

At 21, Jim McDonald was on his way to becoming a professional pitcher. Local newspapers predicted a bright future for Jim. That all ended when he was diagnosed with mental illness, sending him on a decades-long search for a life of purpose. Jim now leads a productive, active life, thanks to the compassionate and professional help of the Visiting Nurse Association of the Greater Milford-Northbridge Area.

The VNA of the Greater Milford-Northbridge Area provides unparalleled health care services in the home, assisting patients on their road to regained health and independence. Our staff is licensed or certified and thoroughly screened before they conduct home visits.

To find out how the Milford VNA can provide care for you or a loved one, call 508-473-0862.



Visiting Nurse Association of the  
Greater Milford-Northbridge Area

[www.milfordregional.org/milfordvna](http://www.milfordregional.org/milfordvna)

At 21, James McDonald, Jr. was on his way to becoming a professional pitcher. His athleticism earned him a baseball scholarship at Old Dominion University in Virginia. And the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* published a spread extolling his talents, predicting a bright future.

That all ended when, in his early 20s, Jim's thoughts began to become confused. His supportive family got him help right away and he was diagnosed with mental illness. The combination of his jumbled thoughts, the medication he took to control those thoughts and his hospitalizations made it impossible to continue playing baseball or remain in college.

In effect, Jim's life came to a halt. He began a twenty-year journey to find medication that would help with his illness and to carve out a life of purpose. Now 49, Jim is living that life thanks to medication, his positive outlook on life and help from the Visiting Nurse Association of the Greater Milford-Northbridge Area (Milford VNA).

The Milford VNA's mental health nursing team came into Jim's life ten years ago. Laura Sheldon, Jim's current mental health nurse, works closely with Jim's physician to monitor his medication. Laura visits every two weeks to administer his medication through injection. While she is there, Laura checks Jim's vital signs and helps him control his recently-

diagnosed diabetes. In addition, because Laura is a trained mental health registered nurse, she is able to access Jim's levels of emotional feelings. "Sometimes I have bad days," confided Jim, "and Laura works with me to try to process my feelings."

Laura's biweekly visits have helped Jim plan a life of accomplishments. He is able to drive and works at the University of Massachusetts Medical School part-time. Through a program at the medical school, Jim conducts sensitivity training at police departments as far away as Florida. He talks about his own experience with mental illness and educates law enforcement professionals to understand that people who are mentally ill aren't dishonest or bad. Jim has an associate's degree from Quinsigamond Community College and was recently accepted into a continuing education program for criminal justice.

"If it weren't for the Milford VNA, I wouldn't be doing as well," says Jim. "The Milford VNA has gotten me better. Without them, I wouldn't be living a productive and rewarding life."



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