



# THE NORWICH COMMUNITY NURSE

## FOR NORWICH, VERMONT

### Norwich Community Nurse Program Annual Report for FY 2021

MISSION STATEMENT: Adopted June 6, 2019

*The mission of the non-profit community nurse of Norwich is to provide residents with health care coordination to optimize the well-being of all community members. The nurse is a resource to help fill gaps in service that may exist in the current health care system.*

#### 1. Norwich Community Nurse Operations

The Norwich Community Nurse, Inc. (NCN, Inc.) Program began as a steering committee in 2019 by several members of the Norwich Congregational Church (NCC) who recognized a need for additional health care services in concert with the local institutions and providers. The committee met for a year with the goal of hiring a community nurse who would be a resource for all Norwich residents. The Upper Valley Community Nurse Project (UVCNP) provided start-up guidance and financial support. Associated with the UVCNP were seven towns in the Upper Valley with established community nurses who helped guide the creation of the position in Norwich. In November 2019 the NCN, Inc. Program became an incorporated entity with a four-member board and two adjunct community participants. Through generous grants from the UVCNP, the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation, Inc., the Woodworth Fund of the NCC, and several private donors enough money was collected to hire a community nurse at 10 hours a week. Services are provided to Norwich residents free of charge.

Amid the COVID 19 pandemic and shut down in March 2020 the NCN, Inc. Program hired its first nurse on April 22, 2020. She left after two months citing personal reasons. After the nurse's departure board members answered questions from the community, distributed adaptive equipment and held a flu vaccination clinic in October administering doses to 28 residents.

After six months of searching, 2021 began with the hiring of a second nurse at the end of January. In addition to working 10 hours a week for the NCN, Inc. Program she also worked part-time as a nursing instructor. During the year, she had 54 client contacts: 51 were calls and emails from residents. Three people visited her in the church. She assisted Rescue Inc. in vaccinating 22 home-bound seniors for COVID 19. There were no home visits during the year. Unfortunately for the program she resigned at the end of November 2021 needing to take a full-time position at a neighboring hospital. Two board members filled in answering another 24 emails sent to the Norwich Community Nurse email account mostly asking for information about COVID testing, COVID and flu vaccines.

The NCN, Inc. board hired its third nurse on January 18, 2022. She is a 48-year veteran of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center with experience in Med/Surg, the Emergency Department, Internal Medicine and Oncology. The NCN, Inc. board looks forward to working with her and expanding its outreach this year with her.

## **2. Budget**

The NCN, Inc. Program started its first year of operation, 2020, with seed money from several charitable foundations and individual donors. By March 2020, enough funds had been collected to hire the nurse part-time. Start-up money was spent on salary, insurance, Worker's Compensation, purchase of a computer, cell phone, office supplies. The NCN, Inc. ended the first year with a net balance of \$31,708.36.

Fundraising continued in 2021 and in April a letter of appeal was sent to every household in Norwich which yielded \$17,806.88 in individual donations. The Mascoma Corporation, the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation, Inc. and the Norwich Congregational Church also generously donated funds. The Norwich Women's Club and the Lion's Club donated money to be used for the purchase of equipment and goods. Dan and Whit's, the local general store, designated the Norwich Nurse as its round-up charity for the month of July. A Pay Pal account was created providing additional funds. Total expenses for 2021 were \$23,773.51. The NCN, Inc. Program ended the year with a balance of \$35,010.72. After almost a full year of operation the board has a better understanding of the cost to run the program and will be able to fund the community nurse's position for FY2022. The annual report and budget are available on the Norwich Community Nurse website <https://norwichcommunitynurse.org> or upon request.

## **3. Goals for the future**

The NCN, Inc. Program has been the recipient of the good will and generosity of many donors in Norwich and the Upper Valley to date. However, there will need to be a continuing effort to secure funds to keep the program solvent in the long term. In addition to operational oversight, financial security and stability will be one of the board's primary areas of focus this year.

### **A. Provide direct services to Norwich residents**

The role of a community nurse includes teaching, coaching, integrating services, promoting health and wellness and educating about disease. Once the pandemic has abated and in-person contact is possible again the community nurse will visit residents in their homes. The Norwich Congregational Church has kindly allowed the nurse to meet with residents on a drop-in basis on Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. This arrangement will continue until a town office in Tracy Hall becomes available. On the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month, the nurse will be stationed at the Norwich Senior Housing Center for two hours from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm..

### **B. Fundraising**

The NCN, Inc. board will use Quality Mailing House again this year to send out an appeal letter to every household in Norwich. The time of its release is under discussion.

The NCN, Inc. board plans to request funds from the town in 2023. A plan to petition the Selectboard to place an article on the town warning for the 2022 Norwich Annual Meeting was postponed with the nurse's departure and uncertainty as to when the position would be filled.

The Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation and the Mascoma Foundation were major donors over the past two years. There are other entities in the region that are potential sources of funds. The board will ask for assistance from the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC) and Vital Communities to explore funds through ARPA and other federal and state grants.

### **C. Hire a professional strategic planner and fund raiser**

The board has entered into a preliminary discussion with a local strategic planner to help identify and implement goals. \$3,000.00 has been included in the 2022 budget to pay for her assistance. The board intends to apply for a grant from the Vermont Community Foundation to potentially cover the cost of her service.

## **4. Conclusion**

The NCN, Inc. board gratefully thanks all donors to its program: foundation, corporate and private. Norwich residents have certainly voiced support for the service through their donations. Board members routinely hear from friends and neighbors who state that they are pleased such a service exists.

The NCN, Inc. Program has faced unique challenges over the past two years. Starting a non-profit during a global pandemic was a major hurdle. Social distancing greatly reduced visibility and availability of the nurse. Communication between the Norwich community and the nurse was limited to Listserve postings, email, phone calls and word of mouth referrals. In the ideal situation the community nurse will have real presence in the town with office hours and home visits.

The vision of the NCN, Inc. board is to create a service that fills in the gaps in the current health care delivery system. The pandemic has clearly demonstrated shortcomings in the system and the need for a community nurse. The board recognizes that the need might rapidly exceed the ten hours that has been budgeted for the nurse's position. Regardless of the difficulty the NCN, Inc. Program board is committed to securing, and potentially expanding, the community nurse's role in Norwich. Its challenge is to move from a "bake sale" model of funding toward a more sustainable one.

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