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Ridgefield, Bethel and New Milford Visiting Nurse Associations (VNAs) Announce Plan to Join Forces and Expand Home Health and Hospice Services in Western Connecticut

Driven by a common commitment to deliver the highest quality health care to their patients and communities, *Bethel Visiting Nurse Association*, *New Milford Visiting Nurse & Hospice*, and *RVNAhealth*, announced plans today to merge their three organizations. The tri-union will result in a single not-for-profit, mission-driven organization, best able to meet the needs of the 36 communities they collectively serve in Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven counties, and highly sustainable for the long term. The agencies anticipate a close date by the end of 2020 and the unified organization will operate as RVNAhealth as approved by their respective Boards of Directors. This merger will make RVNAhealth one of the two largest home health and hospice organizations in Fairfield County and the seventh largest in the state of Connecticut.

The collective organization will be headquartered at the RVNAhealth building in Ridgefield, CT. The New Milford Visiting Nurse & Hospice location will serve as a fully operational branch office. Theresa Santoro, MSN, RN, CHCA, current President & Chief Executive Officer of RVNAhealth, will assume the role of President & CEO of the new organization.

The announcement reflects the mutual acceptance of a “Definitive Agreement,” the final step in a process which included extensive research, analysis, and review by the Boards of Directors of the three VNAs. “Our driving force is the health and well-being of our patients and communities – today, tomorrow, and 50 years from now,” says Santoro. “As we worked through the details of the union, and as the COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear, pooling our collective talent and resources will allow us to invest deeply in the technologies and services that our communities need to thrive, and that we as agencies need to effectively respond to future health challenges.”

The unified agency will offer:

- **Improved access** to exceptional home-based and community-based care for individuals and communities across western Connecticut, to address the increasing needs of the state’s rapidly growing aging population as well as the needs of younger families for access to quality preventative care.
- **Expanded offerings** of preventative and wellness care and educational programs across populations and communities.
- **An enhanced continuum of care** to address all ages, stages, and levels of health, including: community wellness services, home health, rehabilitation, palliative and hospice care; personal caregiving and nursing; and a range of educational and preventative programs — nutrition services; immunizations; annual flu and pneumonia vaccines; health fairs.

- **Organizational and operational benefits** — including a comprehensive and coordinated service model; a significant depth of clinical leadership and talent; ability to support the needs of all healthcare partners; flexibility to compete among payors; and long-term viability in the communities served.

According to Santoro, “All three organizations are committed to upholding their legacies, recognizing that there is strength in numbers and value in collaborating to meet today’s challenges in delivering care.

“We have all made significant investments in talent, technology, programming, and specialty services over the years to meet the needs of our communities. By sharing these resources and making future investments together, we set a stronger foundation for the future and enhance our ability to scale our services as our populations require,” continued Santoro.

Kerri Ann Brinckerhoff, MSN, RN, Chief Executive Officer, New Milford Visiting Nurse and Hospice, agrees, “Partnerships are essential to navigate the changing regulatory environment and competitive forces in home and community-based care. We have a unique opportunity to strengthen our investments to better meet the needs of referral sources — hospitals, physician practices and families. Our focus is clinical quality and long-term financial health.”

Another key aspect of the plan is supporting the organizations’ collective commitment to providing access to care in communities across western



Connecticut. “The healthcare landscape is evolving to meet the needs of our aging population, and home care will remain an essential component of high-quality care,” says Margaret Burke, MS, Executive Director, Bethel Visiting Nurse Association. “The longstanding relationships we’ve developed in our communities will be upheld through this merger — sustained by bringing greater efficiency and financial strength to our collective operations. The union will help preserve our ability to serve our current communities—and embrace new ones — for the long term.”

About the Merging Entities

For over a hundred years, the three agencies have been neighbors and collaborators — each founded on, and serving, a parallel mission in their respective communities. Over the decades, each grew — expanding their range of services, extending their territorial reach, and deepening their impact and loyalty to the patients and families they serve.

Founded in 1927, Bethel Visiting Nurse Association provides home health, rehabilitation, personal support, specialty services, and community health programs, presently serving eight towns in Fairfield and New Haven counties. New Milford Visiting Nurse and Hospice opened as the New Milford Visiting Nurse Association in 1918, during the Spanish Influenza pandemic, and now serves 18 towns in Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven counties. Services include home health, rehabilitation, palliative care, hospice, and community wellness programs. Founded in 1914 as the District Nursing Association and later becoming Ridgefield VNA, the organization evolved to RVNAhealth in 2019 to convey the breadth and depth of its home health, rehabilitation, hospice, and



extensive community health and wellness programs focused on lifelong care. RVNAhealth currently serves 28 communities in Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven counties. When united, the new RVNAhealth will serve 36 towns across Connecticut, offering a full integrated spectrum of care and wellness services to serve individuals and communities across a lifetime.

In joining forces, the three organizations are confident they can be stronger and more valuable to all those they serve – without surrendering their personal approaches or altering the deep-rooted foundations they have built in their present communities.

Please see the RVNAhealth Merger FAQ document for additional details.

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