

HUNTINGTON NOW

Nurse Finds Rewards in Caring for Patients at Home



By Ian Rolla, October 15, 2026

Growing up in a close-knit town like Commack, as I did, you start to feel like you know all there is to know about your community, and even Suffolk County and Long Island as a whole. But today, as a new home care nurse just starting out on his career, I'm learning about the many health care needs that exist in homes across Long Island, especially among some of our most vulnerable residents.

It's an important lesson for younger generations no matter what your career is; there are so many people in need of care— that we have the power to help, and it's incredibly rewarding to provide that help.

When I envisioned a career in nursing, my first thought was of a typical nurse in a hospital. As I began nursing school, however, the type of nursing I felt drawn to looked radically different.

Knowing that I wanted to pursue a nursing specialty that was right for me, through a partnership between [VNS Health](#) and [Touro University](#), I was fortunate to receive a scholarship from VNS Health to pursue my nursing

education with a focus on home care nursing. It's been an eye-opening journey. It's the kind of nursing where you have to stay on your toes and be ready for any kind of situation.

Quite honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way. That's because as a home care nurse, you're very much the "eyes and ears" of health care, finding risks and warning signs before they become more serious and force someone into a hospital. When I started interning with the Long Island team at VNS Health and making home visits, I quickly saw how much I and other community health clinicians were needed.

On one visit, I was with my nurse preceptor, Raquel, a veteran home care nurse at VNS Health who has been caring for people across Long Island for years. We were going to the home of a patient with a brain tumor, which was daunting enough to begin with. As we took the patient's vitals and provided care to him, it quickly became clear that the patient's wife, who was his primary caregiver, was feeling really overwhelmed.

"I'm not sure what step to take moving forward, or how to take care of my own health," she told us.

Being able to take the time to listen and understand what both she and her husband were struggling with was eye-opening. We were guests in their home, but I'm grateful for the way she opened up to us, and that we could then connect her in turn with caregiver support resources, looping in others from the VNS Health team like our social worker, and ensure that she wasn't alone in looking out for her husband's care, as well as her own.

While I was in awe of the strength this woman had to care for her family, it was in her home that she was able to be vulnerable and open up to us, which is its own sign of strength.

All over Nassau and Suffolk Counties, from Long Beach to Valley Stream, and closer to home, learning the ins and outs of nursing, I met patients from all walks of life and with many different health care challenges. On any given day during my internship, I might meet a patient whose home is dark because they can't afford their electric bills, or a serious wound care recovery case, or a patient for whom we might be the only people they speak to all week.

The visits nurses and I made were about more than checking wounds or taking blood pressure or reading what was written on a form. They were just as much about the cues and signs that showed what's really going on with a patient and enabled us to get them the help they needed, both physical and mental. As I learned from Raquel and other [VNS Health](#) home care nurses, we're looking for signs that a patient is doing okay—even something as simple as checking the fridge to make sure a patient has enough groceries can tell you so much about their well-being.

For those of us entering the job market post-school, especially at the start of our careers, I think we can all relate to the anxiety around whether we're picking the right path and making the right choices for our future selves. For me, I knew that whatever shape my future took, I wanted to make a difference and help people stay healthy. That's where I've landed today, as I get ready to start as a full-time nurse with VNS Health, caring for people right in their homes across Long Island.

Oh, and if you happen to see me on the streets on the way to a home visit, don't be afraid to reach out and say, "Hello!" Because I'm not just a nurse – I'm your neighbor, too!

To learn more about careers in home care nursing, including the [VNS Health](#) and [Touro University nursing school](#) scholarships, visit www.vnshealth.org/rnscholarship.

HuntingtonNow is an independent, online newspaper, covering government and politics, the eight public school districts as well as other schools, cultural and entertainment news, business, police and justice, happenings around Huntington and Suffolk County, and human-interest stories. It reaches an approximate audience of 43,476 through their website and social media.