



A newsletter about the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative across the State of Tennessee.

# Tomorrow Starts Today



February 2015

## Members of Kingsport Victory Center Celebrate Success

By Julie Fann, Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach

Whether it was increasing their level of physical activity or watching their portion sizes, members of the Victory Center in Kingsport, Tenn. celebrated their success at the end of a Well Body workshop they attended for six weeks.

"I even bought a treadmill and will be walking a lot more now at home," said Andrew G.

Eleven members received graduation certificates for attending at least three workshop sessions.

"I've changed my diet completely. I eat plenty of fruits and vegetables now, and cottage cheese and yogurt too," said Larry W., who also shared his artwork with members.

Everyone enjoyed chicken and broccoli casserole and fruit for lunch and, afterward, played cornhole indoors, spending time getting to know each other better.

During the six weeks, every member completed a weekly action plan that challenged them to work toward a wellness goal by taking small steps. For some, this led to pounds lost as well as greater awareness of what habits lead to a healthy body.

Staff are looking forward to future workshops at the Kingsport Victory Center so they can see even greater improvement in the physical health of their clients.

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## Fruits and Vegetables and Paintings... Oh My!

Larry W., who is a member of Frontier Health's Victory Center in Kingsport, TN, and an artist in his spare time, holds up paintings of Captain Jack Sparrow and his ship during a graduation celebration for a *My Health, My Choice, My Life* workshop.

# Walking Away the Pounds

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee  
Peer Wellness Coach

There is a movement developing at Enrichment House, a peer support center in Gallatin, that's leading to some serious, positive cultural change.

Director Effie Cates is leading a regular walking group there (participants include Effie, April Waters, Paul Smith and Tina Carden) that is keeping members motivated. They've been using *Walk Away the Pounds* videos as an instruction tool.

For the past two months, Enrichment House members have been walking four times a week. Effie and April walk at the center in the morning before going on van routes to pick up members. Paul and Tina walk with them after lunch. This new walking culture is building a much healthier environment.

April owns the videos and brings them to the center to share with other members. She loves to walk, so she recruited some of her peers to join her in her routine. After the second week of walking, she said she felt like her quality of sleep had improved. She also reported feeling a lot more peaceful. She described it as a "happy-go-lucky" feeling, one that helps her deal better with work-related stress.

She also loves dancing, so she's planning to incorporate a salsa dancing video into the routine at the center to add some variety.

April recruited Paul Smith one month ago to join the walking group. He said that after a week of walking he began to really enjoy it. Paul isn't able to participate in the early morning walk, so he bought his own video and is walking more at home.

In the beginning, Paul said he could only complete the one-mile walk. Now that his energy level has increased, he's able to walk a mile-and-a-half. He's also lost two pounds since he started walking.

Tina joined the group because she also enjoys walking and doesn't have a good place to do it where she lives.



Tina Carden, Effie Cates, April Waters, and Paul Smith sit outside to cool off after their afternoon walk at the Enrichment House Peer Support Center in Gallatin, TN.

"I feel like I have more energy during the day after we are done," she said, adding that since she joined the group she can walk longer without needing to stop to catch her breath.

Members have also incorporated devices like resistance bands and small dumb-bells into walking to activate upper body muscles and make the workout a full-body physical activity. As a wellness coach, I reminded them that if they don't have access to those tools they can use their imagination and just include what is readily available to them, like bottles of water and cans of food.

I've also encouraged them to remember that a walking routine needs to be changed periodically so that it will stay challenging and not become a bore.

After leading a CDSMP workshop at Enrichment House, I bought another version of the *Walk Away the Pounds* video as a door prize, offering members another option as they move, literally and figuratively, into the future.

# This Shining Star Learned that Wellness Is a Journey, Not a Destination

By Leanne Crawford, Cherokee Health Systems Wellness Coach

In the summer of 2012, William completed the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) workshop at Cherokee Health Systems and became more conscious of his eating habits, the need to change those habits, and the need to exercise more.

There was just one barrier keeping him from being able to make those positive changes. At that time, William was living at a group home where the staff prepared all meals for the people who reside there.

In the summer of 2013, William was diagnosed with high cholesterol after already developing high blood pressure several years before that time. By the fall of 2013, he weighed 226 pounds.

At the beginning of March, 2014, William said, “The group home where I was living changed into a supportive living facility. That meant that I was responsible for preparing and buying my own foods.” William finally had control over his diet and nutrition.

In June 2014, William attended the Diabetes Self- Management Program (DSMP) workshop as part of the Health Recovery Program that he attends two days per week at Cherokee Health Systems. He attended all six sessions.

William said he started reading nutrition labels to determine if the food was a healthy choice or not.

“In the fall of 2013 I weighed 226 pounds, and as a result of eating better I lost 20 pounds by June 2014. And in that same period, my bad cholesterol level dropped, and my blood pressure, which had been high for years,

dropped to a normal pressure,” William said.

Due to his successful weight loss and lowered blood pressure, William’s primary care physician stopped prescribing blood pressure medicine and reduced his daily dosage of cholesterol medicine also.

Since that time, William has completed the six-week Well Body Program, again with perfect attendance. He is committed to his health and understands that living a healthy lifestyle is a journey, not a destination.

He is the definition of a true role model for all of his peers. William is definitely a shining star.



William, a Cherokee Health Systems client, has lost an entire shirt size since taking the Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP) workshop through *My Health, My Choice, My Life*. He hasn’t been able to wear a size medium in more than five years. Keep up the awesome work, William!

# Do You Need A Nature Prescription?

By Mark Bresee, East Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

Walking in a park, hiking in the woods, lying on grass watching the clouds, picking or planting flowers, wading in a creek, playing in the yard with your dog, fishing at the lake ... these and countless other activities that bring us in contact with nature provide opportunities for improving our lives in a surprising number of ways.

“The benefits of nature for both body and soul are finding their way to the prescription pad as more health care providers are telling their patients to take a hike – literally.”

Health care providers are also giving their patients ‘nature prescriptions’ to help treat a variety of medical conditions, from post-cancer fatigue to obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes.” says author Carol Sorgen, a WebMD.com contributor. Health professionals sometimes call it “ecotherapy” or “green therapy.” Yes, it has a name and the list of potential nature-contact benefits is impressive.

1. **Nature can help improve your mood.** Scientists in England discovered that depression goes down in 71% of those who take a walk in nature.<sup>1</sup> The same study found a walk in the mall decreased depression in 45% of participants, but it also increased depression in 22%.
2. **Nature can help prevent mental and physical illness.** It is impossible to predict exactly who will eventually become sick, but in one study 69% of those at high risk for emotional disorders said they benefited from gardening and other environmental activities.<sup>1</sup> Evidence is mounting that nature-contact helps prevent physical illness as well.<sup>1</sup>



This walking track and park located in Athens, TN, is a great place to be in nature!

3. **Nature can help save money.** Paul Farmer, chief executive of *Mind*, said, “Our research shows people commissioning mental health services and social care that a holistic treatment like ecotherapy delivers not only health benefits, but wider social benefits and cost savings that medication could not.”<sup>1</sup>
4. **Nature can help boost your energy.** A study published in 2010 in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* showed that spending just 20 minutes outside per day could boost energy levels. For example, women who are recovering from breast cancer often feel fatigued. Some doctors are now prescribing time in nature to help reduce fatigue.
5. **Nature can help children.** Being in nature isn’t considered optional by some, who call it *Nature Deficit Disorder*.<sup>1</sup> Not only do we see benefits engaging with nature, we see problems when we don’t. Obesity, ADD, and Type 2 Diabetes strike children more and more because they are outside less and less.<sup>1</sup>

Counselor Eric Marlowe Garrison sums up the positives of outdoor activity saying, “There’s a world of benefit to being out in nature.”<sup>viii</sup>

## References:

<sup>1</sup> *Benefits Of Ecotherapy: Being In Nature Fights Depression, Improves Mental Health And Well-Being*; Medical Daily, by Lecia Bushak; <http://www.medicaldaily.com/benefits-ecotherapy-being-nature-fights-depression-improves-mental-health-and-well-being-261075#.VMpcKEjr5gQ>

<sup>1</sup> *Benefits of Ecotherapy.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Last Child In the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv

<sup>1</sup> *Last Child in the Woods.*

<sup>1</sup> *Benefits of Ecotherapy*

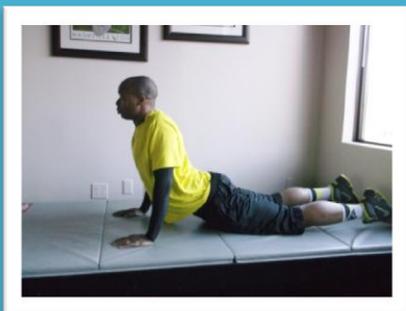
# Donald's Moves of the Month

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

For those who have ever experienced back pain or stiffness, according to Physical Therapist, Eric Roberson, practicing these three moves for five minutes can help eliminate muscle spasms that flare up around the spine.

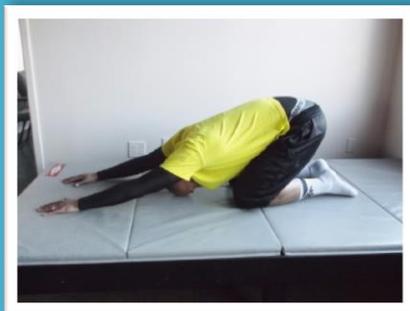
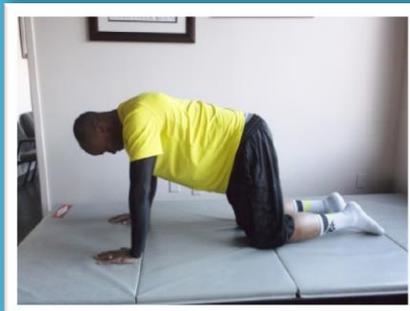
## Modified Cobra

Begin by lying face down on the floor. Place your hands firmly on the ground, just beyond your shoulders. Then, slowly lift your torso. Your back will be slightly extended. Look down to keep your neck safely aligned with your spine. Hold for 15 seconds.



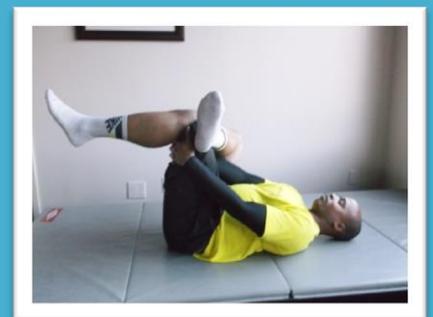
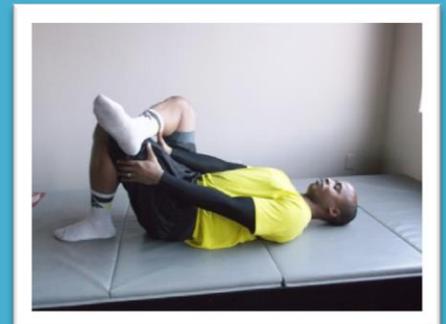
## Child's Pose

Begin on your hands and knees, then sit back so that your rear-end rests on your heels. Then reach your hands forward to lengthen your spine. You will feel a gentle stretch in the middle and lower back. Hold for 15 seconds.



## Piriformis Stretch

Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent. Cross your right leg over your left leg. Pull your left thigh slowly toward your chest until you feel a gentle pull in your rear-end and hip area. Hold for 20 seconds, then repeat with legs reversed.



Look for the next issue where Donald will teach stretches helping with stiff neck, tense shoulders, and even headaches!

# Twenty-One Pounds Lost, and Counting!

By James Pincham, Ridgeview Peer Wellness Coach

Cathy J. has lost 21 pounds since Christmas Eve and has made major changes in her health habits due to her participation in *My Health, My Choice, My Life* programs.

Diagnosed with a multitude of health problems including lupus, major depression, anxiety, sleep apnea and diabetes, she had a heart attack in November, 2014. During her hospitalization, doctors told her if she expected to live she would need to lose weight, control her diabetes and be much more physically active. Hearing those words motivated Cathy to change.

She enrolled in a Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP) workshop where she learned how to read nutrition labels, plan healthy meals and engage in regular physical activity to control her diabetes. At first, she walked two-to-three times a week for about 15 minutes. Today, she walks approximately two hours a day, nearly seven days a week. She even walks to her place of worship instead of driving, which takes almost one hour.

When she shops for groceries, she now parks her car in the most remote section of the store parking lot. She typically buys six bags of groceries at a time, so she carries three bags on each arm. On at least five out of seven days, Cathy also wears five-pound weights on each leg. And she regularly watches videos on YouTube for exercise and stretching ideas.

After receiving the healthy eating guidelines handout in her DSMP class, Cathy now knows how important it is to stay well hydrated. As soon as she wakes up every morning, she drinks two eight-ounce glasses of water.

She now says that, for her, healthy eating is cheaper than eating out and estimates that she saves about \$30 a week eating a healthy diet at home. Her doctor has now reduced her medications from nine to four prescriptions. The last time she visited him, he told her that her blood panel didn't need to be monitored as frequently and that her spine, formerly weak, has gotten stronger.

Taking the DSMP workshop has motivated Cathy to be more physically active than she has been in years, and she now feels like she has more control over her illnesses. During the Christmas holiday she worked hard to control her portions too. "I feel like a spring chicken now, and if I can lose more weight I'll be able to do almost anything!" she said.

One of her greatest successes is not craving junk food anymore. When she started weaning herself off of it, she ate only half of a doughnut or half of a candy bar instead of eating the whole thing. "It was the hardest habit to break," she said, comparing it to a kind of grieving process almost like losing a loved one. Junk food had been her best friend.



Since taking a Diabetes Self-Management workshop through *My Health, My Choice, My Life*, Cathy J. has lost 21 pounds and is working to lose 30 more. She has experienced a great reduction in symptoms related to multiple physical and mental health problems.

"Sometimes I would lay a healthy food and some type of junk food side by side on the table and debate about which one I would eat. I had to tell myself, 'I don't need this. It isn't healthy'."

Healthy eating combined with physical activity have profoundly impacted her mental health too. She's less depressed and happier. She has far more energy. She can concentrate better and so she remembers to take her medicine regularly. Her overall memory has dramatically improved.

Cathy wants to share her story as often as she can to help motivate others who struggle with multiple physical and mental health problems.

## “I Think My Ankle May Be Broken!”

By Febe Wallace and Stella Melton

Cherokee Health Systems



You know that feeling. Your body is suddenly moving in a direction you didn't mean to go. You realize it's happening, but gravity isn't being your friend, and you can't change your direction. You can't get your balance back. Then you collide with a hard surface, and you are aware of pain in a wrist or elbow or ankle or knee. You have experienced a fall.

We might think that only elderly people or those who are physically ill are at risk for falls. It's true that those groups are at increased risk, but anyone can have a fall that results in serious harm.

In our primary care practice at Cherokee Health Systems in Morristown we regularly see people who fall and get injured. Some of these falls result in broken bones or other serious injuries. Serious head injuries can occur if the fall includes a person's head striking a piece of furniture or the floor.

We can't prevent all falls. But we can take some action steps to reduce the risk. Some prevention strategies are about our environment, and others are about our own behaviors. Here are some fall prevention tips:

- Look around your home for things that can cause trips or slips; remove obstacles as needed.
- Make it a serious goal to de-clutter your living space.
- Beware of throw rugs or loose flooring or carpet; repair problem flooring.

- Check your stair railings and make sure stairs are well lit; consider adding peel-and-stick non-skid tread strips.
- Clean up any spills promptly, and use a mat at your doorway to catch drips when you enter in rainy weather.
- Check your outside steps and railings for damage or weakness.
- Use ice-melt when outdoor surfaces are slick with ice.
- Whenever possible, wear footwear that is stable, has a non-skid sole, and fits well.
- Be cautious about fall risks in the bathroom; add non-skid mats and grab bars if needed.
- Use a nightlight in halls and bathrooms – anywhere you might need to be up at night. Keep a flashlight near your bed in case of power outage.
- Learn if any of your medications may cause dizziness. If so, use extra caution in getting up from a bed or chair. Rise slowly and give yourself time to get your balance before standing.
- Get regular exercise that will help maintain strength and balance. Ask your Peer Wellness Coach for examples of exercises that can help with this.
- If you have vision problems, get evaluation and treatment if possible. Seeing better can help prevent falls.
- Use a cane or walker if you are unsteady on your feet.
- Make use of handrails and grab bars. (They aren't just for looks!)
- Use extra caution when climbing (to hang curtains, move boxes to the attic, etc.), and try to postpone it until someone else is with you for backup.

If you have experienced falls in the past, please discuss this with your primary care provider. You can work together to evaluate your individual needs and situation. This can help you develop a plan to reduce your particular risk for injury from falls.

*Febe Wallace MD is the Director of Primary Care Services at Cherokee Health Systems. Stella Melton LPN, BA, CPRP is a nurse who coordinates Cherokee's Psychosocial Day Programs.*

As Peer Wellness Coaches, our goal is to help the individuals we encounter to develop healthier, better-rounded versions of themselves. Following the eight dimensional model designed by Dr. Peggy Swarbrick in New Jersey, we see that financial, spiritual, environmental, physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and occupational factors all play a role if we are to be well.

Within the workshops offered by the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative, physical wellness is discussed thoroughly. We don't have expectations that people will become CrossFit instructors or the next Jillian Michaels. Rather, we emphasize starting where you are and then working toward a desired goal. For Clinton Brown, making one simple change made a huge impact.

Clinton, a member of the Comfort Center in Lexington, Tenn., decided to completely quit drinking soft drinks when the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) workshop started in October 2014. Since he made that change, Clinton has lost 35 pounds and no longer has to take a prescribed sleeping medication.

Also, he's no longer required to take insulin shots and only needs to take his daily prescribed medication. His doctor attributes all of these improvements to the simple change of cutting out soft drinks.

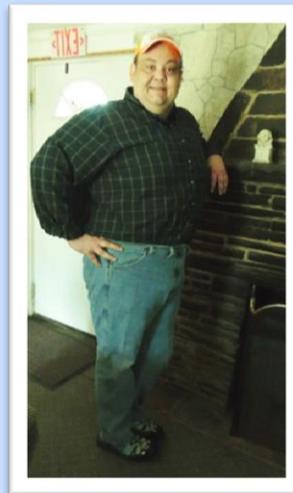
When asked what motivated him to make the change, Clinton stated that he had been having issues with kidney stones. His doctors had made it clear that soft drinks were a huge contributing factor, and change needed to be made.

## Small Changes Lead to Big Results

By Lindsey Johnson, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

"Action plans helped me quit drinking sodas. I wasn't even aware that there was such a thing before Lindsey came, and now I do them in my head about a lot of things. Everyone should incorporate action plans into their daily lives," Clinton said.

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team applauds the success of Clinton and many others like him across the state of Tennessee! We see from stories like his that small changes really can lead to big results!



Clinton, a member of the Comfort Center in Lexington, TN has lost 35 pounds from cutting soft drinks out of his diet! Way to go Clinton!



### Lemon Velvet Supreme: Learn to Make It!

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups vanilla yogurt, fat free
- 3 tablespoons instant lemon-pudding mix
- 8 squares of graham crackers, crushed
- 1 4-ounce can of mandarin oranges, drained

#### Directions

1. Combine vanilla yogurt and pudding mix, gently stir together
2. Layer bottom of serving dish with crushed graham crackers
3. Pour pudding mixture over cracker crumbs
4. Top with mandarin orange slices

# One-on-One Coaching: Helping Others Find Their Strength

By Donald Williams, Middle Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

I recently finished leading my first eight-weeks of one-on-one coaching as a peer wellness coach at “Our Place” Peer Support center in Murfreesboro. Members who signed up for it had recently completed a Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) workshop with me, so I had sort of become acquainted with them.

The experience taught me what a great opportunity wellness coaching provides me to really get to know members and help them find their inner strength.

One member, Gerald D., chose to participate in coaching because he wanted to continue to improve his fitness, especially the health of his heart. Gerald suffers from neuropathy, so he struggles with balance and often feels unsteady on his feet.

During our initial session, he said his father had a heart attack at age 60 and he doesn’t want the same thing to happen to him. Improving the overall health of his heart was very important to him.

After completing his first goal of walking twice a week, Gerald talked about wanting to improve muscle strength, so we started incorporating strengthening activities into his routine. He said he enjoyed the physical activity I led during the CDSMP workshop using a deck of cards.

So, I designed a routine for Gerald using moves to strengthen the upper and lower body. After a couple weeks of coaching, he said he could feel the strength of his legs improving and was also sleeping better because he had decreased his caffeine consumption too. He was feeling relaxed and rested. He even said, “If it’s not challenging, it’s not worth doing.”

Gerald has never walked on the path designed for walking that leads to his peer support center; he doesn’t even know where it leads to, but he told me he has a goal of one day going for a walk there.

Another client, Nancy Mae, began wellness coaching with a desire to start walking regularly. After her first coaching session, though, the weather got colder and prevented her from completing her first action plan. Upset, she was determined to accomplish her next one, which gave us an opportunity to discuss ways she could increase physical activity inside during the winter months.

She told me she had been experiencing tightness in the back of her legs, so she designed her own routine that consisted of stretching and doing jumping jacks before going to bed. The next week, she was so proud of having achieved her goal she couldn’t wait to find me and tell me about it. She was so excited about her success.

After following that routine for a couple of weeks, Nancy said she could feel her body getting stronger. She hopes to begin jogging one day soon.

I have learned so much about motivating others to pursue a healthier mind and body through my initial experience assisting clients during one-on-one peer wellness coaching. Helping people access their own strengths is really rewarding, and I’m looking forward to recruiting my next group of coachees.



Nancy Mae, after not being physically active, recently began a walking routine during her one-on-one work with Nashville’s Peer Wellness Coach Donald Williams. She hopes one day to start jogging.

## Wellness Word Search!



Activity	Routine
Aerobics	Stretching
Balance	Walking
Fitness	Water
Gymnasium	Weights
Health	Wellness
Moderation	Yoga

## Welcome New Peer Wellness Coach Allison Harwell!

Allison Harwell joined the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team in December 2014, as a West TN Peer Wellness Coach, joining Lindsey Johnson serving the western part of the state.

Allison graduated from Union University, located in Jackson, Tenn., in December 2013, with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology and minors in health education and human studies.

During college, she enjoyed working at a local elementary school, babysitting, volunteering in her church nursery and spending time with her husband.

She developed a passion for helping others while working at an assisted living facility during high school. Before becoming a Peer Wellness Coach, Allison was employed as a case manager at a local mental health facility where she enjoyed serving children and adult populations.

Allison is excited to continue her education about holistic health and to have the opportunity to share information with others through the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative. Welcome, Allison! We're excited to have you on board!

