

CHANGE is Good



Mrs. Hattie Blythe has been taking care of people her entire life. She not only has taken care of her husband of 43 years, 3 children and 9 grandchildren, but she also worked in a nursing home for many years.

Mrs. Blythe is also a survivor. She's overcome leukemia and a heart attack, as well as her husband's illness which led him to move into a nursing home a few years ago.

All these changes could be overwhelming to many, but to Mrs. Blythe, it was an inspiration to become healthier and stronger.

"My goal is to be a role model for my family," she said. "I need to be healthy to be able to keep taking care of people. When your health is good, age doesn't have anything to do with what you do; if you're fit to do it, you can do it."

She first heard about the CHANGE program at a cancer survivor's luncheon at her church, but didn't live in the area where the project was recruiting participants. Mrs. Blythe's questions and interest in the program led to a phone call from the community health worker a few days later, and she enrolled in the program. She said just being offered the program and taking advantage of it was important first step.

"It's important to know that there's somebody out there that's concerned about the people," she said. "They have a program that would help to enhance our lives if they would take the opportunity. If she hadn't had the information that day, I would never have known. Just knowing it's possible is the main thing, to know that somebody cares about you."

CHANGE teaches participants about how to incorporate heart-healthy foods and exercise into their lifestyles. Mrs. Blythe said learning about which foods were healthy for her and how to make small changes led her to weight loss and better health.

"I learned what's healthy for me, it's ok to try things and get a taste, but you can't consume it more than the healthy stuff," she said. "Fix it up in a different way, and you'll see changes come eventually. I had clothes I couldn't even wear, and now I can button the blouse up and you do feel better, you really do. It takes work, but you will feel better about yourself."

Mrs. Blythe said learning about how to replace salt with other seasonings was important in her health changes. She also learned to enjoy walking for exercise.

"At first I really wasn't interested in going out for a walk; I was doing other things around the house. I know cutting the grass, pushing the lawn mower was walking, too. But walking and thinking was good for your mental health, too. When you walk, you can just feel free and take time to look at the sky and look around. Getting motivation is good. Get up and go do, and enjoy what you're doing."

All these healthy changes have led Mrs. Blythe to take up a new mantra, which combines her new perspective and her deep faith in God.

"My slogan now is I'm going to live until I die. Worry, stress, give it to Him, and He'll take care of it. Life is a journey and you have to do it day to day."

Mrs. Hattie Blythe was a participant in the CHANGE project in 2017. She lives in Woodland, NC.