

CHIP Project Chehalis, WA

CHIP Improves Seniors' Health

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A group of 18 seniors who live at Woodland Estates Retirement Center in Chehalis, claim they are reversing chronic disease with fork and knife. Together, they have started a food and exercise program that they say normalizes blood pressure, reduces their cholesterol and triglycerides, stabilizes their blood sugar levels and will help them to lose weight.

How It Started

Commonly referred to as CHIP, the program's real name is Coronary Health Improvement Project. It was begun in 1988 by Dr. Hans Diehl, a lifestyle interventionist who directs the Lifestyle Medicine Institute in Loma Linda, California. CHIP was brought to Woodland Estates last fall by Glen Colburn, director of the retirement center.

"I took the class myself so that I could offer it to the residents," Colburn said. "I'm slim, and I run over 2,000 miles a year. Therefore, I didn't think that I needed the program, personally. But when I started following the "Optimal Diet" as outlined by the CHIP program, I lowered my cholesterol from 175 to 140 mg% within four weeks."

Fibromyalgia

Kathy Clark, food service director at the Woodland Estates, took the class with Colburn. Diagnosed with fibromyalgia four years ago, she suffered from chronic fatigue and sleeplessness. "I took the program thinking it might be a tempo-

rary fix for me that might give me a little bit of relief," she said. "But now I'm really feeling good again. My stamina is back. I sleep well, and I have lost 25 pounds."

Clark says that she is off Prozac and other medications she was on. "It's a program that heals you from the inside out," she added with obvious enthusiasm.

Group Results

After Colburn and Clark completed their four-week CHIP class with what they felt were remarkable results, they held a meeting at Woodland Estates for the residents. They were told that a new program would be offered at the facility for those who wished to partake of it, namely an exercise program combined with a high-fiber, natural food diet. Some 24 people signed up for the CHIP menu, which the kitchen now prepares along with its regular fare.

"A few participants have dropped out," Colburn said. "But that's to be expected with any program. People think, 'I don't really need this,' so they stop. Then their blood pressure goes back up, and they start gaining weight, and pretty soon they come back and get on the program again. It's just human nature."

Roger Wadell, one Woodland Estates resident, lost 10 pounds in four weeks. Then he went off the program. He returned to it three weeks later because, "I gained weight and wasn't feeling good," he said. His wife, Dorothy, lost six pounds as well as a chronic rash when she began the program. "Of course, I stuck with the program

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because nothing else has ever given me that relief!" she said.

Rosco and Ruby Perry, also residents, say their high blood pressures returned to normal pressure and their physician was able to cut their medica-

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tions in half. “You should have seen my husband! He was so happy when he was completely taken off his medications he had been on for more than 30 years.”

Resident Eleanor Jensen’s cholesterol levels came down 32 points, and resident Edna Schmidt says that her eyesight has improved.

The CHIP Program

CHIP classes are offered in many cities in North America through certified CHIP facilitators who usually meet Mondays through Thursday, for two hours each evening for four weeks. While the 16 videotaped lectures by Dr. Hans Diehl represent the signature item of this comprehensive and intensive educational program, interactive services are provided, such as personalized counseling, nightly

question & answer sessions with dietitians, physicians and nurses, all designed to provide a better understanding why lifestyle changes are of critical concern for disease prevention and reversal. For skill development, special sessions in menu planning and recipe preparations, cooking demonstrations, food sampling, cooking practice and the availability of cookbooks and workbooks as well as actual shopping tours to local groceries and health food stores are all designed to make the program a practical one. Once the intensive educational phase is completed, the group meets on a regular basis to reinforce their lifestyle as graduates and alumni.

Global Yet Local

While the CHIP program has been offered on most continents, according to Colburn, “Chehalis is the first place in Southwest Washington to teach this innovative program. We feel very fortunate.”

“CHIP is a lifestyle intervention program that is predicated on the notion that 60-70% of our illnesses and our health is determined by choices that we make from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year,” according to Dr. Diehl, CHIP founder. “Modern medicine all too often finds itself trapped in that it is very poorly suited to deal with lifestyle-related diseases, considering that the average office visit allows for only nine minutes of interaction with the physician. CHIP provides not only 40 hours of education and understanding, but it also represents a wonderful support structure which, again, facilitates learning and the maintenance of a healthier and better lifestyle. It is this lifestyle that when practiced with understanding that can not only prevent most of our Western killer diseases, but it can actually reverse most of them, and all too often, within short periods of time.”

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