

May 6, 2021 – May 12, 2021

8

Health

Gratitude for Visiting Nurses on National Nurses Week

By Chandra Wilson

BEACON, May 6 – May 12, 2021 newyorkbeacon.com

May 6th through May 12th marks National Nurses Week, a time set aside to recognize the indelible impact that nurses have on our lives and our communities. In January 2021, New York State listed close to 400,000 registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nurse practitioners in the profession. Whether those nurses worked in a hospital, a doctor's office, a school, sports arena or even someone's home, it's safe to say that the past year has been a year like no other for nurses everywhere.

Home care nurses played a major role in New York City's response to the coronavirus health crisis—and they continue to do so. Frontline hospice nurses with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York cared for patients on respirators and brought family members together through smartphones when quarantine kept them apart. Behavioral health nurses helped families in crisis as the stresses of daily living escalated with job loss, remote school and work arrangements and other tensions associated with life in a pandemic. VNSNY nurses provided home care for thousands of COVID-19 positive New Yorkers as they were discharged from area hospitals—helping them recover and regain strength at home, or navigate the “long haul.”

As we celebrate National Nurses Week and National Nurses Month this year it makes sense to reflect on a few ways that home care nurses make a difference in our lives and in our communities. Here are a few insights that you might not have considered:

Nurses are educated, but they also educate. Nurses go above and beyond their standard “job description” to teach clients and caregivers how to navigate the health care system while informing them about their health care needs and how to best manage them.

Nurses are some of the stron-



gest and most resourceful people you will ever meet. Nurses adapt to a multitude of often complex and stressful situations and must assess and problem-solve quickly and effectively. Whether it's dealing with a difficult home situation, an emergency surgery in the operating room, an elderly person with no family supports, or administering wound care, nurses are some of the strongest people you will ever meet.

Nurses are the “eyes” and “ears” of physicians. Managed and home care nurses coordinate, educate and provide support for people on an ongoing basis. This means establishing trusting (and often lasting) relationships to help patients safely manage at home. A crucial component of the health care team, nurses help assess, monitor, and educate people outside of office, clinic and hospital settings, while informing doctors about health changes in real time.

Nurses aren't just people you see in hospitals. Nurses work in diverse settings. The number of nurses that work in home or community settings is growing every year. By assisting, managing and coordinating home care, nurses make it possible for people to “age in place” and remain safely in their homes and communities, avoiding hospital or nursing home stays.

Nurses provide care and support. Being a nurse is far more than just a “job.” Nurses are often present for joyous moments in people's lives as well as in times of despair. They help people make informed decisions about treatments and serve a