



More Than Just A Neighbor

By **Betsy Abraham** - August 23, 2017

Westbury nurse finds fulfillment in offering home care to patients in need

As a nurse, Marie Desil's job includes administering medicine, caring for patients' wounds and giving shots. But her role with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) allows Desil to do so much more when it comes to caring for both the physical and emotional needs of patients.

"We do just about everything," Desil said. "Depending on what our homecare patients need, in any given day, in addition to our skilled nursing services, we can end up helping isolated patients make beds, walk dogs, take out the garbage—I've even helped with plumbing."



Marie Desil provides home care for patients in Westbury, Carle Place and Old Westbury.

Desil, a Westbury resident, has been a nurse for 30 years, 18 of those with VNSNY. The nonprofit home and community-based health care

organization offers home care services, hospice care, private care services and more, providing patients individualized care right in their home.

While she got her start in a hospital setting, Desil said she made the switch to home health care to extend her knowledge and see patients from different backgrounds.

Now, Desil sees about six to seven patients each day, spending about 45 minutes to an hour with each individual. She treats patients suffering from diabetes, undergoing chemotherapy treatment and recovering from strokes, among other issues.

But more than just acting as a nurse, Desil is a caretaker. She said one thing that sets working with VNSNY apart from the hospital setting is that her role covers everything, which could include helping clean a sinkful of dishes, showering a patient, and teaching them about diet and exercise.

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“It opens the patient up when they know the nurse cares about their health. And it’s not just to take care of their wound or feeding tube, the nurse is there to take care of everything that happens,” said Desil, who said she is close to all the patients in her care. “You can’t help but get close because you’re dealing with people who have feelings and problems and you put yourself in their shoes. That could be your mother, or father, or you.”

Another factor that allows Desil to form a close bond to her patients is that they’re her neighbors. Desil’s patients all live in Westbury, Carle Place and Old Westbury, and the close proximity means it’s not unusual for her to run into her clients at the grocery store, church or around the block.

“I usually tell my patients I can roll out of my bed and be at their house,” said Desil. “It helps me especially if we have storms. When we had [Hurricane] Sandy, at the time, a lot of nurses couldn’t get to their patients, but I was able to walk to patients not too far from me and make sure they were alright. That was a big plus.”

Though it's not easy, Desil said working in home care is a rewarding profession.

"You have to have a heart for it," Desil said. "In home care we see the change [in people] and what we've done."