





The Numbers that Really Count

Tamara "Tammy" DeCaro
Director of Market Development
Collier County, Program 19
Year Joined VITAS: 2005

Because she's responsible for her program's market growth, Tammy closely watches its numbers—though not the ones you might expect.

"Our patient/family surveys are continually excellent, but the number one comment is that they wish they had known about hospice sooner," she says. "That means we still have a lot of education to do within the community."

"Until those surveys come back saying patients and families got their referrals at the right time, our job isn't complete. That's the number that concerns me."

Collier's market is competitive. So is Tammy. She's worked in medical sales and as a VITAS representative in Broward County, Florida, and she's taken a few nursing courses, so she has some clinical expertise.

"Stories mean more to the consumer than charts and data," says Tammy. "If you can paint a patient-care picture for a doctor based on, say, the criteria for end-stage heart disease, you'll create a lasting impression."

Differentiating VITAS

Michelle Luiken
Director of Market Development
Northern Virginia, Program 63
Year Joined VITAS: 2007

At VITAS, "Patients and families come first." Outside of VITAS, however, "People tend to think just of the patient when it comes to hospice," says Michelle.

"Hospice is also about the families patients leave behind," continues the former pharmaceutical sales representative. "Talking to the families is how you really hear about the impact that hospice made in the last moments of their loved ones' lives. That's when I'm



Fill 'Er Up with Enthusiasm

Raymond Jarvis
Director of Market
Development
East Bay, Program 91
Year joined VITAS: 2008

After a decade in pharmaceutical sales and marketing, Ray wanted something more rewarding—but not in the way one might think.

"I wanted something where I could use the sales and marketing competencies I had developed to generate more significant patient outcomes," he says. "I found hospice, where we are able to positively affect patients and families to a much greater degree."

For Ray and his marketing team, sales numbers are just the extrinsic rewards of the job. "Far more important and motivating are the intrinsic rewards—making a difference in people's lives and helping patients on their final journey."

To help his staff maintain enthusiasm, Ray regularly shares letters of appreciation from patients' family members. "I view this as an opportunity to step back and 'refill the tank' with positive comments about our great work," he says. "It reinforces that 'I am proud to make a difference' Value."



especially proud of VITAS." To reach that point with families, though, VITAS must first take care of their loved ones. That's where VITAS representatives come in, and that's where Michelle stresses "personalization."

"My reps follow their patients from referral to discharge then give their referral sources updates," says Michelle. "This personalizes our service. When my reps inform physicians of the type of care their patients are receiving, it reinforces for the physicians that they made the right choice in VITAS. This differentiates us from our competition."



A Valuable 'Inheritance'

Forrest Beaty, MD
Medical Director
East Bay, Program 91
Year joined VITAS: 2004

Being relatively new to VITAS, General Manager Bruce Davis is particularly glad to have "inherited" Dr. Beaty.

"He's an incredible asset to senior management and the growth of the program," Bruce says. "Many regulatory changes came about in the past year, and throughout it all, Dr. Beaty kept a positive, encouraging attitude. He's also an asset in the field, educating the local community on hospice and palliative care."

Dr. Beaty, who is also team physician for Team 254, is humble in the shower of compliments. "I feel fortunate and grateful to be doing the work I do for the company for which I work and for the people with whom I work."

Dr. Beaty discovered hospice care in 1991, when he began his own house-call practice. "Many of my patients were hospice-appropriate. I learned what hospice could offer them." He eventually switched to hospice medicine.

"It has been an ongoing learning experience. I still learn from my patients every day," says Dr. Beaty.



VITAS Provides the 'Full Package'

Paul Rozynes, MD
Medical Director
Broward, Program 14
Year Joined VITAS: 2000

Before joining VITAS, Dr. Rozynes had a thriving private practice in internal medicine, making house calls and often treating patients with terminal illness. But one element was missing from his practice.

"Many of my patients needed end-of-life care and I couldn't complete the entire package," he says. "I didn't



Hospice is a Professional and Personal Love

Ruth Sarmiento, MD
Medical Director
Atlanta, Program 70
Year joined VITAS: 2007

Dr. Sarmiento has come to love hospice both professionally and personally.

She began seeing hospice patients in her private hematology/oncology practice, then worked at another hospice before joining VITAS as a team physician. Soon after, she cared for her own mother in a VITAS inpatient hospice unit.

"The experience was both memorable and emotionally challenging," she says, "but I had seen how patients responded to hospice care, so I knew it was right for her."

Board certified in hospice and palliative medicine (and in internal medicine and medical oncology), Dr. Sarmiento appreciates VITAS' focus on education and support—for physicians as well as patients and families. "If I ever need help in treating a patient, there is always another VITAS physician to consult," she says.

Dr. Sarmiento also likes the support of VITAS' interdisciplinary teams. "The team members form a 'family' for our patients," she says. "No patient has to fear being alone."

have a social worker or a chaplain, and my staff nurse didn't make house calls. I was trying to do it all and I couldn't—not in a great way.

"Hospice allowed me to provide the full package," he says.

As a Medical Director, Dr. Rozynes doesn't make quite as many house calls anymore. But he takes pride in hiring physicians who have a good bedside manner, and he encourages them to spend quality time with patients and families.

"The teams tell me when a doctor is good, and I've gotten a lot of positive feedback," he says.



**Helping Patients
'Go Home'**

Debra Vermette, MD
Medical Director
Fort Worth, Program 24
Year joined VITAS: 2004

"Dr. Debbie" likes visiting patients and families in their homes, in their own environment. One special case, however, didn't start at the patient's home; it started at the neo-natal intensive care unit at the hospital where VITAS has an inpatient unit.

The NICU approached VITAS when it was ready to

discharge a baby with terminal congenital anomalies but whose parents didn't want to take her home. "The mother felt overwhelmed (about) taking care of her," explains Dr. Debbie. "They were considering giving her up."

Dr. Debbie visited with the family. The mother seemed loving and capable; although aloof, the father seemed only to need reassurance that support would be provided if the baby went home. Dr. Debbie reassured him.

"When the baby passed peacefully at home weeks later, she passed in her father's arms as he sang to her," says Dr. Debbie. "It was an honor to help the family through such a difficult time."





Always Supporting Her Staff

Julie Vold, RN, BSN, MS
Senior Patient Care Administrator
Milwaukee, Program 39
Year joined VITAS: 1994

When the Milwaukee program opened in 1994, Julie was there as its first Patient Care Administrator.

Although Julie hadn't worked in hospice before, she was familiar with the concept, having spent most of her career in home health care.

"I had a special interest in not only the needs of the dying but of the people who love them," says Julie. "It's an area that so many people misunderstand. I also wanted to motivate the staff caring for that population so patients and families wouldn't feel isolated and alone."

Julie daily demonstrates leadership, says Senior General Manager Phyllis LoCicero, RN. "She listens, mentors, educates and provides support and recognition to all of the Milwaukee staff."

"If I can say that I've helped even one person each day and made him or her glad to work for VITAS, that's been a successful day," says Julie.



Humbled by Others' Benevolence

Mary Hensley, RN, BSN
Patient Care Administrator
Chicagoland NW, Program 34
Year joined VITAS: 2006

As a career niche "Hospice is where you truly get more than you give," says Mary. Whether she's working with patients and families, her own teams or others in her program, Mary frequently is "humbled by the VITAS staff's benevolence to patients and families and to each other."

On one occasion, Mary filled in for the vacationing admissions manager. "One day, there were so many requests for admissions appointments, every admissions nurse was booked. And the requests kept coming," she recalls.

But the program's staff rose to the occasion. "There were team managers, the volunteer manager, nurses and others running out to meet with patients and families," says Mary.

"I was so grateful for everyone's willingness to 'switch gears' in the midst of a hectic day," she says. "They demonstrated their commitment to working together to give any customer who wanted to choose VITAS the opportunity to do so!"



A 'Worldly' Perspective on Hospice Care

Belinda Hodge, RN, BSN, CHPN
Patient Care Administrator
Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97
Year joined VITAS: 2003

Hospice and palliative nursing brought love into Belinda's life; she met her husband while caring for his mother in the oncology unit of a London, England, hospital, where she worked before coming to the United States.

"It was a privilege for me to care for her," says Belinda.

General Manager Susie Fishenfeld, RN, MSN, explains: "Belinda was born in New Zealand and has lived and worked in several countries, so she brings a wonderful international perspective and understanding of palliative and hospice care to our program."

Belinda's passion for hospice and palliative care is obvious. "I love my work at VITAS," she says. "I never forget the impact we can have each and every day on the people that we care for and those we work alongside."

"I feel privileged to work in this field," she continues. "It's also humbling to be recognized in this way for the work I do each day."

He's Only as Good as His Team

Jeff Mack, RN
Patient Care Administrator
Broward, Program 14
Year Joined VITAS: 1991



Jeff knows he's only as good as his staff, so "if they're doing an incredible job, I'm doing an incredible job."

At least once a day, a member of Jeff's team does something to make him proud. He shows that as often as possible by publically recognizing jobs well-done.

Jeff started at VITAS in Dade-Monroe as a team manager then worked as an admissions nurse, admissions manager and VITAS representative. Though he knows both the clinical and marketing "sides" of hospice care, he daily reminds his staff that those "sides" are interconnected.

"Providing patients and families with consistent excellent customer service, competent clinical skills and superior care drives our success," says the former critical care nurse. "We are daily faced with the challenge of meeting our patients and families' needs in the most compassionate, professional and efficient manner possible. Understanding that putting their needs first will always bring a positive outcome is Number One."



Bringing Loving Memories to Life

Jacqueline "Jackie" Smith, RN, BS, CHPN
Admissions Manager
Dade-Monroe, Program 11
Year joined VITAS: 1996

Before finding her "home" in hospice care, Jackie was a paramedic and a hospital nurse. "And as admissions manager, she can do her job with her eyes closed," remarks Senior General Manager Maureen Knips, RN.

When it comes to relating to patients and families, Jackie's eyes are wide open. When a recently deceased patient's husband and son asked her to help them pick out the patient's clothes for the funeral home, she was more than willing to help.

She started pulling out possible outfits from the patient's bedroom closet. "It was sad," she says, "because the clothes were for a healthy woman—they wouldn't fit the patient as they once had."

"As I presented each outfit, however, the husband and son reminisced about the past and what their loved one was like when she was wearing them," says Jackie. "The room was filled with love."





Ensuring 'Good Deaths'

Marianne Arruda-Wennberg, RN, CHPN
Team Manager
Brevard, Program 18
Year Joined VITAS: 2006

Marianne joined VITAS with 15 years of experience in hospice nursing.

"I started as a team manager in the program office," says Marianne. "I so longed for direct patient care, though. When we opened a new inpatient hospice unit, I asked to be the manager."

Senior General Manager Kathleen LaPorte, RN, BSN, didn't hesitate to give Marianne the job. Marianne had worked at an IPU with another hospice provider, so she was clearly qualified. The new Brevard IPU opened in January 2010 at an independent-living and long term care facility.

Marianne is dedicated to ensuring that patients and families have "a good death." While building Brevard's IPU from the ground up, she's enjoyed imparting that philosophy to her staff.

"I enjoy training and supporting new nurses in hospice care," she says. "If we can make our patients' lives better at the end of life, what a gift to them—and to us."



Hospice is Her Calling

Lucille Faciane, RN, BSN
Team Manager
San Francisco, Program 98
Year joined VITAS: 2007

Lucille, a native of the Philippines, had been an obstetrics/gynecology nurse for 23 years and wanted something different. She accepted an offer to head up VITAS' new satellite office in Foster City, California.

"It was a big change for me," says Lucille, "and the challenge of building a satellite office was scary. But it



Nothing Stops Don, Dog-Gone It

Don Dolan, RN, BS, MS
Team Manager
Broward, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 1999

A VITAS admissions nurse called. An actively dying patient needed admission to the inpatient hospice unit at Florida Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale. The patient and her mentally ill daughter were homeless—and they had a dog.

No problem, said Don. "We brought them all in," he says. In addition to tending to the patient, "We got a cage and food for the dog and called in a mental health professional for the daughter."

His team didn't stop there. "We helped with the mother's burial arrangements then got the daughter and her dog into an assisted living community," he says.

Don's positive, can-do attitude makes such challenging situations seem run-of-the-mill. "I want us to be the leaders in quality end-of-life care," he states. "I try to treat everyone I encounter as if they were my loved one. I try to motivate my staff to do the same."

turned out to bring a sense of accomplishment for me and everyone on our team."

It was her first patient, however, who confirmed for Lucille that she'd made the right career choice.

"He had a dry sense of humor, rarely smiled and was very set in his ways," she recalls. "He would drill me with questions and wouldn't acknowledge the care I provided him.

"In his last hours, the patient took my hand, looked me in the eyes and said, 'Thank you for everything. This may be your calling in life,'" says Lucille. He was right.



She Can't Imagine Being Anywhere Else

Tana Kennedy, RN, BSN
Team Manager
Dallas, Program 21
Year Joined VITAS: 2006 (in Chicago); 2008 (in Dallas)

Tana was just months into oncology nursing when she had a pivotal realization.

"I saw so many patients suffering. I knew right away I wanted to be an advocate for patients at the end of life," she says.

Before moving to Texas, Tana worked at VITAS' Chicagoland Central program, in an inpatient unit and on a nursing home team. There are many memorable patients for Tana, "but I often think of those who had no family and relied entirely on VITAS for comfort and support. Or, I remember working in the field and seeing a patient's eyes light up when I walked in the room. No other job could give me that."

Recently promoted to Patient Care Administrator, Tana now works in the office. "Our staff pours its heart and soul into caring for our patients," she says. "I wake up every morning excited about work. I cannot imagine being anywhere else."



Her Team is Tops

Pat Petrella, RN, CHPN
Team Manager
Orange County, Program 93
Year joined VITAS: 2007

As she filled out the questionnaire for this write-up, Pat refused to accept sole credit

for her success at VITAS. Instead, she submitted two and a quarter typed pages—single-spaced!—listing the names and attributes of everyone at her VITAS program who daily lives up to the VITAS Values.

"And most of all, this honor is about Team 935," wrote the proud Pat. "I have the privilege of working with an outstanding group of people who I laugh and cry with every day as we talk about the great work they do under extraordinary circumstances.

"My reward is to hear a story from family members telling me about the care our team has provided," she continued. "I learn from my team every day. They support me when I'm sad, tired or stressed, and by their example, they remind me why I chose hospice nursing and have devoted myself to end-of-life care."



Making Herself Available

Julie Schlaikowski, RN
Team Manager
Milwaukee, Program 39
Year Joined VITAS: 2006

It was a tough case, and it profoundly changed Julie's approach to nursing.

The patient's heart defibrillator was causing him chest pain. He and his family decided to turn it off. Julie was elected to carry out the procedure.

"The whole family arrived ... they thought he was going to die," recalls Julie. "The eldest son questioned our decision and didn't like my answers. He got angry and yelled at me."

The son finally relented; the father lived another six months. "I later learned that letting the son let off steam made him respect me more. I was the only one he trusted," says Julie. "That taught me to just listen, let families vent and be supportive, no matter what."

Julie makes herself available. She checks in with patients' families several days after admission, and she frequently attends patient care conferences. "I also regularly visit our facilities, so they know me and feel comfortable calling me if necessary."



Everyday Miracles Motivate Her

Debora Tindall, RN
Team Manager
Central Florida, Program 17
Year joined VITAS: 2000

Because of her work with VITAS, Debora believes in miracles.

She cites several examples: The mother and daughter, estranged for 30 years, who finally reconcile at the end of

the mother's life; the family member the team can't get in touch with who shows up just when he's needed at his loved one's bedside; or the many times her patient care team members have all happened to visit the same patient at the same time, thereby providing all forms of comfort and support to the patient's family as their loved one dies.

"I remember these moments because of the amazing work we are blessed to do together each day," says Debora, who first joined VITAS as a patient care nurse and was promoted to her current role in 2006. "It is the lives that we touch that bring us back to work each and every day."



Hospice Makes Her a 'Better Person'

Kimberly Trowbridge, RN
Team Manager
Hartford, Program 42
Year joined VITAS: 2006

When she was an oncology nurse in New Haven, Connecticut, "My most satisfying moments were dealing with patients and families at the end of life," says Kimberly. Moving into hospice nursing therefore "felt like the next natural step."

Kimberly will always remember one VITAS patient in his 60s "who had such a zest for life," she says. "His family was wonderfully supportive and loving. They taught me lessons about life and family and how to stick together.

"Hospice has a way of making you a better person through patients and families like (that gentleman's)," notes Kimberly. "I'm proud to work for a company that stands behind its values, and my team, Team 281, has amazing members who bring their own unique perspectives to this job."

General Manager Michelle Hanlon credits Kimberly for always wanting to learn more, "to educate herself and her staff. And she's always willing to help around the office."



Hospice Care is 'Personal' Care

Susan Warren, RN, CHPN
Team Manager
Northern Virginia,
Program 63
Year Joined VITAS: 2008

Though she doesn't get to see patients in person as often as she would like, Susan loves getting out to process admissions and meet patients and families.

"It's easier to assist my team with issues when I know the patient," she says.

Even when she doesn't know a patient, though, Susan has full confidence in her team. "I can be challenging, but my team makes management easy, because everyone has the primary focus of providing high-quality, compassionate care," she says.

That's always been Susan's guiding principle, too, even when she was a case manager for another hospice provider. She'll never forget one patient who had been a journalist and told entertaining stories.

"After she was discharged, I continued to visit her every Sunday," explains Susan. "When she declined again, we admitted her to VITAS and our team took care of her until her peaceful death. I'll always treasure that friendship."





The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Sharon Wells, RN, CHPN
Team Manager
Los Angeles/Ventura,
Program 97
Year joined VITAS: 1993

Meet challenges head-on and rely on each other. Those are Sharon's mantras for success, and she imparts them daily to Team 977.

Sharon uses team meetings to reinforce staff unity. "We usually start with a check-in, so people can share anything

going on in their lives. It helps us keep in touch with each other," she says.

When a difficult patient visit arises, Sharon encourages team members to "buddy-up." She herself learned to rely on others when she first started working at VITAS and the program was new. At one point, she was managing three teams at once.

"I was frustrated. I felt I couldn't give each of the teams the attention they needed," she recalls. "My manager kept reminding me there was light at the end of the tunnel. Having her support and knowing she was listening was a great help. It's something I always remember for my staff."



'Making a Difference' Every Day

Concepcion "Conchita"
Tovar-Bas, RN
Senior VITAS Representative
Dade-Monroe, Program 11
Year joined VITAS: 2002

Friendship brought Conchita to VITAS.

"A friend I had worked with in home health was at VITAS," recalls the former nurse. "When I told her about my seriously ill grandmother, who was living with me, she said, 'Come to VITAS.' I did. My grandmother did, too.

"My grandmother died on VITAS' service, pain-free and with her family around her," continues Conchita. "She wanted to go with dignity. She did just that."

Having been a medical/surgical, diabetes, oncology and home health nurse and having worked in pharmaceutical sales, Conchita has seen it all in the healthcare field—and she's loved it.

"When I worked in oncology, people would ask me if my job depressed me. I realized that, if I did something that made my patients' and their families' lives a little better that day, I knew I'd made a difference," she says. As a VITAS representative, she continues to do that every day.



Bringing Choices to Her Community

Pat DiMaria
Senior VITAS Representative
Chicagoland NW, Program 31
Year Joined VITAS: 1994

Referral sources have called Pat personally when they needed hospice care for their loved ones. "I value their trust in me and VITAS," she says.

Pat is proud to represent VITAS because she worked as a nurse before hospice care was an option for terminally ill patients. "I cared for one young man who died alone and in pain in his hospital room, because our knowledge of pain management was bleak and rigid rules prevented family members from staying after visiting hours," she recalls.

"People now have choices," asserts Pat. "They have the ability to be pain-free and comfortable at home, surrounded by loved ones. It's important to educate our communities about that."

Director of Market Development Miriam Campbell adds, "Pat shares her knowledge with her co-workers, helps with special projects and helps new VITAS employees get acclimated. She brings positive energy into our program."



Self-Starter Has Special Gift

Gail Weishaus, RN, CHPN
Senior VITAS Representative
Broward, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 1999

As a five-time Leadership Council appointee, Gail knows success. She shares her skills by mentoring new marketing representatives.

A former Emergency Room nurse, Gail has dedicated 17 of her 38 years in nursing to hospice. She started at VITAS as a pool RN; she became a marketing representative in

2003. Her multiple accolades prove she does whatever necessary—even became a Florida Licensed Assisted Living Facility Administrator—to enhance her knowledge.

“Gail is a self-starter,” says Director of Market Development Rick Deal. “She also happens to be the funniest rep I’ve ever worked with.”

Gail is able to “step back during moments of stress or crisis and reframe the situation in a humorous light,” which is an invaluable gift in the hospice field. She used to write a column about bringing humor to healthcare for *Home Healthcare Nurse* magazine, and she’s been a national speaker on the subject.



It’s About Reaching Out, Not ‘Making Numbers’

Michele Barattini
VITAS Representative
LaSalle, Program 35
Year joined VITAS: 2007

The one word that best defines Michele is “trust.”

The folks I call on know I mean what I say, that they can count on me and that I will constantly work with them to make sure our patients in their facilities are getting the very best hospice care,” says Michele. “My referral sources and I have developed trust in one another.”

For Michele, her work has never been about “making her numbers.” “Rather, it’s about how many people to whom we can reach out and provide great quality end-of-life care, and it’s about caring about everyone involved in the process,” from the referral sources to the patients to their family members.

“It humbles me to have the privilege to care for our hospice patients,” says Michele. “They keep me grounded on what’s really important in life.”



He Hits the Ground Running Every Morning

Jay Barnett
VITAS Representative
Los Angeles/Ventura
County, Program 97
Year joined VITAS: 2008

Jay had both personal and professional experience with hospice before he joined VITAS. His mother received hospice care in Texas.

“I saw firsthand that hospice makes a lasting impression on the families and friends of those at the end of life,” he says. It was while working in sales and marketing for senior living facilities in Southern California that he found VITAS.

“VITAS cared for many of our residents,” he says. “I respected the VITAS teams’ commitment to their patients. When a representative position became available, I didn’t think twice about applying.”

Jay believes the care VITAS provides makes his job easier. “Our referral sources see that we have big hearts, so they continue to refer to us,” he says.

“There’s nothing like walking through the grocery store and having a former patient’s spouse hug me and thank me for all we do. That makes me want to hit the ground running every morning!”



Education is Key

Zemi Bertonneau
VITAS Representative
San Gabriel Cities, Program 96
Year joined VITAS: 2006

Zemi learned about VITAS while working as marketing director at an assisted living community.

“VITAS took care of a patient in the facility, and I saw the difference VITAS made in his last days of life,” says Zemi. “VITAS gives me an opportunity to make that

same kind of difference in the lives of even more patients and families.”

Zemi, who was also appointed to the Leadership Council in 2007, credits her success to her commitment to educating people about hospice. “Each person I talk to has different feelings about hospice. My job is to educate them about the specific benefits available to them in end-of-life care.”

More than meeting numbers, “It really means a lot to me to know when a family is happy they chose VITAS and that we really did make a difference in their loved one’s last days,” she says.



Providing the Magic ‘Touch’

Shana Beym, LVN
VITAS Representative
Orange County, Program 93
Year Joined VITAS: 2006

For Shana, working as a VITAS representative isn’t about the number of patients she signs onto the company’s care.

“It’s about how many patients, families and healthcare providers we can reach, and ultimately, how many lives can be touched by the tender care that we provide,” she says.

Shana often provides that tender touch herself. “The most memorable moments I’ve had is simply sitting at the bedside of a VITAS patient and having him or her say, ‘thank you for touching me.’”

“I am passionate about walking with patients and their families as the patients make their final journeys,” she adds.

A licensed vocational nurse, Shana previously worked at a skilled nursing facility as the director of social services and the director of admissions and marketing. “Having both a clinical and sales background has been helpful to me in my work for VITAS,” she says.



Making Connections through the Fog of Illness

Linda Brown
VITAS Representative
Los Angeles/Ventura County, Program 97
Year joined VITAS: 2006

For Linda, her work is about making connections—creating that link to help potential patients and referral sources choose VITAS.

“There are more than 100 hospices in our area,” says Linda. “Why should someone choose VITAS? I take it seriously that I am the face of VITAS and it’s up to me to earn people’s trust.”

“Most families are in a fog when VITAS comes into the picture,” she adds. “It’s our responsibility to guide them and show them that VITAS is the answer, that we are the experts who can help.”

Linda recalls a 45-year-old single mother and patient. “She was concerned about her 12-year-old son. Our staff reassured her that we would make sure he was cared for—and we did. I will always remember the faith she put in VITAS to provide her the peace of mind to let go. I’m proud to work for VITAS.”



'Fighting' for Patients and Families

John Case
VITAS Representative
Dayton, Program 50
Year joined VITAS: 2008

As a Tae Kwon Do expert, John is all about focus, strategy, precise execution and—most importantly—getting things right.

"I think it's important to get the right message to the right people with the right frequency. To do that properly is to plan and strategize with purpose," says John.

John's strategy in educating the community about VITAS is asking good, open-ended questions, listening intently

and offering sensible solutions. "It's important to adapt your selling style to your consumer's personality," he says. "You have to make the consumer feel comfortable, not threatened."

John notes that he's honored and privileged to be involved in end-of-life care. "There are too many patients and families who are either unaware of the hospice benefit, have not been properly educated about hospice, or have not been offered a choice," he says. "I see myself as fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves."

To view photos from the 2009 Leadership Council event, click on the Leadership Council icon on the home page of the VITAS i-net.



Bringing VITAS' 'Soothing Balm' to Patients

Carol Collum, RN
VITAS Representative
San Antonio,
Program 27

Year Joined VITAS: 2006

When work gets overwhelming, Carol hits the "reset" button.

"I ask myself, 'Why am I really doing this job?' All I need to do is remember seeing our patients' family members relieved—relieved that someone will be there to help carry the burden," says Carol. "That's what helps me stay focused."

No matter how much one might be prepared for the end of life, "it's still always a time of crisis," remarks Carol, a former Emergency Room, medical/surgical, oncology and admissions nurse who has worked in many different hospitals.

"VITAS brings a 'soothing balm' at a time in patients and families' lives when they need solutions to their medical, emotional and spiritual needs," she continues. Carol likes being the one who delivers that balm.



Experience and Passion

Pamela Derrama
VITAS Representative
San Francisco Bay, Program 98
Year joined VITAS: 2001

Highly experienced in hospice and assisted living sales, Pamela wanted a challenge. How about helping to open a new hospice program (VITAS) in a competitive market? Today, Pamela still finds challenges—and satisfaction—in her work.

Pamela's most memorable challenge came when the

program admitted its first patient. "This was a 'test' from a nursing home that was willing to give the new kids on the block a try," she recalls. "I met with the patient's son, who had no experience with hospice nor knew anything about VITAS. We provided quality care for the patient and gained the trust of both the son and the nursing home staff."

Pamela offers herself as a "one-stop shop" for her referral sources and their patients. "I'm able to give them information about hospice and provide my knowledge of nursing home regulations," she says. "It is my passion to help people find hospice."



She Always Comes 'Home' to VITAS

Melissa Erben
VITAS Representative,
Dade-Monroe, Program 11
Year joined VITAS: 1988

Melissa has “spread her wings” a few times during her career—but she’s always returned to VITAS.

Having originally joined VITAS in 1988 in a part-time capacity, Melissa was hired full-time in 1989. Since

then, she’s worn nearly every hat possible for a non-clinician. She’s worked as a team secretary, admissions coordinator, managed care coordinator, customer service supervisor and now a representative. In between, she worked as a Medicare Eligibility supervisor for two Miami hospitals.

“I’ve had to come back to VITAS because of the sense of accomplishment and the gratification this work brings,” says Melissa. “At the end of the day, we’ve not only put in a good day’s work, we’ve also truly made a difference in people’s lives. Everyone at VITAS helps someone in some way; we’re not just pushing paper.”



VITAS Care Teams Make His Job 'Easier'

Matthew MacGregor
VITAS Representative
Philadelphia,
Program 61

Year Joined VITAS: 2007

Like many VITAS representatives, Matthew was in pharmaceutical sales before he came to VITAS. And he liked his job.

“But I always felt like something was missing ... I was lacking a sense of contributing to the benefit of society” he says. He thus “picked the brain” of an acquaintance who worked in hospice care and decided to give it a try.

“Promoting a service versus a medication really inspired me, particularly a service like hospice care, with such an extraordinary benefit to those at the end of life,” continues Matthew.

Matthew stresses that he wouldn’t be successful at promoting VITAS if it weren’t for the dedicated patient care teams behind him. “Our leaders continuously improve upon the care our teams provide, and they strive daily to be the best at what we do. This is important to me ... and it makes my job much easier.”



Give Us a V-I-T-A-S! VITAS!

Erika McCullough
VITAS Representative
Pittsburgh, Program 62
Year joined VITAS: 2009

Considering her enthusiasm and passion for hospice and VITAS, it shouldn’t surprise anyone to learn that Erika also coaches little girls in cheerleading.

“They have such a positive energy and are so much fun to work with,” Erika says of her young protégées.

Erika’s superiors say the same about her. “She has energy, drive, dedication and a strong commitment to customer service and assuring that all hospice-appropriate patients have access to the Hospice Benefit,” says Vice President of Operations Patty Husted.

General Manager Mark Katich adds: “Erika is thorough, committed and hard-working. She will do great things at VITAS.”

And VITAS couldn’t ask for a better cheerleader in return. “I am so passionate about the quality of our services,” says Erika. “I feel rewarded when I’m able to help the community understand the benefit of hospice—specifically VITAS.”

Editorial Note: Erika was recently promoted to Director of Market Development.



VITAS Employs 'Special Breed' of People

Valerie Paikin, MBA
VITAS Representative
Broward County, Program 14
Year joined VITAS: 2007

There sometimes is a moment of perfect clarity, when a VITAS representative knows he or she is doing so much more than "selling." For Valerie, that moment came when she was still in training.

She and an admissions nurse (AN) were called to a hospital. The patient, a young woman with ovarian

cancer, was in severe pain and was being comforted by family members.

"The AN immediately looked for a hospice nurse to treat the patient's pain," recalls Valerie. "Once the pain was relieved, we talked to the patient and her mother about hospice and VITAS. As the patient signed on to our service, the AN held the distraught mother's hand and cried with her a bit.

"I left that appointment knowing I had made the right decision to work at VITAS," says Valerie. "Our people are a special breed of individuals with huge hearts and a commitment to helping others."



Listening is Key

Mark Ray
VITAS Representative
Dayton, Program 50
Year Joined VITAS: 2008

Mark is a good listener. That's key to his success at VITAS.

"At the core, all hospice providers should be able to provide the same services," notes the former account manager at a major long-term care pharmacy. "By listening to our referral sources, such as long-term care facilities, and identifying their view of a perfect hospice experience, we can tailor VITAS services to their scenarios.

"I highlight the value-added services that VITAS brings to a facility's residents," says Mark.

And providing the "perfect hospice experience" is important to Mark. "I got into hospice care because I wanted to help make a positive difference at a difficult time in people's lives," he says.

"Educating facility staff on the benefits of hospice care and sharing the positive outcomes of our experienced clinical teams allows us to show that the journey at the end of life can be less painful in many ways," he concludes.



Everyone Deserves Choices

Kerri Wheeler
VITAS Representative
San Francisco Bay,
Program 98
Year Joined VITAS: 2007

As far as Kerri is concerned, "Everyone deserves choices," especially when it comes to end-of-life care.

"Hospice is a benefit that every qualified individual should have the right to choose," asserts Kerri, who discovered hospice while working as an account representative in healthcare staffing as well as operating her own marketing/advertising company that catered to healthcare providers.

"Too many people don't have the knowledge to make the right choices for end-of-life care," continues Kerri. "It's my mission to educate and build awareness about hospice."

Kerri knows she's on the right track. That's affirmed for her each time she walks into a nursing home.

"I am filled with joy when, as patients and residents sit in their wheelchairs, they lift their heads and return my greeting with a BIG SMILE," says Kerri. "I melt every time when their faces light up simply because someone took the time to say hello." Kerri always finds that time.

Gold-Level National Leadership Council Winners for 2009

Clinical and Operations Awards

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Team Physician

- **Anuj Prasad**, DO, Philadelphia, Program 61

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service—RN

- **David Bucheit**, RN, Collier County, Program 19
- **Jeneen Coker-Jackson**, RN, NJ West, Program 66
- **Kathleen Hatcher**, RN, Dallas, Program 21
- **Janette Perasso**, RN, East Bay, Program 91

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Admissions Nurse

- **Paula Lynch**, RN, Waterbury, Program 41
- **Tiphonie Tolentino**, RN, Orange County, Program 93

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— LPN/LVN

- **Kimberly Sanchez**, LVN, San Antonio, Program 27
- **Veronica Van Reil**, LPN, Palm Beach, Program 16

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Chaplain

- **Melanie Schley**, M.Div., Broward, Program 14

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Social Worker

- **Diane Neptune**, LCSW, East Bay, Program 91

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Hospice Aide

- **Richie De La Pena**, CNA, Chicagoland Central, Program 38
- **Lorena Grijalva**, CHHA, Orange County, Program 93
- **Carlos Hastings**, CNA, Brevard, Program 18
- **Sharon Whyte**, CHHA, Collier County, Program 19
- **Carrie Ann Zangari**, CNA, Hartford, Program 42

VITAS Award for Outstanding Service— Admissions Coordinator

- **Yolanda Peterson**, Admissions Call Center—West Coast Region

VITAS Award for Excellence in Management

- **Randolph Tijerina**, Operations Manager, HME—Dade (recently promoted to Manager)

VITAS Award for Outstanding Customer Service

- **Carolina Garcia**, Recruitment Specialist, VITAS Corporate Human Resources Department
- **Amy Manikowski**, Performance Improvement Specialist, Chicagoland South, Program 37

VITAS Award for Volunteer Achievement

- **Jim Johnson**, Volunteer, Chicagoland NW, Program 31

Sales & Marketing Awards

Patient Care Administrators

- **Rebecca Mott**, RN, Brevard, Program 18
- **Donna Scott**, RN, CHPN, Coastal Cities, Program 94 (now National PCA)

Team Managers

- **Maureen Campbell**, LPN, Cincinnati, Program 51
- **Mary Fell**, RN, Chicagoland Central, Program 38
- **Donna Fischer**, RN, Central Florida, Program 17
- **Sherron Jackson**, RN, Broward, Program 14

VITAS Representatives

- **Amy Arquilla**, Cincinnati, Program 51
- **Jessica Knapp**, SE Michigan, Program 53
- **Michelle Latham**, Atlanta, Program 70
- **Kimberly Martin**, Dade-Monroe, Program 11
- **Ida McQuilliams**, San Francisco, Program 98
- **Wrendi Morris**, Palm Beach, Program 16
- **Heather Mullally**, East Bay, Program 91 (now Senior VITAS Rep)
- **Charlene Oliver**, Broward, Program 14
- **Rebecca Sandvall**, Volusia-Flagler, Program 10
- **Laura Solomon**, Milwaukee, Program 39

