

BECAUSE
EVERYONE
DESERVES
QUALITY CARE



VNA
& HOSPICE FOUNDATION

ANNUAL *fund* 2021



THE RIGHT CARE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Born on a Wisconsin farm, Ron Pierner was a hardworking, industrious kid. Taught in a one room schoolhouse, farm life and family values carried him far beyond the classroom. As a young adult, he started his own business and retired from it at 44 years of age. Amid entrepreneurship, he found the love of his life, Kathy. Having sold off the business, they moved to Wisconsin to live off the grid on 500 acres. Ron was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer in 2015. A few years later, he and Kathy relocated to Florida to live closer to their daughter.

A rush to the ER was a turning point in Ron's life. It was there, during a compassionate and forthright conversation with a VNA hospice nurse, that Ron truly came to terms with what he already knew in his heart: hospice was the

answer in providing the relief he so desperately sought. Ron was discharged from the hospital and elected hospice to manage his pain and provide comfort care at home so he could focus on living life with quality.

Brenda, his daughter, recalled the moment, “It was such a relief for all of us. We all were at peace. My dad understood it meant he didn’t have to endure pain, suffering or anything about any more treatments. It was a powerful moment when he realized he could just let go.”

A little-known aspect of hospice is that patients will, at times improve; therefore, they no longer need hospice care. This is because when pain and symptoms are well-managed, it leads to less stress on the body. Ron’s family was surprised when this happened to him. “No one could have ever imagined he would get better,” reflected Kathy. “He knew he was dying. Somehow, the next day he was getting out of bed.”

Ron no longer needed hospice and began receiving home health care. Since VNA is the only hospice provider in Indian River County, it is the only agency that can offer a continuum of care for patients like Ron. When a disease process changes, VNA can alter the care plan while continuing to meet the needs and health goals of the patient. Due to the comprehensive home care services VNA offers, a patient can transition from home health to hospice without the disruption of changing health care providers.



After receiving home health services for a few months, Ron's cancer eventually progressed. Once again, Ron and his family elected hospice. "It was so helpful and reassuring to know everyone," remarked Kathy. "They welcomed us, they knew Ron and knew how to take care of him."

When Ron's symptoms could no longer be managed at home, he was transferred to the VNA Hospice House. Kathy, overwhelmed, offered, "I was so relieved, I almost cried when the drivers arrived to take Ron to the VNA Hospice House. He was so incapacitated. I knew we couldn't handle him. We were so relieved to know he would be in the hands of such caring and compassionate people. Thank the Lord for VNA and for hospice."

The VNA Hospice House offers patients who need 24/7 care a comforting, supportive,

home-like environment. For Ron, the care he received helped ease the agitation and confusion he was experiencing. Careful consideration of his environment included adjusted lighting and temperature to help soothe his distress.

One of the benefits of hospice is the team approach to care to help patients physically, emotionally and spiritually. Music therapists would softly play in Ron's room, putting him at ease. A hospice caregiver gave him a lavender sponge bath, which not only provided a soothing touch, but allowed him to spend his last days with dignity. The hospice nurses, who understand the dying process, could meet Ron's physical needs at every step.

“No one could have ever imagined he would get better,” reflected Kathy. “He would tell us, ‘this is it.’ He knew he was dying. Somehow, the next day he was getting out of bed.”

For Kathy, hospice meant unconditional support and love. She received spiritual care from chaplains and had long conversations with the social workers about the planning process for Ron's death. They also discussed what resources were available to her afterwards.

The social worker offered the guidance Kathy needed at such a difficult time by helping her find a funeral home and make service arrangements.

Kathy explained how support made a difference, “I was so overwhelmed. He got better, then he was on death’s door. We wouldn’t have known how to do anything for Ron if we hadn’t had the guidance from VNA. It meant so much that VNA knew how to provide the continuity of care with Ron’s changing status due to his health condition.”

“We were so relieved to know he would be in the hands of such caring and compassionate people.”

Stories like Ron’s help individuals understand how VNA’s array of services can meet patients where they are in their health journey. As the only hospice provider serving Indian River County, VNA is in the unique position to modify the plan of care as the patient’s needs change. Contributing to the 2021 Annual Fund means that all persons, including the under and uninsured, can always receive the right care at the right time.

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We have made diligent efforts to ensure the accuracy of the list of 2020 Annual Fund Leadership Donors. We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact Michelle Deschane at mdeschane@vnac.com or 772.978.5568 with any questions.

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