



On the Frontlines of DCV Member Care

By Jeanne Downing

Being on the Village Care Committee (VCC) has been an eye-opening experience in the best sense. What does the committee do? DCV executive director, **Eva M. Lucero** is seemingly able to move heaven and earth when members call in distress. She often turns to the expertise of DCV's Case Management Team: our health care navigator, **Lee Reed** and social worker, **Meaghan McMahon**, as well as experienced DCV volunteers able to address mundane health issues as well as crises. Some of the stories shared in VCC meetings took my breath away. Yet few members know what the Village does and can do when we are most vulnerable. Let me share some of these stories:

After a health crisis, a member is sent—without preparation—to the hospital and then a rehab facility

After suffering a fall in his apartment, a Villager living alone was rushed to the hospital. Upon discharge and based on concern for his safety, the hospital made the judgment that he could not return home alone. He was transferred to a rehab facility. All of these life changes happened so quickly that only once in the facility was it clear that this Villager had no legal or healthcare plans in place for such a transition. The Village's Health Care Navigator and social worker — together with his family in Texas — worked on health proxies, Power of Attorneys and a roadmap for making critical long-term care decisions. After substantial efforts, this Villager is now reconnected with family and in a safe environment where he is receiving the care he needs.

While in the hospital, a member is unable to get the care she needs and deserves

A longtime DCV member fell seriously ill and was hospitalized. When a Village volunteer who happened to have medical training visited, the volunteer was shocked by how badly our member was being cared for. She had not been properly cleaned, and her pain was through the roof — all due to the lack of hospital staff. As a medical professional herself, our volunteer was able to navigate the system and advocate for this member — pressing hospital staff to address her pain, improve her hygiene, and treat our member with the respect she deserved. This experience was proof of the essential role a healthcare navigator can play in

advocating for members in the hospital. In 2023, DCV hired its first professional (non-volunteer) Health Care Navigator. On numerous occasions, she has been able to ensure that our members are cared for when faced with a medical crisis.

A villager with multiple health problems struggled with understanding her doctors' complex medical advice

A Villager explained the difficulty of living alone with no family nearby to lean on when health problems arise, especially when these health issues begin to snowball with no sign of abating. This Villager said that "without the love and support of the DCV, I simply don't know what I would have done or how I would have had the strength to keep on trying to get better." It was so important for me to have someone to go with me to the doctor's: to take notes, to help me understand the doctor's medical lingo and to fight on my behalf when I wasn't getting what I needed. This was the support I got from the Village.