

1

CHAPTER

“I AM NOT ALONE.”

The realization that she wasn't alone was a life-changing moment for Deborah Woock, a participant in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) offered through Mercy Medical Center at Geneva Tower, located in downtown Cedar Rapids.

The free, six-week CDSMP workshop is held periodically at Geneva Tower to help improve the health of the elderly and/or disabled adults living there.

Through the workshop, Deborah realized, “Other people are suffering with their problems, too. Our journeys are similar and yet each is unique.” Her chronic diseases include asthma, high blood pressure and depression, which have taken a toll on her quality of life and prevent her from working.

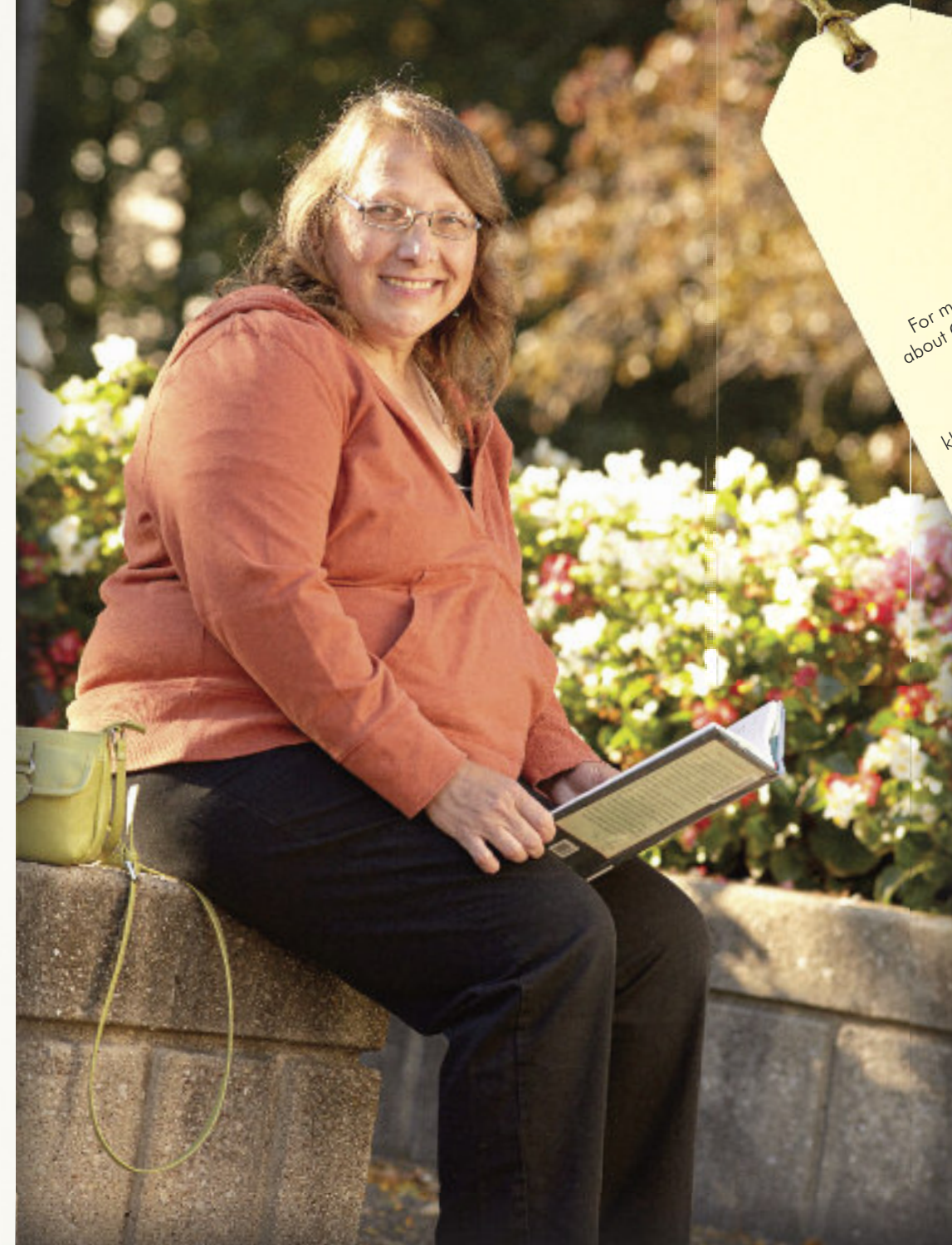
Participants learn healthy ways to live with chronic conditions. CDSMP workshops are held throughout the community and at Mercy Health Plaza at a cost of \$20; included in the fee is a book called “Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions” and a relaxation CD.

Holding the CDSMP workshop at no charge to residents of the low-income complex is just one example of the many ways Mercy lives out its mission through its Community Benefit program. From free health screenings to educational forums, Mercy has reached beyond the walls of the hospital as part of our heritage for more than 100 years, when the hospital was founded by the Sisters of Mercy to take care of the sick and the poor.

The CDSMP program has traditionally helped patients cope with diseases such as cancer, arthritis, heart disease, asthma, lung disease, emphysema, stroke, Parkinson's disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. It's designed to empower participants coping with a chronic condition to get the most out of each day by getting the information they need, while learning practical skills to manage the daily challenges of living with their condition.

“People with chronic diseases can feel overwhelmed by their conditions, and they may withdraw from daily activities. One of the goals of our program is to help patients feel less stressed about their disease and take greater control of the management of their condition,” says Kathy Baragary, program coordinator of Mercy's CDSMP. The program Deborah attended at Geneva Tower was led by Dan Tucker, Nurse Clinician, Continuum of Care, and Marcia Swift, Social Worker II, Care Coordination.

Deborah says she appreciated Dan and Marcia's level of expertise and personalized approach. She now has a new perspective: “It's not my fault that I have this disease. I am only responsible for doing what I can do to make my life as healthy as possible.”



For more information about CDSMP workshops, please contact Kathy Baragary at (319) 398-6012 or kbaragary@mercycare.org.

To learn more about Community Benefit at Mercy, visit www.mercyare.org/community-benefit.

Deborah Woock has chronic asthma, so she carries a book with her while walking in case she needs to stop and rest. She set a goal to walk at least two blocks a day after taking part in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program offered through Mercy at Geneva Tower.

She particularly enjoyed the Action Plan segment of the program, where participants and workshop leaders work together to create an individualized plan. “The Action Plan segments were really eye-opening! It is so important to make goals that I can achieve each and every week,” says Deborah.

One goal of Deborah's plan is to walk two blocks every day – no small feat for someone who struggles to breathe. Walking is good for her physical health and also provides a good release for her emotions, she says.

There will continue to be other learning opportunities through Mercy available to Deborah and other residents at Geneva Tower. A family counseling and mental health group also kicked off in October. In addition to CDSMP workshops, blood pressure screenings are offered monthly along with programs, like fall prevention and healthy cooking.