

House Calls

St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association | Spring 2020



Health Care Heroes: VNA Nurses Go Above and Beyond to Fight COVID-19



Andrea Angstadt, RN, is an admissions nurse for St. Luke's VNA. She visits patients in their homes, performs assessments and on-boards them to receive home health services. With reduced hours during the COVID-19

pandemic, Andrea felt compelled to do something for her colleagues and her community. "As a nurse, I felt guilty when I saw what my colleagues were going through and needed to do something to help," explained Andrea.

Pulling out her sewing machine, previously used only for Halloween costumes and minor mending, Andrea got to work. She started with family and friends. Following a post in a moms' group on her Facebook page, the real orders began arriving. Masks were made for more than 200 families, two Lehigh Valley restaurants and the staff at the Arts Academy, where Andrea also serves as a school nurse. To date, Andrea's masks have been sent to 9 states, including Arizona, and an Air Force base.

Andrea has established a pick-up system on the front porch of her West Allentown home and mails masks to those living out of the area. She doesn't charge for the masks, but is

grateful for the many donations she has received. Fitted sheets have proven to be a good source of elastic and friends and family have made donations of fabric, postage and other supplies.

A single mom of two young boys, Andrea sews for several hours most nights after her children go to bed. "I am grateful and humbled by everyone coming together during this pandemic," shared Andrea. From her dining room, Andrea has sewn nearly 800 masks so far. And counting.



Mary Tornetta, RN, has been a nurse with St. Luke's VNA for ten years. Providing care for patients in their homes as they transition from a hospital stay, Mary regularly helps patients recovering from joint replacement or other surgeries, strokes and

injuries, as well as those in need of wound care. She also provides education and ongoing care for those living with chronic conditions such as congestive heart failure and diabetes.

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St. Luke's Visiting Nurse Association, as part of St. Luke's University Health Network, provides compassionate, excellent quality, cost-effective home health care, hospice services and home-based parent/child programs.

St Luke's
VISITING NURSE
ASSOCIATION

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A Mother's NFP Journey



Nurse Stacy Andrews, Eli Wood, and Melinda Saunders-Wood

In the fall of 2015, the time came for my husband and me to take the test – the pregnancy test. We passed... it was positive. Excited but clueless, we knew we needed help. We didn't know the first thing about how to take care of a baby. We needed support and direction.

Thankfully, I found St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership. A visiting nurse came to my home, and help entered like a breath of fresh air! My visiting nurse was warm, respectful, knowledgeable, nurturing and caring. I immediately trusted her. She took me under her wing and groomed me from an expecting woman to a caring mother. She taught me about pregnancy, labor, afterbirth, breastfeeding and parenting. She gave me countless toys, books and crafts, and showed me how to make play dough and instruments with my son. She encouraged and guided me to pursue my own personal endeavors and dreams.

I connected with my nurse and I fell in love with this program. My husband and I will always remember our time with St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership. With the birth of our son, we became parents; with Nurse-Family Partnership, we walked confidently into parenthood.

-Melinda Saunders-Wood, Mom to Eli Joseph Wood



THE DIFFERENCE YOUR GIFT CAN MAKE

St. Luke's Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) launched in 2001 and has grown into one of the largest NFP sites in Pennsylvania, providing services to thousands of Lehigh Valley families.

Despite its success, there is still a long waitlist for NFP services.

Your gift to St. Luke's NFP is an investment in the overall well-being of the Lehigh Valley. Our program truly changes the way children grow, allowing them to live healthier, happier, more successful lives in our community. Our generous donors make it possible for St. Luke's NFP to serve more Lehigh Valley families in need. By making a gift to St. Luke's NFP, you are building better worlds for new babies and their families.

To support St. Luke's NFP, visit www.sluhn.org/supportNFP

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Health Care Heroes: VNA Nurses Go Above and Beyond to Fight COVID-19

A Sellersville resident, Mary is part of the VNA's "southern team," caring for patients in Bucks, Montgomery and Western Berks counties. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, masks were scarce, even for health care providers. Mary quickly made 20 masks for her teammates. She modified the elastic, lengthened the straps and retrofitted the fabric with pipe-cleaners at the bridge of the nose for increased comfort. Mary was also able to procure a donation of safety goggles and a full pallet of antiseptic wipes. A pair of goggles and a container of wipes were distributed to her fellow home health colleagues, and the remainder of the antiseptic wipes were donated for use throughout St. Luke's University Health Network.

Following a career as a human resource manager for many years, Mary enrolled in nursing school and graduated at the age of 41. "As an HR manager I was paid well, but the money just wasn't enough for me. I wanted to contribute more directly to people's lives," explains Mary. After a few years working in an ICU, Mary came to the VNA and wouldn't want to work anywhere else. "I love teaching and caring for people in their homes and having a direct impact on their healing."

In addition to her work at the VNA, Mary is also co-founder of "Hands in Service (HIS)." The non-profit organization fosters alliances among charitable organizations to gather resources, including medical aid, for disadvantaged communities locally, nationally and internationally. As part of short-term missionary teams, Mary regularly visits Nepal, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. Mary credits her faith as the driving factor behind her work as a missionary nurse and caring for those in need.

To view all the ways to get involved and/or make a gift in support of COVID-19 response efforts at St. Luke's University Health Network, please visit sluhn.org/COVID-19Donations.

Dr. Baxter's Tour Is Over, but His Message Remains the Same

"Don't Wait"



One of the most pleasant surprises of the trip was witnessing the basic kindness of strangers along the

Last September, Ric Baxter, MD, spent four weeks travelling 1,026 miles on his bicycle, spreading the word about palliative and hospice care throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Nearly eight months later, he has no regrets.

When Dr. Baxter set out on his "Don't Wait Tour" last fall, he had three objectives in mind: to test his own limits and get in better shape; to promote St. Luke's University Health Network's Palliative and Hospice Care programs; and to spread the word about palliative and hospice care while addressing some of the barriers that keep people from taking advantage of the services.

"I believe in the work, that's why I do it," explains Dr. Baxter. "No one wants to talk about death and dying, and because we don't talk about it, we miss out on some of the meaningful benefits that are available," he explains. Dr. Baxter wanted to address physicians, students and the community at large with his message of "don't wait." He encourages health care providers not to wait to have those hard conversations with patients and he reminds patients that it's okay for them to start those conversations as well. "If a patient wants to die at home instead of the hospital, he shouldn't wait to have that conversation. He should let his family and his care team know his end-of-life wishes, before he is at the end of his life."

Each stop on the tour was unique, but his stop at Clarion University in western Pennsylvania was especially memorable. The College of Health and Human Services hosted an interdisciplinary conference about end-of-life care, for which Dr. Baxter was the keynote speaker. "This was a whole-day seminar that was not a requirement for anyone, yet 300 students from all different disciplines – nursing, social work, psychology – attended. That was incredibly satisfying and very encouraging," Dr. Baxter said.

In Harrisburg, Dr. Baxter met Governor Tom Wolf. Although he is a self-proclaimed "non-politico," it was an honor to meet the Governor and have an opportunity to shine a light on hospice care. Notably, according to Governor Wolf, Dr. Baxter is the only person to have his picture taken with the Governor while on a bicycle!

Other than six flat tires along the way, everything went pretty much as planned. Dr. Baxter emphasizes the journey was a team effort. "The trip itself really was a metaphor for hospice – it takes a team to pull it off – it's hard and scary and you can't do it alone," he explained. "I felt very vulnerable, but I learned things about myself and about others."

way, from people opening up their homes as he passed through their towns or drivers pulling over and offering help.

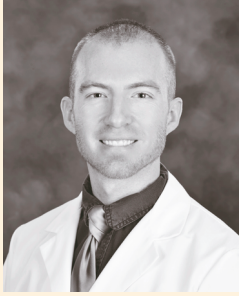
When asked what he learned from his tour, Dr. Baxter replied, "I am persistent. I did this even though it was hard." Dr. Baxter spent a lot of time alone on his bike and learned that he liked himself – he's not sure we always know that about ourselves. It was not a fun ride, but it was focused. He was riding along unfamiliar roads in places he hadn't been before, but Dr. Baxter concedes, "I'm really glad I did it."

In the early planning stages, Dr. Baxter thought the tour was a great idea, but he didn't really know if the message was going to resonate. Yet without always knowing who his audience was going to be and exactly what their expectations of him were, his message was consistently well received, and all the feedback was positive. "I was most happy about that," he admits.

So, when's the next ride? "This was a once in a lifetime event," protests Dr. Baxter. He will continue to spread the word about palliative and hospice care, but likely not on a bike. In the meantime, his message remains the same: "Don't Wait."

Ric Baxter, MD, is the Hospice Medical Director at St. Luke's University Health Network. Dr. Baxter is a national leader in Hospice and Palliative Care. In 2017, he received a lifetime achievement award from the Pennsylvania Hospice and Palliative Care Network (PHPCN). He has been a presenter at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization Clinical Conference and webinars, for the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and for the National Association for Homecare and Hospice Annual Assembly.





PALLIATIVE CARE

Patient-Centered Care for Improving Quality of Life

Meet Dr. Pipestone

Michael Pipestone, MD, is a fellowship trained palliative care physician. Specialty trained to treat individuals with life-limiting health issues, Dr. Pipestone provides symptom-focused care for patients as they continue to receive treatment for advanced illnesses such as cancer, heart failure, COPD and kidney failure.

St. Luke's Palliative and Supportive Care team works closely with other specialists including cardiologists, oncologists, pulmonologists and primary care physicians. As part of a patient's care team, Dr. Pipestone understands complex medical conditions and specializes in relieving symptoms. For example, a cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy may experience pain, nausea, fatigue, anxiety, depression or shortness of breath. Dr. Pipestone helps with the management of those symptoms and also helps the patient and family members navigate the disease by interpreting multifaceted medical information. Most importantly, he

listens to his patients and helps them make appropriate treatment choices.

"When patients are treated only emergently and not thoughtfully, we miss the opportunity for them to meet their end in a way they decide," explains Dr. Pipestone. "Palliative care is based on the needs and desires of the patient, not just the patient's prognosis."

St. Luke's Palliative Care is integrated with St. Luke's Hospice, allowing for continuity of care if and when patients transition to hospice care. Having an established relationship with a palliative care provider results in improved patient satisfaction, concordance with a patient's desires and earlier referrals to hospice. "Patients grow to trust us, so when someone no longer wants to go through treatments and switch to comfort care, we can help them understand what to expect and assist in making what is a difficult, but often clear, choice," says Dr. Pipestone.

Dr. Pipestone – like all St. Luke's Palliative and Supportive Care team members – is committed to improving the quality of life for his patients by controlling pain and other symptoms, communicating with others involved in their care, providing emotional and spiritual support, and helping with short- and long-term care planning. "Palliative care does not mean you are giving up," says Dr. Pipestone. Studies show that palliative care is associated with reduced costs, improved patient satisfaction and is NOT correlated with shorter life spans.

Michael Pipestone, MD, graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Medicine and completed his residency, internship and Hospice & Palliative Medicine fellowship training at the University of Minnesota Hospital and Clinic. In addition to inpatient care, St. Luke's Palliative and Supportive Care has offices in Bethlehem, Stroudsburg, Easton and Quakertown. Appointments may be scheduled through St. Luke's Palliative and Supportive Care, but referrals must come from the patient's primary care doctor or lead specialist. Self-referrals are not accepted. Patients may call 484-526-3648 for more information.

Memorial Tree of Life at St. Luke's Hospice House

Honor a loved one or a special friend by dedicating a plaque in his or her name on the Memorial Tree of Life at St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House. Naming opportunities are available for those who wish to leave an everlasting memorial of a loved one on a leaf, acorn, or stone plaque.* One-time gifts of \$1,000 or more will secure your personalized plaque.

Philanthropy brings comfort and care to thousands of people each year. Proceeds from the Memorial Tree of Life will support the St. Luke's Hospice Endowment Fund to ensure that everyone in need of hospice care will have access to this special resource, regardless of ability to pay.

For more information about naming opportunities, memorializing a loved one or leaving a legacy gift, please contact Melissa Siegfried, Director of Development, at 484-526-3691 or Melissa.Siegfried@sluhn.org.

* See enclosed envelope for order details.



Barry Kessler, second from left

Providing Compassionate Companionship for More Than 15 Years

Barry Kessler has been making a difference in the lives of staff, patients and families at St. Luke's Brian D. Perin Hospice House for more than 15 years. As a volunteer, Barry visits with patients and their families, typically once a week, at the Hospice House. He occasionally shaves a male patient or delivers a snack, but always provides conversation and compassionate companionship. As a donor, Barry's generosity has allowed St. Luke's Hospice to continue providing extraordinary, end-of-life care to the patients and families from across our region. Here's Barry's story:

Hi, my name is Barry Kessler and I am a hospice volunteer. I work for St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN) at the Brian D. Perin Hospice House on Black River Road in Lower Saucon Township. I have worked there since they opened their doors in early 2006. Before that, I spent two years at St. Luke's hospice facility on Delaware Avenue in Bethlehem.

You might be wondering how I got started and why I do this work. Well, it all began in 1994 when my mother was ill and passed away at my previous home in Bucks County. At that point I was unfamiliar with the concept of hospice. The experience was eye-opening. Having trained, caring, even loving people come into our lives when walls seemed to be closing in, was supportive and uplifting.

Years passed, and I eventually moved to Lower Saucon Township. I met neighbors who were St. Luke's volunteers at the hospital campus in

Fountain Hill and was drawn to the opportunity. I was assigned to the emergency department, because of my wanting to work on the front lines with people going through difficult times. That was in 2002. In the course of volunteering at SLUHN, I became aware of the need for hospice volunteers. I said to myself, "I want to do that as well," and received my hospice training in late 2003.

In preparing this article I looked up the word, Volunteering. We all know something about that word, which means "working with others to make a meaningful contribution to a better community. One estimated dollar value of volunteer time is \$21.36 per hour." That information helps acknowledge the millions of individuals who dedicate their time, talents and energy to making a difference. That's really what it's all about, isn't it ... caring enough to give ourselves to make things bet-

ter for others. I believe we all have some time, talents and energy to make a difference. It doesn't even have to be a lot, just some. For me it is a win/win. I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve.

I have always felt called to volunteer in hospice. I feel privileged and honored to have met amazing people in my 16 years – patients and families, and even friends of patients, but also an incredibly capable and genuinely kind staff. I have shared grief, courage, resolve, belief, compassion, sadness and more, but always in an atmosphere of love. I am happy to say those feelings are catching at the Hospice House. You can feel it as soon as you walk in the door.

It is my hope that more people will be motivated to give some of their time, talent and/or treasure to making our loved ones' end-of-life care significant and meaningful, worthy of their last days on this Earth.

Learn More About Volunteering

There is no set number of hours you must commit to volunteering for St. Luke's Hospice. All St. Luke's Hospice volunteers receive training to ensure they feel comfortable with their tasks. To learn more, contact the Volunteer Office at 484-526-2779 or visit sluhn.org/volunteernow.



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*In light of the recommendations surrounding COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus),
spring fundraising events have been cancelled or postponed.*

Please visit sluhn.org/events for the latest information on the status of upcoming events, as well as event contact information should you have any questions.
Thank you for your understanding and best wishes for a swift return to good health for all.

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St. Luke's Home Health/St. Luke's
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