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A publication of

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Gratitude, Growth, and Good Health

By Andi Waisman, M.Ed.

Andi Waisman

Changes in federal and state funding have required LifePath to adjust to urgent pressures by reducing program offerings. Unfortunately, LifePath's Healthy Living Program, which has provided support and education for those in our community living with chronic conditions for over 15 years,

has been discontinued. As the former Healthy Living Program Director, I want to take this opportunity to thank those who have participated in building this prevention-focused program and I want to share a short list of healthy living resources that we can all continue to utilize for our own health education.

A special thank you to LifePath's community partners: Highland Valley Elder Services, Access Care Partners, the YMCA of Holyoke, the YMCA of Franklin County, Caring Health Center in Springfield, Hilltown Health Center, Springfield College, and AgeSpan, our regional hub. You may contact these sources in the upcoming months to connect to existing Healthy Living programming that is available across the state. AgeSpan, located in Merrimack Valley, publicizes all the statewide workshops on their website: <https://healthyliving4me.org/workshop-schedule/>.

For over 15 years, LifePath's Healthy Living Program reached over a thousand community members with Healthy Living Workshops that offered the information, motivation, and support needed to make lifestyle changes; that shared knowledge and practices about how to manage control over our health; and that built bridges, breaking social isolation among many confronting chronic health conditions. Participants shared the following comments about the impact LifePath's Healthy Living Program has had on their lives:

- *"This program gave me the general understanding that I am not alone with my infirmities. I am mobile, even if less so, and for this I am grateful."*
- *"I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn along with you, and like you, I have learned a lot about remaining active and hopeful as we age."*
- *"The classes I took launched me into several other community programs. I like to talk to people who are in the same boat as I am. I met some really great people. I am still in touch with several of them."*
- *"Just the other day, sitting in my car before a visit with a medical specialist I'd never met before, I got myself centered and reached into my toolbox. I made friends with my difficult emotions, reviewed my goals for the visit, and fine-tuned my communication skills before going into the office. I know from conversations with other Healthy Living leaders that we all find ourselves needing and using the skills we teach."*
- *"I watched how, chart by chart and section by section, a group of relative strangers became a caring community. Even when we had to move to Zoom!"*
- *"I just wanted to say that the Healthy Living classes gave me hope through the participants and leaders, through the readings and exercises. The action plans and setting a small goal taught me to get a little out of my*

comfort zone and try new things even with my chronic pain. Setting a goal and being held accountable for it, somewhat, taught me to get out of my head and forget about the pain for a while and actually use my body and move more. Another highlight is when I heard of the other participant's successes!! I am so thankful and grateful that LifePath offered these wonderful and resourceful classes!!"

- *"I want to talk about what the Healthy Living workshops I took on Zoom through LifePath did for me. They changed my life. I really learned how to get healthier. Instead of just thinking about what I should do, they showed me how to do it! They are all so well done! I eat better, exercise more, and have a better attitude about what I can do because of them."*
- *"Small groups and really great teachers like those at LifePath make all the difference in this world for people who are [disabled]. I made some friends from the group. I got inspired to get healthier and that journey will never end. It prepared me for going through cancer and never giving up!"*

LifePath wants to thank all the Healthy Living Program participants. Thank you for your generosity to help others, and your curiosity and commitment to improve your health. And a special thank you to the many amazing volunteer leaders, coaches, and seminar presenters who shared their talent and passion to make LifePath's Healthy Living Program possible over the years. You generously gave wisdom, compassion, vulnerability, humor, and hope to program participants.

LifePath would also like to acknowledge our community partners who include the Councils on Aging, medical providers, YMCAs, and human social service providers who referred participants, and promoted and hosted workshops. We are grateful for your collaborative efforts over the years to make these programs possible in Franklin County & the North Quabbin Area.

We are confident that you, our community members, will be able to find alternative programming in support of your ongoing health education needs. LifePath staff are available to provide resources and make referrals as necessary, or visit the LifePath website (<https://lifepathma.org/>) where information abounds about local resources.

And here are some additional sources of support:

- Councils on Aging and Senior Centers and the growing Villages movement throughout Franklin County & the North Quabbin area offer essential resources in promoting healthy aging by offering diverse programs and services that keep older adults active, eating well, managing chronic conditions, and staying socially connected: <https://lifepathma.org/resources/councils-on-aging-senior-centers-and-villages/>
- The Massachusetts Council on Aging, under the Healthy Aging and Nutrition tab where statewide programming is advertised: <https://mcoonline.org/healthy-aging/>
- YMCAs offer many health education opportunities as well as exercise classes: Franklin County YMCA, <https://your-y.org/> Athol YMCA, <https://ymcaathol.org/>

No matter what happens, choose to stay well and to be well. Good health is a precious thing that none of us should take for granted. Prevention is the key to long-term, healthy well-being. I will miss you all.

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