

Living Well: Chronic Disease Self-Management

"Chronic diseases are like wolves, they travel in packs" is the phrase used by Sharon Johnson, Associate Professor with the Oregon State University Extension Service. It explains why OSU Extension and over thirty local organizations have collaborated to assure that Stanford University's evidence-based chronic disease self-management programs are available to aging adults throughout southern Oregon.

The Rogue Valley Council of Governments' Senior and Disability Services holds the license to offer the six-session educational series. Recognition of the potential power of disease self-management education is attributed to Don Bruland, long-time Director of Senior and Disability Services and an unswerving advocate for innovative approaches to meeting the health-related needs of aging adults. Each six-session disease self-management series, which is available in Spanish and English, is provided by a pair of volunteer program leaders trained in the highly-structured Stanford approach. Over sixty individuals are certified Living Well Program Lay Leaders. The **Gordon Elwood Foundation** helped launch the program in late 2005 with a \$10,000 seed-grant.

Grant-funding from several sources has followed. The "Living Well" program is now fully integrated into the service delivery system in the Rogue Valley. The classes are organized and delivered under the able oversight of Bernadette Maziariski, Registration Coordinator and Master Trainer. Hundreds of individuals with chronic conditions like diabetes, heart problems, arthritis and osteoporosis complete the series each year. Improvements in self-efficacy and life-enhancing behavior changes are consistently in evidence.

In the words of two Living Well workshop participants:



Laura and Charles Furrey

"This program has given me the confidence that I can have a future worth living. I have learned there are people like me, not living life to the fullest because of a chronic condition and that we can move forward. Great people teaching us to live again." -- *Laura Furrey*

"I learned a great deal that I could use to help myself." -- *Charles Furrey*

For more information, visit Living Well on the Web at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/livingwell/index.shtml>