

VNA TODAY

The Newsletter of the Visiting Nurse Association of the Treasure Coast

VNA Remains Community Resource Throughout Hurricane Season

Florida's active hurricane season proved to be no match for the VNA spirit as employees joined together to ensure patients were safe and well cared for before, during and after the storms.

Before the hurricanes hit, VNA staff contacted patients to make sure they had adequate medications and supplies, and helped make arrangements for those who needed to go to the special needs shelter at Sebastian River High School.

From the outside, it looked like a regular high school, but from the inside, the 10 classrooms in the V wing resembled an acute care hospital or MASH unit.

"It seemed like every four hours there was an emergency, such as a man who broke his hip, or a little girl who suffered a Grand Mal seizure. Everyone really gave their all, even when the power became limited and toilets began backing up. Nearly a third of our 300-plus clinical and office employees worked more than 4,000 hours at the shelter," said Margot Kornicks, VP and chief operating officer.

VNA's efforts did not go unnoticed, as most patients were thankful to have a safe haven.

"I don't know what we would have done without the VNA. We are so grateful for the magnificent job you

did," said Denny Gordon, a caregiver who stayed at the shelter with her two elderly neighbors.

Before Frances and Jeanne hit, Hospice staff transported Hospice House residents and home hospice patients to a special needs shelter classroom, which was transformed into an oasis Hospice House. To help keep patients calm and comfortable, Hospice staff practiced aromatherapy and used peppermint cooling spray and hand held fans when the power went out.

"The Hospice House is a beautiful building, but a beautiful building is not required to provide compassionate care. It's about dignity, comfort and peace. We brought that with us to the shelter," said Linda Travers, Hospice House manager.

Both the Hospice House and Hospice Thrift Avenue sustained water and structural damage and will be closed until repairs can be made. In the interim, the Hospice House is operating out of Indian River Memorial Hospital.

Following the storms, VNA staff and volunteers worked on getting the 100-plus special needs patients and caregivers back in their homes by spearheading a Home Assessment and Resettlement Team to assess patients' homes to ensure safety as well as access to electricity, telephone service, food and

water. Others helped patients get resettled by cleaning out refrigerators, house cleaning and grocery shopping.

In Brevard County, VNA Space Coast employees conducted home assessments and assisted patients in special needs shelters throughout the county. RNs helped with meals and toileting, while employees checked patients' homes for damage, electricity and water.

After spending nearly two weeks in Charlotte County helping Hurricane Charley victims, the mobile unit was well stocked and prepared for Frances and Jeanne. Following the storms, the mobile unit was stationed at the Indian River Mall, where ARNPs administered tetanus shots, treated patients for bee stings and poison ivy, and even removed a police officer's stitches.

"We saw all kinds of patients - from people who had cuts and wounds to people who couldn't reach their doctor but needed follow-up medical care. One day we saw 49 patients - a mobile unit record," said Liz Korba, ARNP.

Overall, the VNA spirit was made stronger by the storms, said Sharon Broome, president and CEO.

"Everyone did a fantastic job. I am so proud of our employee's commitment to this agency, to our patients, and to the communities we serve."



Left: Beatrice Wilson and Karl Parrish, both 92, enjoy lunch at the Special Needs Shelter at Sebastian River High School. The shelter was staffed by the Visiting Nurse Association, Indian River County Health Department and the Emergency Operations Center.

Right: Nancy Mace, ARNP, examines 8-year-old Torres Hanson on the Health Care on Wheels Mobile Unit, which provided free non-emergency health care to hurricane victims.

