

CHIP Program helps guide local residents through lifestyle changes

By Stacy Green
For The Chieftain

Stephanie Williams of Joseph had been eating pretty healthful, avoiding processed foods and white bread and staying physically active. The same could not be said of her husband, Bob. For Bob, grabbing a quick candy bar or some potato chips as a snack was pretty common. Making time for exercise was a struggle.

Les and GG Johnson had a freezer full of meat — beef, elk, deer — and enjoyed hearty meals. Overweight and out of shape, their doctor warned them changes would have to be made or more severe health consequences would follow.

Ted and Sharon Hays had tried all kinds of different diets, but inevitably Ted went back to eating the way he had always eaten — poorly.

On the recommendation of their doctors, Bob Williams (with Stephanie as his support person), Les and GG, and Ted and Sharon signed up for one of the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) sessions. Skeptical at first and dreading the idea of cutting out foods they loved, they nevertheless decided to try the program, which was offered by Wallowa Memorial Hospital and led by local general surgeon Dr. Ken Rose, with help from Dr. Emily Sheahan and hospital Dietician Margaret Lamm.

Bob and Stephanie Williams

Bob was a part of the pilot program in spring of 2014. Today, nearly two years later, Bob's weight is down 60 pounds. He has successfully incorporated many of the CHIP lifestyle changes into his daily routine, breaking bad habits and replacing them with good habits. Among the permanent changes: beef, milk and cheese are no longer a regular part of his diet; exercise is now a priority, with morning walks, frequent bicycle rides and town team basketball. Candy bars and chips have been replaced with fresh fruit and multi-grain crackers. Adding salt is no longer a habit.

"So much of it is mental," Bob said. "They call it lifestyle habits, but



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Margaret Lamm, director of the Dietary Department at Wallowa Memorial Hospital, often teaches healthy cooking classes as part of the local CHIP program.

to me it's just breaking bad habits."

Those bad habits had led to being overweight and dependent on four medications to manage blood pressure and cholesterol. Today, Bob is down to one medication, and feels better across the board.

"I'm more productive at work, more able to deal with tasks as they come up, and less likely to procrastinate," Bob said.

Stephanie has adapted the lifestyle changes at home. But with a teenage daughter to feed, there were some challenges.

"Vegan burgers are now a regular staple, and our daughter has learned to like them," Stephanie said.

The Williams' two older daughters, who both have their own homes, have accommodated their parents' changes.

"When we get together, they provide options for us," Stephanie said.

Les and GG Johnson

GG Johnson was worried about giving up the staple of their diet — meat.

"Les was raised on a ranch with beef and dairy cattle," she said. "He got his degree from Oregon State University in dairy science and food technology in 1965, and in those days the food pyramid was the end-all and be-all of nutrition."

Within two weeks on CHIP, GG knew they had made the right deci-

sion. She started to feel better after the five-day "jump start" to help remove toxic build-up in the system and reduce cravings for salt and sugar.

As they gradually went through the program, GG realized she had never really felt good. With high cholesterol, excess weight and osteoarthritis, there was a lot of room for improvement.

Since completing the CHIP program last fall, GG and Les have completely changed their dietary habits, which now includes healthy portions of lentils, beans and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I keep my husband full, and he's happy," GG said. "I've learned how to use spices instead of salt, and we learned how beneficial spices are to your diet."

Today, Les is 27 pounds lighter, and GG has lost nearly 20 pounds. Their cholesterol has dropped — and so has their grocery bill.

"It's a myth that it's more expensive to eat healthier," GG claims.

With the absence of meat, dairy and processed foods, grocery bills are often significantly lower.

"I realized I can cook this way," said GG, who invested in new cookbooks to stay inspired and motivated.

Ted and Sharon Hays

Ted and Sharon decided to try CHIP because, as Ted said, "at

our age, we recognize we have to take better care of ourselves."

For Ted and Sharon, CHIP provided a key missing piece — education.

"We were blown away by the education it provided," Ted said. "It trained me on how to really understand food labels, and to see food as medicine."

Ted's lifelong cravings for sweets went away. He no longer desires the cakes, cookies, pastries and pies that he had enjoyed, but that had cost him his health.

"I do not feel deprived," he said. "We made it through the holidays — Thanksgiving, Christmas — and we did not deviate from this lifestyle. We brought vegan dishes to share, and even when my old favorite things were presented, I just didn't miss them."

Ted's results include a 45-pound weight loss since January 2015, when he started the program. His inflammation markers plummeted, as did his cholesterol. Blood pressure returned to healthier levels, and Ted's physician took him off his medications.

"I haven't looked back," he said.

Ted's goal for 2016 is to increase his exercise levels.

"That's the one thing I still struggle with, and I'm working to improve."

For more information on the next CHIP program offered through Wallowa Memorial Hospital, call Kari Carper at 541-426-5301.

Tips from CHIP participants:

- Clean out your pantry and refrigerator — remove temptation
- Do the CHIP program with your spouse, significant other or a friend
- Be ready to unlearn everything you've learned about what to eat and why
- Invest in good cook books for variety and inspiration
- Invest in a pedometer to track your steps
- Replace all liquid calories with water and herbal teas