



VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION  
OF SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT, INC.

## News Release

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For Immediate Release

### **Seniors to get Much Needed Aid from Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut;**

#### **Agency Receives Major Grant to Fund Innovative Community Health and Education Outreach**

New Haven, CT (February 10, 2009) – The Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut (VNA/SCC), a non-profit organization that fosters access to community health and home care services and offers health education in the Greater New Haven, Milford and Valley areas, was awarded a \$165,000 grant from the Jennie C. Bronson and the Hoblitzelle Family III funds at The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. This multi-year grant will increase the capacity of the VNA/SCC to improve health literacy, fall prevention and ongoing wellness and chronic care maintenance for the elderly through the organization's innovative CareLink program. CareLink provides free ongoing support to seniors through a collaboration with the Southern CT State University School of Nursing and the Yale University School of Nursing.

John R. Quinn, the newly appointed President and CEO of VNA/SCC comments, "The VNA, as home health care experts, understands first hand the need for community programs that provide support and education, so I am delighted and grateful that the VNA of South Central Connecticut has been given this unique opportunity by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. This will allow us to leverage our expertise in community care to elevate the level of health and wellness knowledge and support in the community."

Regina Demitrack, RN, MPH, the Director of Strategic Program Development for VNA/SCC, has been tapped to become the Director of Community Health and Wellness – a new position that was created by Foundation funds. Ms. Demitrack is a magna cum laude graduate from Adelphi University in nursing science, and received her Masters in Public Health from the New York Medical College. She is an adjunct professor in community

health for the nursing program at Southern Connecticut State University and has most recently supported the agency's successful telehealth and wound care programs.

Significant evidence suggests that addressing health literacy, fall prevention and CareLink in a comprehensive fashion enables seniors to be measurably more independent in their health care decision-making and self-care processes. Such a holistic approach also has the potential to reduce hospitalizations of active and discharged home care patients, thereby reducing the costs borne by the community in caring for preventable illnesses and injuries.

A major component of this outreach will be the ability to reach populations of seniors in the community. Therefore, partnerships with other health care and/or community organizations will be critical. Organizations wishing to partner with VNA/SCC in these efforts are welcome to contact Ms. Demitrack at 203.859.6052. Those wishing to support these efforts through sponsorships or direct contributions may contact Tonya Irby in the VNA/SCC development department at 203.859.6054 to discuss the many options available.

### **Background Information**

Healthy People 2010 defines health literacy as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.” According to health literacy fact sheets from the Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc. ([www.chcs.org](http://www.chcs.org)), people with low functional health literacy are less likely to: understand written and oral information given by physicians, nurses, pharmacists and insurers, act upon necessary procedures and directions or be able to navigate the health system to obtain needed services. Conversely, they are more likely to receive health care services through publicly financed programs. Older people, non-whites, immigrants and those with low incomes are disproportionately affected. “In 2001, low functional literacy resulted in an estimated \$32 to \$58 billion in additional health care costs.” “Medicaid finances 47% of the additional health care expenditures. Medicare finances 19% of the expenditures.”

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons ([www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org)), half of women, by age 90, will fracture a hip. According to information provided by D.I. Baker, PhD, RNCS, of the Yale School of Medicine, citing data from the CT Department of Public Health, in Connecticut falls account for 56.2% of all unintentional injury hospitalizations from 2000-2004, with an associated cost of \$203.6 million. Of those who fall, 33-60% will require long-term nursing care and 15-25% will die within a year. Dr. Baker also added that, home care patients are the most likely to fall and, of the 210 home care agencies with the lowest re-hospitalization rates in the country, fall prevention was the #1 strategy for intervention. The most common barrier to intervention however, was patient compliance, which can be adversely affected by low functional health literacy.

In addition to active home care clients, of which VNA/SCC has in excess of 1,000 on service on an average day, there are those who are no longer active on home care services who would benefit from fall prevention and health literacy outreach. Each year, VNA/SCC discharges over 2,900 patients from its services, who also are at risk. The VNA/SCC's newly established Carelink program is a collaborative effort with the Yale School of Nursing and Southern Connecticut State University School of Nursing, in which student nurses follow discharged VNA/SCC patients. Recently, a similar program was conducted by the New Britain VNA and UConn School of Nursing. Their program resulted in an 18% decrease in falls among the patients during a two-year period. The program involves fall prevention, reminiscence therapy and medication education. Health literacy education is a primary feature of the success of this program. The VNA/SCC hopes to expand this program through the Community Health and Wellness Program.

### **About The Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut**

Founded in 1904, the VNA/SCC, the original VNA of New Haven, Milford and the Valley, is a state licensed, non-profit, community based home health care agency. The VNA/SCC staff consists of highly skilled nurses, therapists, medical social workers and home health aides. A vital resource to the communities it serves, the VNA/SCC provides a wide range of specialized clinical services, community programs, the Nurturing Families Network and subsidized care to those who are in need. The agency employs over 240 staff members, has an average daily census of over 1,000 patients and makes over 150,000 home visits per year. The VNA/SCC is supported in part by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, local United Way organizations, corporate sponsors and individual donors. The agency has a private-duty affiliate, CareSource. CareSource strives to maximize the quality of life for its clients and their caregivers in the home and health care settings. Their services include private duty nursing, homemakers, companions and live-in home health aides. Both VNA/SCC and CareSource are CHAP (Community Health Accreditation Program) accredited. To learn more about the organizations, log onto [www.vnascc.org](http://www.vnascc.org) or [www.caresourceinc.org](http://www.caresourceinc.org).

### **About The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven**

Since 1928, donors to The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven have built the community's endowment currently valued at approximately \$300 million. In 2008, The Foundation's Board of Directors distributed nearly \$13 million in grants from approximately 700 different named charitable funds, that support a wide range of programs and projects. The Foundation is celebrating 80 years of helping donors achieve their charitable goals and improving the quality of life for Greater New Haven residents. For more information about The Community Foundation visit [www.cfgnh.org](http://www.cfgnh.org) or call (203) 777-2386.

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