

Skilled Nursing News

Frontline Honors Award Winner:

Jean Verlus, Home Care Registered Nurse, VNS Health



Jessica Longly, Mar 19, 2026

Jean Verlus, Home Care Registered Nurse (RN) at VNS Health, has been named to the [Frontline Honors Awards](#) Class of 2025 by Skilled Nursing 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

Skilled Nursing News recently caught up with Verlus to discuss his time in the skilled nursing industry.

SNN: What drew you to this industry?

Verlus: My path to nursing began when I was a child. My father became extremely sick, and as a child I felt completely helpless watching him in the hospital. He was the most important person in my life, and seeing him suffer without being able to do anything stayed with me. From that moment, I told myself, “I need to be in the health field. I need to help people so they don’t feel this helpless.”

At first, I wanted to be a doctor. Life took a different turn, but I knew I needed a career where I could make a difference wherever I went. Nursing felt right — although I must admit, at that time, I barely knew if there were any men in the profession. Still I knew, “I’m going to be a nurse.”

After I became a nurse, a friend eventually introduced me to home care while I was working in the ER. I decided to give home care a try, and I’ve been in this specialty ever since. I immediately found it fascinating, meaningful, and fulfilling, and I never left.

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

Verlus: I used to think nursing, and home care especially, would be very “cut and dried.” Do this, and get that result. Almost like a simple equation: 1+1=2. I also assumed it would be easier work than a hospital.

I learned very quickly that was not the case at all. You cannot treat a person as a “part.” You must care for the whole human being: physically, mentally, and socially. In home care, when you step into a patient’s home, you see how they live. You see their real situation. Sometimes there is no food. Sometimes there are no supplies. You cannot just walk away and leave someone like that.

This work is demanding, but it’s also rewarding in ways I never imagined. The small things you do can change someone’s life.

SNN: Was there a moment in your career when you realized, “This work really matters”? What happened?

Verlus: There have been many, but one powerful example happened quite recently to a young woman with an ileostomy who was in our care. She started experiencing skin pain because the supplies she needed hadn’t arrived, so we took action.

Her wound care specialist lived in Connecticut and drove 45 minutes, while I drove 35 minutes from the other direction so we could meet halfway and get the supplies our patient needed immediately. I didn’t leave the patient’s home that day until 7 p.m., hours after my shift ended, but seeing her relieved and comfortable made it all worth it.

As a VNS Health nurse, you do what needs to be done. That’s what nursing is all about. The gratitude she showed, the relief on her face, that’s when you know the work matters. It reminded me that sometimes the simplest intervention, or going a little out of your way, can turn a patient’s entire week (or even their life) around. Those moments stay with you.

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

Verlus: Listening. Truly listening. Not just to symptoms, but to everything a patient is telling you, directly or indirectly. You need to pay attention, show genuine concern, and prove compassion through your actions, not just your words.

Patients can tell immediately if you’re just going through the motions. Trust is earned when they see that you care enough to spend the extra minute, or even the extra hour, when it’s needed. Many times, I’ve seen nurses on our team go above and beyond to make sure that their patients had what they needed at that moment. The patient needed help. That’s what matters.

When you show people that you care, they trust you. And when they trust you, that helps them heal.

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

Verlus: One of the most impactful decisions leaders can make is to ensure that frontline nurses have the right support and equipment they need to do their job. Something as simple as a reliable tablet or a functioning communication device can make or break a visit.

I appreciate that I have worked with leaders at VNS Health who refuse to take “no” for an answer when it comes to getting clinicians what they need. When you’re already dealing with complex patient situations, the last thing you should be worrying about is whether your equipment works. Leaders who prioritize getting their clinicians the right tools and resources show us that they care.

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

Verlus: Communication. Quick, reliable communication. When you’re alone in a patient’s home and you need support, you need someone to answer you, not tomorrow or next week, but now.

I’m lucky that our VNS Health team works hard to always maintain open communication. Something as small as a manager or supervisor quickly getting back to you with, “I’ll call you right back. I’m in a meeting,” means the

world. It tells you that you're not alone. That support helps you make better decisions, helps keep patients safe, and helps clinicians feel valued. When you feel supported, you can give better care.

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

Verlus: What gives me optimism is knowing how great the need is. People today face so many health challenges: poor nutrition, lack of education, unmanaged conditions, and many other basic needs that affect health. Hospitals and nursing homes cannot possibly absorb it all. That's why there is a tremendous need for home-based care. Home care plays an essential role. Without home care, the system would collapse.

Despite the challenges, I'm optimistic because the work we do is essential, meaningful, and enduring. I love what I do. I love helping people. And I know my service will always be needed — not just for patients, but because this work allows me to take care of my own family and make a decent living. That's important, too. When clinicians feel supported and cared for, it helps them feel more fulfilled in their career, and able to do their jobs to the best of their ability.

Skilled Nursing News is a leading news publication covering the skilled nursing industry, offering reporting on policy, operations, reimbursement, staffing, and trends affecting nursing home operators. Its audience primarily includes skilled nursing executives, operators, administrators, and other long-term care industry professionals seeking industry-specific insights and analysis.