



Community News

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.At 91 years old, the former Golden Glove boxing trainer Sr. Colon continues to follow an athletic lifestyle and a healthy diet with the help of VNSNY

.There is no place like home

.The phrase takes on a distinct poignancy for the many New York residents who require home health care to remain in independent living, where they are tended to by aides

.These health care professionals assist in the tasks of daily living, from the delicate tasks of bathing and feeding patients to the far more rigorous work of administering physical therapy

.They are the eyes and ears for the medical team that oversees the patient's care, often the first to notice when heads ache or if fever approaches

.They do so in Spanish, Creole and Russian, mindful of linguistic and cultural sensitivities

For The Visiting Nurse Service of New York, Inc. (VNSNY), founded in 1893, and the largest not-for-profit home health care organization in the United States, with a city-wide patient population of more than 131,000 and a staff that includes approximately 2,500 nurses, 650 rehabilitation therapists, 600 social workers, and 6,000 home health aides, the work is intensive, and rewarding

.Home care helps keep people out of hospitals, out of emergency rooms, and out of nursing homes. And [home] is where people prefer care," explains Judy Farrell, Director of Government Affairs of VNSNY"

.In the Bronx alone, VNSNY's total patient number was 16,572 and for Manhattan, the total number of patients served was 25,717 people in 2010

.For able-bodied patients who have been beset by short-term illness, the ability to remain in their homes while recovering is key to regaining mobility and autonomy

For others with chronic or long-term care needs, the independence afforded by living in their homes with care and supervision has been described as life- and cost- saving. Conditions requiring home health care most frequently include conditions such as diabetes, heart failure, and hypertension. Monitoring at home prevents otherwise unattended patients from leaving untreated the kinds of seemingly minor afflictions that quickly turn more serious

.Esa mujer me salvo la vida, punto [That woman saved my life, period]," says Víctor Ruiz, lauding the work of his home health aide Rosanny, who comes to stay with him in his home in Washington Heights"

.He is still visibly moved when he remembers how Rosanny sprung into action after "una gripecita" (a small cold) began to rack his body with fever and chills overnight

.It was she who noticed that his appetite had dwindled, and that he was becoming more disoriented

.Ruiz had contracted the flu, and the diabetic grandfather with a long history of infirmity could scarcely afford to simply nurse a little hot water with lemon

.Rosanny had him brought in to the hospital, where he was diagnosed and treated promptly

The New York State Association of Health Care Providers, Inc. (HCP), is a membership organization and advocacy group that represents over 500 offices of licensed home care service agencies, certified home health agencies, and hospices

With the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT)'s recent vote of approval on steep budget cuts to home care programs, HCP's members have expressed serious concern about the future of home-based care in the state

.In testimony on March 3rd at the state's Joint Budget Hearing, Bader Reynolds, HCP Board Chair, and Christine L. Johnston, HCP President, testified about the impact of the Executive Budget

.According to Johnston, the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) proposals fail to recognize the value of home care

Over 36% of the MRT cuts impact home and community-based care, yet home care is just 12% of the Medicaid system," said Johnston. "Studies show that home care saves money – plain and simple - but "cuts to home care, particularly at this level, create severe barriers to care and drive patients to higher cost settings

.All told, home care is facing over \$1 billion in cuts," said Reynolds, who is also Vice President for CareGivers, an agency that provides home care services throughout upstate New York"

.Critics of the MRT panel's decision to cut so deeply into home care charge that this approach is ultimately penny-wise but dollar-foolish

Institutionalization of patients in long-term facilities such as nursing homes has been shown to be far more expensive than home care. Additionally, for patients who remain isolated at home without care, it is not uncommon for their conditions to worsen, leading to costly urgent care hospitalizations

.And these issues are not going away

[By the year 2030, about one out of every five Americans, or 20% of the population, will be a senior citizen](#)

.Many too note that in such difficult economic times, there is a great disincentive to cutting spending precisely where the economy is destined to continue to grow: the healthcare industry

.In 2008, the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that the healthcare industry, more than any other, would generate 3.2 million new wage and salary jobs in the next decade

.Over half, or 59 percent, of these jobs are in direct care, mostly home health aides and personal care aides

.For New York State, the numbers are similarly promising

The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) of New York, a home care policy and strategy group, estimates that state employment for direct-care workers is expected to increase by more than 114,000 new positions, with home health care aides expected to account for nearly 88 percent of that new demand

.In local communities hit hard by economic troubles, this is significant news

.In the Bronx, the unemployment rate stands at 12.5 percent, more than 50% higher than the city's unemployment rate of 7.8 percent

Yet the healthcare industry accounts for more than half of the private sector jobs in the borough. Montefiore Medical Center, for example, is the largest private employer in the Bronx, and over 60 percent of its employees live in the borough

In Washington Heights, with one of the largest concentration of older and aging Hispanics relative to other community districts in Manhattan, this growth in healthcare jobs could represent a sizeable source of employment for many, particularly in light of an average 13% unemployment rate that bests the city's average of 9%

.In the Bronx, where the estimated median household income in 2009 was \$32,000, far below the city's median of \$54,000, a good job is worth its weight in gold

.For both home care aides and their patients

.Victor Ruiz would be happy to tell you that

.Ella [Rosanny] nunca me deja caer! [She never lets me fall!],” he says, grinning“

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