



Bud Nelson of Albany walks on a regular basis to help him live with severe emphysema.

A second chance

Albany man credits class for helping him live with chronic illness

By Ian Rollins
For the Democrat-Herald

Bud Nelson, 84, didn't think he had a lot of time left. Suffering from severe emphysema and with a poor prognosis from his physician, he didn't know where to turn.

"The doctors I had seen had given up on me," said Nelson, of Albany. "They knew they'd gone as far as they could. They advised me that I had very little time left."

But then Nelson saw a newspaper article about Living Well with Chronic Conditions, a free six-week workshop presented by Samaritan Health Services and its community partners. Class leaders from Samaritan hold the workshop several times a year throughout the mid-valley.

"I went for a meeting, and it was the best thing I ever did," Nelson said. "I really learned how emphysema and my other conditions worked."

The workshop teaches people with chronic conditions to manage them and get the most out of their lives. People with emphysema, high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic pain, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or just about any other condition are welcome to sign up.

Developed at Stanford University School of Medicine, the workshop teaches participants to:

- n Find better ways of dealing with pain and fatigue
- n Discover easy exercises to help improve or maintain strength and energy
- n Learn the appropriate use of medications
- n Improve nutrition
- n Talk effectively with family, friends and health professionals
- n Understand new treatment choices
- n Feel better about life

In Nelson's case, he learned that his emphysema kept his lungs from completely emptying unless he breathed the right way. "I learned to purse my lips like I'm going to whistle," he said. "That empties my lungs out and I can breathe a lot better."

Armed with this knowledge, Nelson can now breathe without the aid of an oxygen tank or inhalers. He is also seeing a Samaritan-affiliated physician now who is treating his condition more aggressively.

Nelson first took the workshop in 2007 and again in 2008. Carole Kment, who leads the workshops for Samaritan, said she's noticed a major difference in Nelson since she first met him.

"He felt like he was going to die that week; now he thinks he can live to 100," she said. "His face is clearer and he has a much brighter outlook."

Kment said she has many success stories like Nelson's. "A lot of my patients will write letters to their doctors, asking them to refer more patients to the program."

Nelson said he wouldn't think twice about encouraging someone to take a Living Well workshop. "You'll feel much better, and you'll find out how to live with your disease," he said.

Ian Rollins is the public relations coordinator for the Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital.

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