

Elder Services

Maine's Office of Elder Services has recently received a \$200,000 ARRA grant to expand the offering of **Living Well for Better Health** in Central and Southern Maine. The ARRA grant is administered by MaineHealth's Partnership for Healthy Aging in coordination with Southern Maine Agency on Aging and SpectrumGenerations. **Living Well for Better Health** is a six-week program for people with a chronic health condition. The goal of the program is to help participants discover how to manage their own health to gain the best possible lifestyle. Outcomes include improvements in health self-reported health outcomes improved self-rated health, self-management, and improvements in hospital and emergency department use.

Living Well sessions are held in physician's offices, community settings and senior centers and last for 2 ½ hours each. Adults of all ages, as well as those who support them, attend the program together in groups of 8-15 people. The program is offered under a license from Stanford University. Workshop lay eaders are trained by certified Master Trainers. Each group is facilitated by two trained lay leaders, one or both of whom have a chronic health issue.

For more information: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oes/healthychoices/living_well.shtml or call Southern Maine Agency on Aging at 1-800-427-7411.

Link to Volunteer Lay Leader Story:

Making a Come Back: A new volunteer role fills a personal need while helping others

With Priscilla Platt's sparkling eyes, glowing complexion and vivacious manner you might assume that she hasn't a health care concern in the world. And, you'd be wrong. Just three years into remission from cancer, Platt never knows when the aftereffects of extensive radiation and chemotherapy will demand immediate attention for a new or existing medical problem.

Before her diagnosis, Platt was a librarian, first at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor, then at all levels in public schools. Throughout her career she loved teaching and coaching people as they gained the knowledge to find the resources and answers they needed. After her cancer diagnosis Platt took a year off to complete treatment. She credits eHope for helping her organize the wonderful people who wanted to help her and credits that support team for nurturing her and helping her get back on her feet. Though her cancer went into remission, Platt made the difficult decision not to return to her librarian position in a K-5th grade school. Realizing that working with young children requires a high level of energy all day long, she didn't want to give all her energy away and at the end of the day, have none left for herself.

Still, Platt thought of herself as a healthy person who is naturally energetic. As she got better, she became restless. "I had spent the first year writing, working through the emotions associated with the illness, facing mortality and retirement, which meant the loss of my work

community. I got to the point where I needed to do something that would integrate well with my needs and put me in a new work-like role.”

As a long-time hospice volunteer, Priscilla discussed her desire to find a new role with Kathy Lewis, the Volunteer Director for Hospice of Southern Maine. Lewis thought that Platt would be a terrific lay leader for the Living Well with Better Health Program and put her in touch with Anne Murray at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging.

“I jumped at the chance,” says Platt, who now regularly teaches the six-week Living Well workshop for adults living with long-term health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic pain (see sidebar). The workshop helps participants learn healthy ways to take care of themselves and to feel more in control of their situation.

Platt considers the program to be “rather brilliant” in the way that it is put together. “It is very exciting when it works, and I have seen it work,” she says. Participants tell her that they have skills they can use throughout the week along with specific goals and an action plan. “It is hugely satisfying to hear people say, ‘Thank you, this is what I needed. This was great!’”

Of course, admits Platt, modeling the healthy skills as a volunteer leader “keeps me honest and doing what I need to do for my own health.”

In addition to teaching workshops, Platt has also become a Master Trainer, certified to train new workshop leaders.

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Provided courtesy of Senior News, Southern Maine Agency on Aging.