

Caring for Our Communities, One Home at a Time



By Esther Conteh, APRN, MSN, PCC, VP Care Management, VNS Health Health Plans, Apr 27, 2026

May is National Nurses Month, a time to recognize the vital work nurses do every day. Many people think nursing only occurs in hospitals, but some of the most meaningful care takes place in people's homes.

Over a century ago, Lillian Wald, who grew up in nearby Rochester, helped transform nursing. As America's first public health nurse, she brought care to homes and communities. She understood that health is shaped not only by medicine, but also by where people live. Today, nurses across Western New York continue that work, meeting people where they are, often in their homes. The need is growing: Home care across New York has increased [by 26 percent](#).

I have seen this firsthand. I began my career 25 years ago as a home health aide, and it changed how I understand care. In someone's home, you see more than medical needs. You see daily routines, challenges, and support systems. At [VNS Health](#), we look beyond a diagnosis. We ask: Is this person safe? Do they have food? Do they understand their care? Real care begins here. This work requires skill, compassion, and flexibility.

As Katherine Heubusch, Director of Clinical Operations at Elderwood IPA, which manages care for many of our Health Plan members in Western New York, says, "As a social worker and Buffalonian, it is a privilege to collaborate with members as they focus on maintaining their health and independence at

home. In this role, you are not just part of a care team — you help individuals preserve not only their health, but also their dignity and quality of life.”

Community health nursing is more than a specialty. It is a lifeline for our communities.

Partnering with a trusted network of providers, including Elderwood IPA, VNS Health offers Medicare and Medicaid health plans designed to help older New Yorkers live, age, and recover in the comfort of their homes and communities. Learn more at vnshealthplans.org.

Buffalo Healthy Living is a free monthly providing evidence-based information on health, nutrition, and fitness. Buffalo Healthy Living is read by 200,000 readers monthly in print and thousands more through online media. It is the only free full-color monthly health magazine in the region that addresses mainstream and functional health issues for people of all ages.