

Frontline Honors Award Winner: Teresa Lin, Vice President, Cultural Market Development, VNS Health



Jessica Longly, Mar 17, 2026

Teresa Lin, Vice President of Cultural Market Development at VNS Health, has been named to the [Frontline Honors Awards](#) Class of 2025 by Home Health Care News.

To become a Frontline honoree, an individual is nominated by their peers. The candidate must be:

- A dedicated, high-performing frontline worker who delivers exceptional experiences and outcomes
- A passionate worker who knows how to put their vision into for the good of their respective industry, the patients and residents they serve, and their families
- An advocate for their industry and their fellow colleagues

Home Health Care News recently caught up with Lin to discuss her time in the home health & home care industry.

HHCN: What drew you to this industry?

Lin: I've always been drawn to healthcare. My dad was a physician in Hong Kong, where I grew up, and I spent a lot of time in my father's office after school and on weekends. I watched how he cared for people, especially older adults with limited resources, and I saw how he would do everything within his power to help them. Knowing he was helping people is what gave him satisfaction, and knowing his patients were getting the support they needed. Those moments really shaped me, and in many ways I feel like I'm a living legacy to the work of my parents, carrying on that same dedication and service.

In the same way, I was drawn to VNS Health because of its 133+ year history as an organization helping those most in need remain in their homes and communities. The mission really connected with me, especially our work to serve communities that may have historically lacked access to healthcare within the broader system.

HHCN: What's a misconception you had about this work before you started – and how has reality differed?

Lin: Before joining VNS Health, I worked in a hospital setting overseeing clinics, community outreach, and provider relations. I thought I understood most aspects of healthcare delivery, but home care and hospice are very different worlds, and upon entering them, I quickly realized that there was a lot to learn.

I threw myself headfirst into getting more experience in frontline care, starting out as a volunteer with our Hospice Care program. It was intriguing because hospice was not common where I grew up. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of this work, not only for the clinicians, but for the families we serve, who may come with their own preconceptions about hospice care. Volunteering, and later returning to hospice work as a social work intern, gave me a greater appreciation for what it means to support someone at the end of their life. It's an incredibly meaningful experience that I feel privileged to be a part of. Working with hospice patients at home opened my eyes to how powerful this unique kind of care can be, but I also saw how much support families still need in navigating it.

HHCN: Was there a moment in your career when you realized, "This work really matters"? What happened?

Lin: For me, that realization came from looking closely at the New York City communities we serve. Many of our health plan members and clients are older adults who don't speak English, and who may not know what resources exist because of those barriers. Helping them understand what resources are available and what they are entitled to here, both in the broader U.S. healthcare system and through VNS Health, really became my personal mission.

When I first joined VNS Health, I oversaw our Chinatown Community Center, and that experience reinforced how essential it is to meet people where they are. It's not just about clinical services; it's about building trust, creating community, and helping people feel supported in every aspect of their lives. I have seen over the years how our programs improve accessibility and empower people to stay healthy at home, which really makes this work so meaningful to me.

HHCN: What's the most valuable skill you've developed on the front lines that people often overlook?

Lin: A holistic perspective is so important in this field! It's easy to focus on people's medical needs alone, but our communities face challenges that extend far beyond that — including language barriers, isolation, limited income, and complex systems that are difficult to navigate. Those barriers really hinder their ability to get access to the basic needs, like housing, food, transportation, that make up the building blocks of health.

Something as simple as receiving a letter in English can be overwhelming for someone who doesn't speak the language. It can even trigger a sense of fear: they might think an official-looking notice means something is wrong, when in reality it is just as likely a communication about care or support they are entitled to.

Many people we serve don't have family here to help them. They may live far away, or as people grow older and loved ones pass away, they become more isolated. That's why we aim to be their trusted partner. We want them to feel comfortable in reaching out to us, or walking into a community center and talking to our team members whenever they have a question or concern.

Understanding the whole person, not just one aspect of their care, has become an essential skill. It helps us collaborate with providers, remove barriers, and ensure that people get the support they need to stay healthy and independent.

HHCN: What's one decision leaders make that has a bigger impact on frontline workers than they might realize?

Lin: Asking questions and actively listening. It sounds simple, but it makes a tremendous difference.

Leaders should try to spend time with frontline team members, accompanying them on home visits, joining them in community settings, and seeing their work firsthand. Data and PowerPoint presentations can only tell

you so much. When you're out there with your team, you see the individuals and families behind every number. You understand the real impact of the work and the challenges that teams face daily.

With that knowledge and background, leaders can feel more confident, make better decisions, build stronger support systems, and enact policies that reflect the reality of frontline work.

HHCN: What's a simple change – policy, tool, or mindset – that would make frontline work more effective?

Lin: It is important to recognize that frontline work can be isolating, so you need to ensure team members feel supported.

When I first began making home visits independently, especially in hospice, it could feel lonely sometimes. I was fortunate to have a strong team. My SW mentor was readily available for support. Frontline workers often navigate complex situations on their own, and that independence is what draws many of us to this field. At the same time, having a strong support system, knowing that your supervisor or peers are just a phone call away, and feeling that leadership truly has your back makes all the difference.

Leaders should listen to frontline insights and act on them. The people doing the work know what's effective and what's not. Empowering them, validating their experiences, and creating channels for their voices to shape improvements can greatly strengthen the quality of care.

HHCN: What gives you optimism about the future of this industry, despite its challenges?

Lin: The need for home-based care is only going to grow as our population ages. I even find myself thinking about my own journey as I grow older, and what I would want for myself down the line!

Even with workforce challenges, I'm optimistic because technology and innovation offer real opportunities to make care more accessible and efficient. I'm particularly hopeful about advancements in language-access tools and artificial intelligence (AI). Imagine a tool that can communicate in dozens or even hundreds of languages on demand, which could remove so many barriers for diverse communities across the country.

Technology won't replace the "human touch," but it can make our work easier and allow us to focus more time on what matters most: supporting families, building relationships, and taking care of ourselves as well. With thoughtful integration of technology and continued investment in people, the future of this industry is brighter than ever.

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