



Dear <<SALUTATION>>,
It was an honor to receive an Award of Excellence in Clinical Practice at the 2026 APTA conference in California. Your support keeps us going!
— Todd and Allyson

Dear Friend,

About a week ago, I made a mistake.

My name is Todd Burnett, I'm a Physical Therapist (PT) at Cornerstone VNA (CVNA), and I know better than to show my face in the office. If I'm spotted, someone is bound to rope me into one of their above-and-beyond ideas. When I arrived for my morning meeting, I thought I'd be able to sneak a coffee from our kitchen. No sooner did I put the lid on my cup and in walks Erika, our Director of Advancement! Before I could protest, she'd convinced me to write a letter to you about the impact of our specialty programs.

We offer several wonderful specialty services at CVNA. As I specialize in *Lymphedema Management and Wound Care*, I'll speak to those. It is rare for a PT to have either of these specializations. Let alone both. And so, the most frequent question we get about lymphedema is, "Why hasn't anyone been able to manage this before?"

There are many reasons.

To illustrate, I'd like to invite you into a visit that I had with "Mike." I open the door and hear him yell, "Come on back, I can't get to the door." I traverse through the kitchen to find Mike seated in his recliner. He tells me, "Glad to see you, I've been unable to get up since yesterday. This diaper that I have on my wound exploded."

Being open minded, I ask, "What's with the diaper?" He proceeds to tell me that he's seen many specialists and he's tried everything. "No matter what anyone does, my wound always comes back. They tell me, 'Sorry, we've done all we can.' When I use the absorbent pads they gave me, I end up with a puddle on the floor. These adult briefs are the only things that absorb enough of the fluid leaking from my wound."

"Mike, you're in luck. I happen to be one of the few PTs that specialize in this kind of care. CVNA has a combined lymphedema and wound management program; we can easily contain that drainage." Naturally, he asks, "Why am I just hearing about this? I've been too embarrassed to leave my house for months."

Well Mike, here's why.

Through a lot of hard work and with support from CVNA, my co-worker Allyson Alexander and I learned to solve these problems. To serve the need, we've built a program from the ground up. Until CVNA developed the service, there were no combined lymphedema and wound programs.

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Clearly there is a need, why aren't there more of you doing it?

Well, PTs go to school for seven years, we need a doctorate. It was another few years combined to obtain these specialties. In total, my training took ten years.

But you must make so much money!

I explain: In 2020, the average debt of a graduating PT was \$142,000, and the typical starting salary in NH for a new grad was \$67,000. Most PTs are pretty broke. Also, specialty training is expensive. All things considered, my specialty training cost almost \$10,000.

How could you afford it?

"Well Mike, I couldn't. It was only possible because CVNA supported me." "I see," he says, "CVNA must be making a lot of money on this then!" I replied, "Not really. Nearly every patient cared for with lymphedema and wounds is at a financial loss, insurance reimbursement is insufficient. CVNA supported my certifications with funding from donors."

If it's at a loss, what good are the specialties then?

"Well, CVNA is setting the standard, and our leadership took a risk. We put people over profit and are willing to serve where service is needed." I explain to Mike that when we combine care, the wounds that many have had for years can heal within weeks to months.

"Something unique to CVNA is that your wound care is performed during the PT visit. This eliminates the need for a nurse's visit, freeing them to address other needs. Both mitigating costs and improving access to care."

We know how to manage lymphedema long term, ensuring wounds don't come back. We are experts in wound products and know which to use and when. The wounds we manage have fewer complications, fewer infections, and are less painful.

Most importantly, we restore dignity. Our patients are isolated and marginalized. Frequently ignored, left desperate and without hope. When a person is told that their wound won't heal, they believe it, and it doesn't heal. Confined to their home, they feel that their community has forgotten them. Even abandoned them. At CVNA we can't and won't accept this reality for our community. But this problem must be addressed by the entire community. And **YOU** can make a difference. Specialty offerings like lymphedema and wound management only remain sustainable through the generosity of your GIFT!

With a heartfelt THANK YOU,

Todd Burnett

Allyson Alexander PT, DPT

Todd Burnett, PT, DPT, CLT, WCC and Allyson Alexander, PT, DPT, CLT, WCC
Lymphedema and Wound Management Coordinators

You've convinced me, how can I help?

Your gift will support **all our specialty services**, but here are examples of how donor support helps programs such as lymphedema and wound care:

- ♥ \$60 – Provide a patient with a skin care/hygiene kit.
- ♥ \$100 – Provide a patient with a supply of clean socks
- ♥ \$300 – Provide a patient with one basic lymphedema garment
- ♥ \$1000 – Provide a patient with one month's worth of wound care supplies
- ♥ \$5000 – Sponsor one clinician to get specialty certified
- ♥ \$10000 – Offset the cost of specialty pumps and/or custom garments

Ready to help?

To support our specialty programs visit cornerstonevna.org/donate or scan the QR code below.

