



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Making The South Shore A Better Place

Community Spotlight:

**Q&A with Renee McInnes,
CEO of NVNA and Hospice**



Renee McInnes, CEO, NVNA & Hospice

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your journey? What inspired you to pursue a healthcare career, and what brought you to NVNA and Hospice?

A: I've always been passionate about health, wellness, and prevention. That passion led me to nursing school, where I initially planned to go into pediatrics. But right after graduation, I began working in cardiac care, then intensive care. I found myself deeply interested in caring for patients with chronic and serious illnesses, particularly those with heart disease.

Over time, I also became drawn to the role of the community in supporting people's health, which brought me to community and home health care. When I returned to school to complete my bachelor's degree, I chose to major in sociology and social work since hospital-based nursing programs did not offer a major at the time. That educational background helped deepen my understanding of treating both the patient and their family holistically.

Working in home health was a natural fit for me and something I consider both a privilege and an honor, which is why I joined NVNA and Hospice in 2010 and returned in 2015 after spending time in the hospital setting as a case manager. There, I was able to see both sides of the continuum through planning care for patients transitioning out of acute care. That perspective was invaluable as I came back to home health.

I had previously worked with the leadership team at NVNA and Hospice and transitioned into the CEO role in 2016. I feel incredibly grateful to lead an organization so committed to compassionate, community-based care.

Q: How has NVNA and Hospice evolved under your leadership?

A: When you're an independent nonprofit home health and hospice organization that is not part of a larger system, you must be innovative and progressive to remain viable and sustainable. Since I stepped into leadership, we have embraced that spirit. We focus relentlessly on excellence in patient care and employee support. We have grown substantially from a hospice census of 25 to 270 patients, and our home health program now supports over 750 patients daily, bringing us to a daily census of 1,100. We have expanded our palliative care program, working with community healthcare partners to improve quality of life and reduce hospitalizations. And our philanthropy program has grown exponentially, culminating in a five-year \$20 million capital campaign that is already at \$9.4 million in its second year.

Q: What makes NVNA and Hospice unique in how it serves South Shore families?

A: We are deeply embedded in the South Shore community, serving 27 towns, and our care reflects that.

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We operate the Pat Roche Hospice Home, a 12-bed hospice residence and the first in the region. Our commitment to employee development and patient care translates into consistent 5-star ratings in both patient satisfaction and quality. We're also the only provider in the area offering primary palliative care in the home. Our philanthropic efforts are another differentiator; we've built a robust program that enables us to expand access and innovate in ways others can't.



Pat Roche Hospice Home

Q: How do hospice care, home health, and funeral services like Keohane's align in supporting families?

A: They're tightly connected. Hospice and funeral care both deal with very emotional transitions. Families often aren't prepared for the logistics or emotional toll of end-of-life care. That's why early conversations and planning are so important. We involve the whole care team — nurses, social workers, chaplains, home health aides — to support patients and families. We encourage early planning, including selecting a funeral home, to reduce stress when the time comes. I experienced this personally with Keohane when my mother passed, and their compassion and guidance made all the difference.

Q: Do your hospice teams and funeral directors often collaborate?

A: Yes. When patients begin hospice or palliative care, we ask about funeral plans. If none exist, we help guide families. Our nurses work directly with funeral homes like Keohane, especially at the time of passing. These relationships are vital because families often feel overwhelmed and need trusted experts to lean on. We see our role as not only providing care but also helping prepare and ease the journey for families.

Q: How does Keohane's approach align with NVNA and Hospice's values?

A: Keohane shares our commitment to excellence, compassion, and community. They give back, collaborate, and prioritize personalized care. That shared community-first mindset makes them a valuable partner. They're involved with the local Chamber and broader healthcare ecosystem, and Dennis Keohane has been a member of our Charitable Fund Board of Trustees since 2019.

Q: What advice would you give to families facing end-of-life decisions?

A: Start the conversation early. Talk to your family and your doctor about your wishes, even if you're young and healthy. Planning ahead for hospice care, funeral arrangements, and everything in between makes a huge difference for your loved ones. If you're managing a serious illness, ask to speak with a palliative care team. You don't need to wait for a crisis to get the support you deserve. Our navigator program helps families understand their options at any stage of the journey. Having those conversations before you need them brings peace of mind to everyone involved.

Q: What are you most proud of at NVNA and Hospice today?

A: The care we deliver. None of our growth would be possible without our dedicated colleagues. I'm incredibly proud of our ability to expand access and ensure more people on the South Shore receive the quality care they deserve. Our culture of excellence extends from patient outcomes to employee satisfaction.

Q: What does serving the South Shore community mean to you personally?

A: It means everything. Our team lives here, works here, and cares deeply about the people here. We know that without an organization like ours, there would be a major gap in care. We collaborate with hospitals, physicians, and businesses across the region. We're also very focused on broader issues like affordable housing and workforce development, because they directly affect our ability to serve. It's about more than healthcare; it's about investing in the entire region.

Q: What exciting initiatives are ahead?

A: We're working on new payer models, especially with commercial and Medicare Advantage plans, to improve sustainability. We have ambitious growth goals, aiming to reach a daily census of 1,800 by 2028. And, of course, we are in the middle of rebranding and continuing our capital campaign. It's a busy and transformative time.

Renee McInnes, MBA, RN, is the CEO of NVNA and Hospice, serving the South Shore with a mission grounded in Care, Trust, and Heart.

Learn more at [NVNA.org](https://www.nvna.org)

BLOG HIGHLIGHT:

After Goodbye



How to Support a Grieving Loved One After the Mourning Period Ends

Grief doesn't follow a timeline. While society often places an invisible deadline on mourning — expecting people to return to “normal” after the funeral, memorial service, or a few months — it's rarely that simple. The reality is that loss lingers, often in quiet and unseen ways. If you have a loved one who has lost someone, your support remains just as important in the weeks, months, and even years after the immediate mourning period.

Here are meaningful ways to support a grieving friend or family member long after the funeral ends:

Understand That Grief Doesn't Have an Expiration Date

After the formal mourning period ends, many people assume their grieving loved one is “doing better.” However, grief doesn't disappear — it evolves. Special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays can resurface painful emotions, sometimes even more intensely than right after the loss. Instead of expecting them to have “moved on,” recognize that grief is a lifelong process. Giving your loved ones all the time they need to adjust to the shifting dynamics of their lives can be a powerful message. Let them know it's okay to still talk about their loved one and you would be honored to hear about their cherished memories and/or emerging challenges. Check in regularly, even months later, to see how they're feeling and acknowledge their feelings. Help them celebrate and observe any milestones or anniversaries related to the person they lost.

Continue to Offer Practical Help

Immediately following a loss, many people receive an outpouring of support including meals,

childcare, and housework help. But over time, those offers dwindle, even though the person may still be struggling. They may be dealing with emotional exhaustion, financial stress, or even day-to-day life tasks that feel overwhelming.

This is a great opportunity to help someone reenter the everyday world after a loss. Offer specific, tangible help, like running errands or preparing a meal. If they have children, offer to babysit or take over carpool. Ask if they'd like you to provide some insight on sorting out financial or legal matters if they're still dealing with paperwork related to their loss.

Keep Their Loved One's Memory Alive

One of the biggest fears for many grieving people is that their loved one will be forgotten. As time passes, people may avoid bringing up their name, thinking it will upset the bereaved. In reality, many grieving individuals find comfort in knowing that others remember their lost loved one.

Remind someone experiencing grief that while a loved one is gone, they are never forgotten. Reinforce this level of comfort by sharing a memory or story about their loved one. Send a text or card on significant dates, like the anniversary of their passing, not everything has to be formal, it's just nice to be remembered. Donating to a charity in their loved one's honor is also a beautiful gesture.

Be There on the Hard Days

Grief has no set pattern. Your loved one may seem okay one day and deeply sorrowful the next. Certain days such as the first birthday without their loved one, can be especially difficult.

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Loneliness is often one of the hardest aspects of long-term grief. Ask ahead about upcoming tough dates and offer to spend time with them. You can plan something meaningful for significant days, whether it's lighting a candle in remembrance or simply sharing a meal. It's important to be patient and let them express their feelings without rushing them to feel better.

Encourage Professional Support, If Needed

While grief is a natural process, prolonged or intense grief that interferes with daily life might require professional help. Some people feel hesitant to seek therapy or grief counseling, especially long after the loss. If you notice they are struggling significantly, gently encourage them to seek additional support.

Admitting you need professional help and taking steps to secure it can be overwhelming. Offer to help the bereaved find a grief counselor or support group. Normalize seeking help by sharing positive experiences with therapy if you have any. Most importantly, let them know that getting support isn't a sign of weakness, but a way to heal.

Respect Their Unique Grieving Process

No two people grieve the same way. Some may need to talk about their loss often, while others

may process it more privately. Some find healing in work or new hobbies, while others need solitude. The key is to support them in whatever way feels right for them.

Ask how your loved one prefers to be supported rather than assuming. It's imperative to avoid phrases like "You should be over it by now" or "At least they lived a long life" as this can come off as invalidating their feelings. No matter what, accept their way of grieving, even if it looks different from yours.

Final Thoughts: Love That Lasts Beyond Goodbye

Grief doesn't end when the world stops sending sympathy cards. Your continued support — whether it's a simple text, an invitation for coffee, or just listening without judgment — can make a profound difference in someone's healing journey. By showing up long after the funeral flowers have wilted, you're offering the greatest gift: the reassurance that love, care, and remembrance don't fade with time. And remember, the Keohane team will assist you with grief support whenever you need — reach out to us anytime for help.

Even after goodbye, your presence can remind them that they are not alone.

KEOHANE IN THE COMMUNITY

To best serve our communities, we need to actively support them.

We are proud to sponsor these local organizations, among others:



**Saint Albert the Great &
Saint Francis Xavier Collaborative**



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

At Keohane Funeral Home, our people are at the heart of everything we do. Today, we're proud to spotlight Margaux Bettencourt, a dedicated Funeral Director who brings compassion, professionalism, and integrity to every family she serves.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I'm originally from New England. I grew up in Dover, New Hampshire, and later in Norfolk, Massachusetts. I've lived in the Boston area — either in the city or in Quincy — for most of my adult life. My husband and I moved to Marina Bay about 13 years ago, and just recently, about a month ago, we moved into a home in Houghs Neck. So, we've been Quincy residents for quite a while now. That long connection to Quincy is one of the reasons why the Keohane name stood out to me. I was already familiar with its reputation and had visited a few times, so it felt like a natural fit when I was looking for a place I wanted to work.

Q: How long have you been with Keohane Funeral Home?

A: I've been with the company for coming up on three years now. I started out as an apprentice, which was a bit of an unconventional path for me since this is my second career. I was in my early 40s when I approached John about the opportunity, and from the very beginning, he was incredibly supportive and willing to help guide me through what it would take to get started.

I told him, "Even if I can't work here, could you tell me what I need to do to pursue this kind of work?" And he did. He walked me through the steps. But more than that, he made me feel included and taken care of, even before I was officially part of the team.

That experience really stuck with me. To feel that supported when I wasn't even an employee yet made me think, "If this is how they treat someone who just wants to work here, imagine how they treat the families they serve." It made me even more confident that this was where I wanted to be.

Q: What inspired you to become a Funeral Director?

A: I've always been interested in this field, even from a young age, but as life often does, it led me in different directions for a while. Before becoming a funeral director and mortician, I had a couple of other careers. They were great experiences, and funny enough, John Keohane once told me, "The careers you've had have prepared you perfectly for this work." Honestly, I think he was right.



Margaux Bettencourt, Funeral Director

The timing felt right when I finally made the transition, and I'm so glad I did. That said, I do sometimes wish I had done it sooner because I truly love my job. I say it all the time: I absolutely love what I do, and I genuinely love working for Keohane. It's rare to find work that feels so meaningful, and I feel fortunate to be doing something I care so deeply about.

Q: What does a typical day look like for you?

A: Honestly, no two days are ever the same. You might walk in expecting one thing, and the entire day takes a different turn. That's the nature of this work — you must be ready for the unexpected, because that's really what the job is all about: being there for people in moments they didn't plan for.

Sometimes people walk through the door needing help, and you weren't expecting them — but you show up for them anyway. That's how I approach each day. Sure, I have a calendar and a general plan, but I try to stay flexible and focus on simply being there for whoever needs support whether it's a family, a coworker, or someone just looking for guidance.

That unpredictability is one of the things I love most about the job. You're not just sitting behind a desk all day. You're up, you're moving, you're connecting with people, and you're making a difference.

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There's something deeply rewarding about not knowing exactly where you'll be needed, but knowing that, wherever it is, you're helping someone.

Q: What does success look like to you in this work?

A: I mean, sure there's all the formal stuff, like positive survey results and feedback, and I understand why that matters. It's important. But for me, success shows up in the little human moments. When a family member hugs me or takes my hand and says they feel like they've known me forever, or that they couldn't have gotten through it without me — that's what stays with me.

It's those small, powerful moments of eye contact, or quiet connection, that mean the most. They're completely real and altruistic. Those are the things I carry with me long after the day is done.

Q: How would you describe the culture at Keohane Funeral Home?

A: It's accepting, progressive, and truly a team environment. Everyone is willing to help one another no matter what. If you're looking to work somewhere that's still a genuinely family-run business, this is it. The family is not only present but deeply involved and focused on all the right things.

There's a real sense of shared purpose here. People show up because they care about the work, each other, and most importantly, the families we serve. It makes coming to work every day easier, because you know you're walking into an environment where your coworkers genuinely want to support you and work together toward the same goal: giving families the best experience possible during some of their hardest moments.

And it's not just talk, we're all willing to go the extra mile, to give our time and energy, because we believe in what we do. That shared commitment is what makes the culture at Keohane so special.

Q: What's one thing you wish more people knew about the funeral profession?

A: That it's not about death. It's about transition. Yes, we're here to honor and care for the person who has passed, but just as importantly, we're here to help their loved ones through that transition as well. That's really the heart of what we do. It's not just about someone dying — it's about guiding families through an incredibly difficult time with compassion, support, and dignity. We're here to help them begin to heal.

Q: Any memorable moments that stand out during your time here?

A: There was a gentleman who had been a beloved high school basketball coach in his town. He was known for always wearing his off-white Converse sneakers, those classic, old-school basketball shoes. It was part of who he was.

His wake was huge. He had ten children, and the turnout from the community was overwhelming. We ended up holding it at the church instead of the funeral home to accommodate everyone. And in a beautiful tribute, all his children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and beyond wore Converse sneakers to honor him.

The next day, for the funeral, I made a quiet decision. Instead of wearing the standard dress shoes with my suit, I showed up in my own pair of Converse. I didn't tell the family I was going to do it. But when they saw me walk in, fully suited with those sneakers and they all started crying, saying, "We can't believe you did that."

It was such a small gesture, but to them, it meant everything. In that moment, I wasn't just a funeral director. I was someone who saw their grief, understood what mattered to them, and honored it. I was part of their family for that moment. And that's what this work is about: being present, being human, and stepping outside the box when it means something deeply personal to the people you're serving.

Q: What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

A: Life is simple these days, and honestly, I'm grateful for that. I used to have a much more colorful, fast-paced lifestyle, but I've found a lot of peace in the quiet and the meaningful.

My husband is everything to me. He's a three-time cancer survivor and was the one who really encouraged me to follow my dream of becoming a funeral director. He's supported me every step of the way, and I wouldn't be here without him. We also share our lives with our dog, Miss Olivia, she's a 110-pound sweetheart we lovingly call the "freight train of love." She's full of energy and affection and keeps us on our toes. I have a wonderful family. My parents, my sister, we're all very close and supportive of one another. And there's some exciting news: my stepdaughter is expecting a baby in July, so I'm going to be a grandma soon which feels weird, but also incredibly special.

Outside of work and family, I'm a huge sports fan. I don't even listen to music in the car. I'm all about sports radio. In particular, I have a passion for all things Formula One racing.

Talking to Loved Ones About Their Final Wishes:

A Compassionate Approach to Advance Planning



Having a conversation about final wishes can feel difficult and emotional, but it's an important step toward ensuring peace of mind for both you and your aging loved ones. At Keohane Funeral Home & Cremation, we believe in the power of advance planning by providing families with the opportunity to make thoughtful decisions and relieve future burdens.

Addressing your loved one's wishes for their final arrangements is not only a way to respect their preferences, but also a meaningful act of care and love. By engaging in this conversation early on, families can avoid unnecessary stress during a time of grief and make decisions that truly reflect the desires of the person who has passed.

How to Start the Conversation

Approach with Sensitivity and Understanding

Recognize that this is a topic that may bring up a lot of emotions, both for you and your loved one. It's important to approach the conversation with empathy. Choose a quiet, calm moment where everyone feels comfortable, and let them know that the purpose of the conversation is to ensure their wishes are honored and to bring peace of mind.

Make It About Their Comfort, Not Your Fears

Express that your main goal is to ensure they have control over their

unique transition and that their wishes will be respected. This isn't about making your preferences known, but about honoring theirs.

Focus on the Benefits of Advance Planning

Explain that by having a plan in place, they can avoid leaving decisions to family members during a difficult time. Talk about the practical benefits, such as preventing family disagreements or confusion. Emphasize that having everything settled ahead of time makes the process smooth for everyone involved.

Use Clear and Respectful Language

Instead of rushing through the conversation, give your loved one the space to voice their thoughts and feelings. Use gentle, clear language to explain options for funeral arrangements, cremation vs. burial, and the importance of having advance directives.

Addressing Key Topics

Funeral Planning

When discussing funeral arrangements, be sure to consider all available options. Whether your loved one desires a traditional service, a more personalized memorial, or a simple gathering, it's important to listen to their preferences.

"Keohane Funeral Home was excellent. We have used their services for many years and they have always been amazing. I couldn't have asked for anything better."

- Christine L

"Everything with Keohane Funeral Home went well. This amazing aftercare service definitely made up for the struggles I had."

- Mary S

"We have been using McDonald Keohane Funeral Home for a long time. They always do a fantastic job."

- Amber M

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By making these choices ahead of time, families can avoid the emotional difficulty of making decisions under pressure.

Cremation vs. Burial

One of the most common decisions families face is whether to opt for cremation or burial. It's helpful to approach this subject with an open mind and a clear understanding of your loved one's values, beliefs, and preferences. Some people may prefer cremation for its simplicity, cost-effectiveness, or environmental reasons, while others may lean toward burial for tradition or cultural beliefs. Offer the facts and let your loved one lead the discussion.

Advance Directives

In addition to funeral plans, having a conversation about healthcare directives and power of attorney is crucial. These legal documents outline the care a person wants (or doesn't want) if they become unable to make decisions for themselves. While these may seem like heavy topics, they are invaluable for ensuring your loved one's wishes are respected.

Reassure and Encourage Open Communication

Make sure your loved one knows they don't have to make all the decisions at once. Let them know that planning ahead can be a gradual process and that you're there to help. Encourage them to revisit their plans over time, as preferences and circumstances may change.

Offer the option of speaking with a professional, such as a funeral director, who can guide them through the process of advance planning and answer any questions they may have.

At Keohane Funeral & Cremation, we understand that talking about final wishes can be emotionally challenging. However, we also know that these conversations are an essential part of ensuring peace of mind for everyone involved. Planning is a gift that offers clarity, reduces stress, and ensures that your loved one's preferences are honored.

By having an open, compassionate conversation about their final wishes, you are not only supporting your aging loved one, but also creating a foundation for your family to navigate a difficult time with understanding and care. If you need assistance or would like to learn more about the advance planning process, please reach out to us. We're here to help guide you every step of the way.

START YOUR ADVANCED PLANNING JOURNEY

keohane.com/advance-planning



"McDonald Keohane was great. We've always used them and they're always very helpful. Their assistance with the obituary was appreciated. We would definitely recommend them."

- Linda H

"McDonald Keohane Funeral Home was excellent. They did such a good job. Everything went smoothly and the team was great!"

- Patricia M

"Frank Maggiore and his team did an excellent job. They all were professional, compassionate, and knowledgeable. I highly recommend their services. Thank you for the Aftercare service checklist. This went above and beyond what I expected. "

- Sergio O