



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

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ISSUE

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# Filling the Gaps

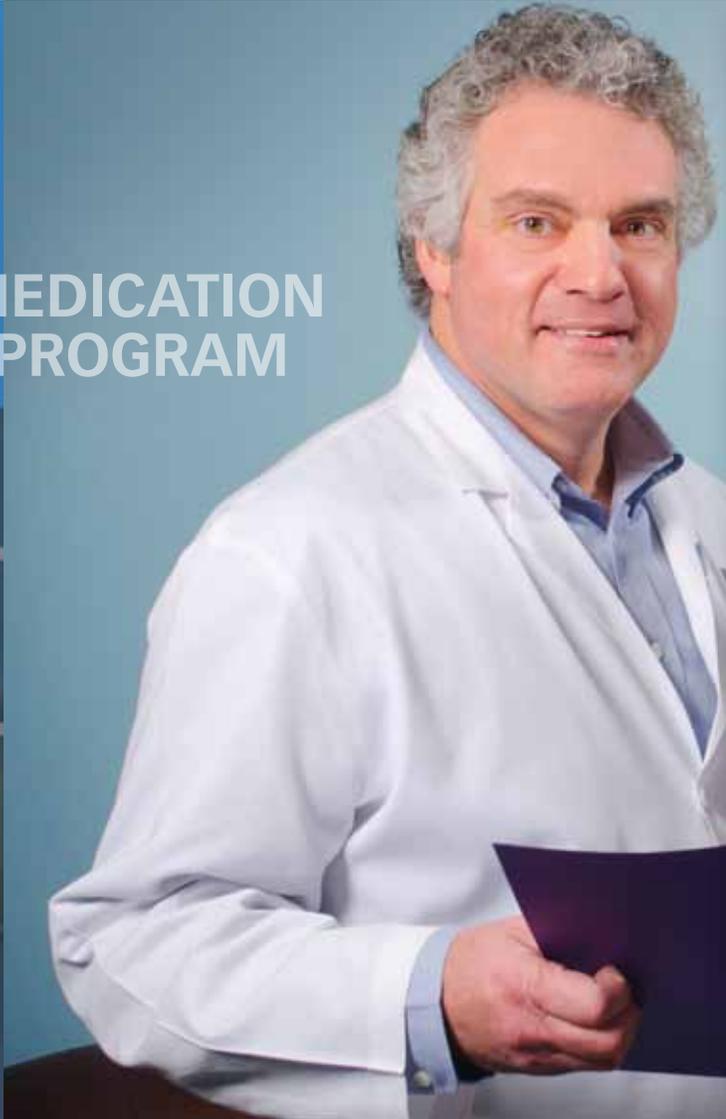
CMAP delivers critical medicine, screenings and healthy lifestyle assistance



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

# CMAP

## CENLA MEDICATION ACCESS PROGRAM



To find out if you're eligible for free medications, call CMAP at 318-443-7494 or toll free at 1-888-443-7494.

## PROVIDING LIFE-SAVING MEDICATIONS

In 2001, The Rapides Foundation formed the Cenla Medication Access Program to provide life-saving medications to people who could not afford them. CMAP soon became a national model, a blueprint for delivering critical medicine to the uninsured and underinsured.

Originally serving nine Central Louisiana parishes, CMAP now serves the entire state. It manages its own pharmacy and has branched out into other areas to coordinate Foundation-funded programs that offer free cancer screenings and healthy lifestyle assistance to Cenla residents.

**PICTURED ON THE COVER:** *CMAP Program Director Wendy Roy and CMAP Pharmacist Kevin Brown.*



*Dr. Thomas Davis, an Oakdale physician, and CMAP Patient Assistance Program Supervisor Tammy Billings discuss the latest CMAP program information.*

Maxine Pickens, a CMAP board member and former trustee for The Rapides Foundation, said all of the CMAP programs work together to improve the health status of Central Louisiana.

“All of this plays back into the goal that we talked about over the years in terms of having a healthy community,” she said. “All of the diseases and illnesses that people are experiencing, they all lead back to diet, exercise, cancer, tobacco and proper medication to treat your illness. It’s all interrelated.”

Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation, said CMAP continues to adapt its services to meet the needs of the community and to reach as many people as possible. “Access to care is vital to increase a person’s quality of life. We know that people with health insurance, higher incomes and a primary care provider are more likely to receive quality preventive care. CMAP attempts to eliminate health disparities by offering medications, cancer screenings and healthy lifestyle assistance to Cenla residents who meet income and insurance guidelines.”

The heart of CMAP is its medication program, which seeks to increase healthcare access to Central Louisiana residents who are unable to pay for their prescription medications.

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**“ The CMAP program is invaluable to help physicians treat their patients more effectively.**

Dr. Thomas Davis

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“This problem affects so many people. Unfortunately with the situation of unemployment these days, many people have to live paycheck to paycheck. Some lose their jobs and then lose their insurance because they can’t afford COBRA,” said Wendy Roy, CMAP Program Director. “We believe that no person in Louisiana should have their health compromised because of the inability to pay for medications.”

Since 2006, CMAP has helped 9,930 people



*CMAP Pharmacist Kevin Brown checks medication inventory.*

across Louisiana get the free prescriptions they need to maintain their health. Currently, CMAP has 6,172 active clients across the state.

CMAP employs Patient Assistance Program specialists throughout Central Louisiana to help clients get their medications, and to network with more than 770 physicians who refer their patients to the program.

CMAP has collaborations with nine major pharmaceutical companies, who donate medications in bulk through their patient assistance programs. CMAP's pharmaceutical partners are AbbVie, Alcon, Americare,

## PROVIDING LIFE-SAVING MEDICATIONS

AstraZeneca, Direct Relief International, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Novartis and Pfizer. These medications are stocked in CMAP's Central Fill Pharmacy, which is staffed by a pharmacist and a pharmacy technician. By operating the Central Fill Pharmacy, CMAP is able to more effectively manage the process of getting these medications to eligible clients. If a medication is not located in the Central Fill Pharmacy, a CMAP PAP specialist will fill out the necessary paperwork for the client to receive medications directly from the pharmaceutical company, Roy said. The pharmacy is not open to the public.

Oakdale physician Dr. Thomas Davis refers his patients to CMAP because it ensures his patients will follow through on his medical advice.

"The CMAP program is invaluable to help physicians treat their patients more effectively. It doesn't do any good to prescribe a medication and the patient can't afford it," he said. "The CMAP program helps patients consistently get their medicines, and this makes the control of their diseases so much easier."

Patients call the CMAP office to determine whether they are eligible for the program. The screening can be done over the telephone.

Billie J. Brown of Jonesville has been using CMAP for years, and enjoys the convenience. She meets with PAP Specialist Jessica Paul at the beginning of each year. Then, Brown's prescriptions are sent to the LaSalle Primary Clinic in Jonesville, where she picks them up.

Before she started the program, Brown was having trouble affording her medications. "I would skimp on it. I'd stretch it and take my pills when I thought I needed them."

Now, she gets her nine different medications on a regular basis, so she is able to control her cholesterol levels, thyroid, diabetes and heart conditions. She doesn't have to worry about where the money will come from. "I'm very grateful. I'm really blessed to be able to use this program," she said.



# BRANCHING OUT



*Reviewing paperwork for the partnership between CMAP and the HP Long Outpatient Clinics are (from left) HP Long Clinic Practice Manager Deborah Bess, CMAP Program Director Wendy Roy, CMAP Administrative Assistant Crystal Watts, and Director of HPL Operations Patricia Shehane.*

## CMAP PARTNERSHIP GETS MEDICATIONS TO MORE PATIENTS

**C**MAP is partnering with the HP Long Outpatient Clinics operated by Rapides Regional Medical Center to provide free or low-cost medications to patients. The hospital recently opened the clinics to take on the urgent care, outpatient care and specialty care previously offered through Huey P. Long Medical Center, which is scheduled to close in 2014.

Providing services to uninsured and Medicaid patients, the clinics are the result of Louisiana's transition from a state-run charity hospital system to a health system run by private entities.

The outpatient clinics include an Urgent Care Clinic located at 105 North Third Street, Alexandria, (across the street from HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital). An Urgent Care Clinic,

## BRANCHING OUT

Specialty Clinic and Medicine Clinic are located in Pineville a few steps from the current Huey P. Long Medical Center, 213 Hospital Blvd. The two urgent care clinics are open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, while the other clinics are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. As part of the partnership, CMAP employees staff both locations during business hours Monday through Friday.

HP Long Urgent Care clinics treat minor injuries and illnesses, including ear or eye infection; fever; minor cuts that may need stitches; possible broken bones or simple fractures; severe sore throat; sprains and strains; and vomiting/diarrhea. The Specialty Clinic sees patients by referral only. It allows patients to seek treatment here at home as opposed to traveling to Shreveport or other cities. The Medicine Clinic is a primary care clinic.

When patients arrive at any of the clinics, they first see a nurse practitioner. If medications are prescribed, they meet with a CMAP representative. "If the patient meets eligibility requirements, we enroll them in the program and we work with the doctors to try to get the prescriptions they need," said Wendy Roy, CMAP Program Director.

For patients who need their prescriptions right away, the medicines are prescribed from the CMAP Central Fill Pharmacy. If the medication is not in the pharmacy, the patient will either be given a prescription to be filled at Walmart for \$4 a prescription, or a Pharmacy Benefit Card that they can use at most pharmacies for \$4 a prescription. The Pharmacy Benefit Card is the result of a contract with VRx, a Pharmacy Services Management company, and was negotiated by CMAP and Rapides Regional Medical Center.



For long-term medications, a CMAP Patient Assistance Program specialist will order the medications and the patient can pick them up at the clinic at a later date at no cost.

Since the first clinic opened in December 2013, CMAP enrolled 538 patients into the program and filled 1,098 prescriptions from the Central Fill Pharmacy at a wholesale cost of \$326,988 and 201 additional prescriptions from the CMAP Patient Assistance Program at a cost of \$286,611. These costs represent an estimated savings to patients of more than \$875,000 had they had to pay for those medications out of pocket at a retail pharmacy. Figures for the Pharmacy Benefit Card are not yet in.

Patricia Shehane, Director of HPL Operations, said the partnership works so well because it ensures that patients receive all of their care in one place. "I think it's so convenient," she said. "There are many patients who don't have insurance, and a lot of patients may not realize they qualify" for the medication programs. "Some patients can't afford the medications that they need, so this just puts another avenue out there for them to have access to their medications."



*Director of HPL Operations Patricia Shehane (left) and HP Long Clinic Practice Manager Deborah Bess at the HP Long Outpatient Clinic at 105 North Third Street in Alexandria.*

**“ Some patients can’t afford the medications that they need, so this just puts another avenue out there for them to have access to their medications.**

Patricia Shehane,  
Director of HPL Operations

Deborah Bess, Practice Manager for the HP Long Clinic, said the patients know immediately whether they qualify. “They are very appreciative. You can tell some of them didn’t know they had access to these drugs.”

Bess said she appreciates the fact that CMAP employees also counsel patients on their medications. “They are getting educated about their diseases and how to deal with their medications. It’s going to lead to a healthier population.”

The services provided at the HP Long Urgent Care locations “are designed to give Medicaid and uninsured patients greater access to quality care,” said Jason Cobb, Rapides Regional Medical Center President and Chief Executive Officer. “I am confident that we will be able to continue to meet the medical needs of our community with accessible, exceptional care.”

Clara Harrell of Alexandria was introduced to CMAP after she was treated at the Alexandria HP Long Urgent Care Clinic. She handed the CMAP specialist a list of her medications, worried about how much it would cost to get them filled. When she found out her insulin and other diabetes medications were going to be free, she was elated.

She used to get those medications for \$8 each. “It doesn’t seem like a lot, but for some people like me, that’s a lot.” To stretch her money, she would skip her insulin. “When I would do that, I wouldn’t eat to try to control my blood sugar, and then I would get sick all over again,” she said. “I am so grateful for CMAP. I didn’t think anything like that existed.”



# MOBILE CANCER SCRE



## INITIATIVE BRINGS SCREENINGS TO RESIDENTS

**C**ancer is the second-leading cause of death among adults, responsible for one of every four deaths in the United States. But according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of new cancer cases can be reduced and many cancer deaths can be prevented by healthier lifestyles and cancer screenings. These screening tests reduce the

number of deaths from these diseases by finding them early, when they are most treatable.

The Rapides Foundation in 2009 launched the Cancer Screening Initiative to promote early detection of breast, cervical and colorectal cancers among adults in its nine-parish service area. A primary component is the Cancer Screening Project, which seeks to increase access to screenings by bringing them to Central

# SCREENING



Call the Cancer Screening Project to see about an appointment at 318-767-3027 or toll free at 1-855-767-3027.

*Diana McGlothlin (left) and Cancer Screening Specialist Tessa Myrick go over digital mammography materials.*

Louisiana parishes via a mobile unit. The mobile unit is a partnership with the Partners in Wellness Program at Feist-Weiller Cancer Center at LSU Health Shreveport. In addition, grant funding from the Susan G. Komen Foundation in Acadiana funds mammograms in six of nine Cenla parishes: Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Rapides and Vernon.

The mobile unit travels to Cenla parishes for two-day clinics. On the unit, patients receive clinical breast exams, digital mammograms, cervical exams, Pap smears and FIT colon cancer screening take-home tests. These services are offered for free for people who meet age, income and insurance guidelines.

Physicians like Dr. Thomas Davis of Oakdale say the Cancer Screening Project provides an

“It’s very important to get screened because with me, they found it so early. The doctors always talk about early detection, and now I know why.”



Diana McGlothlin,  
mobile screening patient

important service for the area. “The problem with a mammogram and a Pap smear is they cost money. When someone is feeling well and they don’t have the money to pay, the last thing they will do is schedule these screening tests,” Davis said. When he refers a patient to the Cancer Screening Project, not only is the test free, but a Cancer Screening Specialist will fill out the paperwork and set up the appointment for the patient.

Davis sees a secondary benefit. Patients who have insurance are becoming more aware of the importance of getting these cancer screens. “It’s all about increasing awareness. The Rapides Foundation is demonstrating to everyone just how important these screenings are by sponsoring patients unable to afford these simple, lifesaving tests.”

When a patient first contacts the Cancer Screening Project, either because their doctor sent



*Cancer Screening Specialist Tessa Myrick*

them or if they simply read a poster in a medical office, they speak to Cancer Screening Specialist Tessa Myrick. Myrick can determine over the phone whether the patient is eligible. If they are, Myrick schedules the next appointment based on the mobile unit schedule.

"It doesn't have to be in the parish they reside in. I always tell them 'if you can get there, you can come,'" she said. The unit travels to each parish two or three times a year, depending on the number of patient referrals in the area.

Myrick said most patients express gratitude, saying they would not be getting these tests because they cannot pay for them.

"It's mainly because of the affordability. They live month to month. They may be supporting a family on a minimum-wage salary, or they may have fallen on hard times," she said.

Since its inception in late 2009, the Cancer Screening Project has screened 2,052 women. Of the mammograms performed, 298 women have

## MOBILE CANCER SCREENING

needed a diagnostic follow-up, and eight have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Of the 587 cervical screenings, 21 have come back abnormal and were sent for follow-ups in Shreveport.

FIT kits are take-home stool sample tests that can detect colorectal cancer. Patients mail in the sample and the results are analyzed. If the results are positive, patients are referred to the LSU-HSC Family Medicine Residency Program in Alexandria for a follow-up colonoscopy. One of those was Diana McGlothlin of the Boyce area. When her colonoscopy showed a problem, she then went to Shreveport for surgery in mid-January. Diligent about getting her annual mammograms, McGlothlin never had a FIT test until she started getting screened on the mobile unit.

"It's very important to get screened because with me, they found it so early," she said. "The doctors always talk about early detection, and now I know why."

McGlothlin not only credits mobile unit staff for potentially saving her life, but she also praises them for making the cancer screens simple. There's no waiting in a waiting room, and staff members remind her about her appointments. "Everybody that works on that van they are so sweet, they are so gentle. It feels like it's a family day out when I go there because I remember all of them and they remember me."

Gloria Freeman of Campti also enjoys the reminders. "I usually get something in the mail, and they will call two days before to remind me of my appointment. They are very good about that."

Freeman's test results have always been good, and she's always been diligent about getting screened for breast and cervical cancer. She used to travel to Shreveport until a friend told her about the mobile unit. When she found out it travels to Natchitoches, she started using it for the convenience. "They are very friendly and it's quick."





# COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVISORS

*Letitia Thompson (left), Vice President for the Mid-South Division of the American Cancer Society, looks over materials with Annette Beuchler, Director of Programs and Communications for The Rapides Foundation.*

## VOLUNTEERS OFFER EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

**T**o support its Cancer Screening Initiative, The Rapides Foundation partnered with the American Cancer Society's Mid-South Division to bring the Community Health Advisor Project to Avoyelles, Natchitoches and Rapides parishes. The project trains local volunteers as Community Health Advisors to help educate individuals about the importance of cancer screenings. Once trained, these volunteers provide education, outreach and information to men and women in their communities.

The partnership began with Foundation staff exploring ways to increase the number of vital cancer screenings in our area. When Annette Beuchler, Director of Programs and Communications, heard about the success the American Cancer Society was having with its CHA Project and found that it could be customized to rural areas, she inquired about bringing it to Central Louisiana. The American Cancer Society then did its own study to determine if bringing CHA to Central Louisiana would be feasible, looking at such criteria as need, willingness of

## COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVISORS

the community and patient navigation. They liked what they found.

"The reason this particular marriage was so attractive was the work that The Rapides Foundation was already doing to expand provider outreach and around health outcomes for that whole region," said Letitia Thompson, Vice President, Mid-South Division of the American Cancer Society. The Rapides Foundation's CHA Project is one of only two in Louisiana. "We do look at it as a partnership. We could not be successful in that area if it were not for the Foundation."

Thompson said the concept behind the CHA Project is to provide patient navigation to the 20-30 percent of individuals who are eligible for cancer screens but do not get them. The reasons

**“ I think education is the thing that I find to be more effective than anything. It's all about the knowledge.**

LaNeshia Gammage,  
Cenla Community Health  
Advisor Specialist



vary, but some don't get screened because of money, cultural beliefs or misinformation. For that reason, CHA volunteers are ideal because they go into their home communities and educate their peers about cancer screenings.

"They are trying to change behavior," Thompson said. Volunteers will not only provide

education, they will also help their peers schedule screens. In some cases, a CHA volunteer will refer a patient to the Foundation's Cancer Screening Project. "The focus is really very much on the front end. It starts when someone is told they need to get screened."

LaNeshia Gammage is the American Cancer Society's Community Health Advisor Specialist in Central Louisiana, training and supervising the 19 active CHA volunteers in the three parishes served by the program. In addition to helping 80 patients get screened, the volunteers have provided educational materials about cancer screenings to some 900 individuals in 2013.

Gammage is proud of her volunteers, who are chosen because of their passion. "We try to find a connection with the people that we recruit to make sure that they have a sense of fulfillment from it," she said. About half of the volunteers have been touched by cancer while the others are retirees who enjoy the interaction with their peers. Both types have that drive and compassion to make the program a success.

When CHA volunteers distribute educational information at community events, they look for people who have not had a screening at all or who have missed their last screen. Then, they'll help navigate that person through the process. The number of people who do not know they should be screened surprises Gammage.

"I think education is the thing that I find to be more effective than anything. Coming into contact with people who have not been screened, some of them don't know. They don't understand. Cancer is not on their list of things to talk about and discuss," she said. "It's all about the knowledge."



**To become a CHA volunteer, contact LaNeshia Gammage at 318-308-9678.**

# 'GREAT THINGS CAN HAPPEN'



*Beth Garland (left), DASH Coordinator for The Pentecostals of Alexandria, and CMAP DASH Coordinator and Healthy Lifestyle Dietitian Bretta Lutz show some of the DASH materials that are distributed to participants.*

**DASH for a Healthy Lifestyle provides nutrition and fitness information**

In the summer of 2013, some 400 Central Louisiana residents embarked on a journey that would change their lives for the better. The residents signed up for DASH for a Healthy Lifestyle, a grant opportunity that helps members of church congregations to get healthier together.



*Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church DASH members (l-r) Anita Frances, Beverly Brown, Barbara Obey and Patricia Roque go over their program materials.*

## DASH FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

This one-time DASH grant opportunity was offered after The Rapides Foundation saw success with the Healthy Lifestyle Program, a CMAP-administered program that provides one-on-one nutrition and fitness counseling to people referred by their doctors. "We wanted to reach a large number of people, and we knew that church congregations would be a great way to do that," said Annette Beuchler, Director of Programs and Communications for the Foundation.

The Foundation in early 2013 offered this grant opportunity to all Central Louisiana church congregations. After the grants were awarded, each church selected a DASH coordinator, who would then receive training on how to lead DASH in their own congregations.

DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is a proven, evidence based nutrition and exercise plan studied at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge. The curriculum focuses on increasing physical activity, fruits, vegetables, whole grains

and low-fat dairy, while reducing calories and sodium. Scientists show that this will have a major impact on lowering blood pressure and reducing the risk of hypertension and heart disease. *U.S. News and World Report* selected DASH as the #1 best diet overall in America for 2012 and 2013.

Today, 403 people are enrolled in DASH at 24 Central Louisiana churches. Results so far have shown great success, said Bretta Lutz, CMAP Healthy Lifestyle Dietitian and DASH Coordinator. "The people who realize what a privilege it is to be a part of this program are doing fantastic. They are trying, and they are motivated. When you have that combination of being motivated and having these resources at your fingertips, great things can happen."

Numerous participants have lost weight since beginning the program, Lutz said. Many have shed in the 30-pound range. More importantly, participants have reported improvements in blood pressure, diabetes, hypertension and other

“ It’s not a weight-loss program, it’s a lifestyle change.

Bretta Lutz,  
CMAP Healthy Lifestyle  
Dietitian and DASH  
Coordinator



medical issues. “It’s not a weight-loss program, it’s a lifestyle change,” she pointed out.

After the grants were awarded, Lutz led coordinators through an 8-hour training, taking them through the entire DASH manual and program requirements. Coordinators then were given all the tools they needed to teach DASH to their peers, including lesson plans that provide detailed instructions on leading every session throughout the course of the program.

“They give you everything you need to begin the program,” said Beverly Joan Brown, DASH Coordinator at Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church. Brown uses her teaching manual to lead her group, but also enjoys the materials that each participant receives, including an individualized manual, a calorie counter and a food and fitness diary — all paid for by the grant.

The first phase of the program consisted of eight group sessions meeting once a week. Participants learned to take charge of their eating habits and become more physically active. In Phase Two, participants met every other week for six sessions, focusing on problem solving. In Phase Three, which began in 2014, participants began meeting once a month for 12 months. This phase is considered a time to put all resources to work and strengthen healthy habits.



## HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROGRAM GIVES ANOTHER OPTION FOR CHANGE

The Healthy Lifestyle Program is a Foundation program administered by CMAP in which patients who are referred by their doctors receive one-on-one counseling from a registered and licensed dietitian and an exercise specialist. Healthy Lifestyle Coordinator Kira Davidson said clients are counseled for six months, learning behavior changes they can take with them when they complete the program.

“If they leave confidently and know what to do, it is up to them to be disciplined to continue on their own. I always tell every person before they walk out the door that knowledge is power, what are you going to do with it?” she said.

The Healthy Lifestyle Program provided coaching to 378 people since it started in 2013. Physicians have sent more than 1,200 referrals, saying they enjoy having somewhere to send their patients for follow-up and consistent nutrition and exercise education. Doctors also say that diseases become easier to control when patients modify their diets and increase their physical activity.

Not all Healthy Lifestyle Program clients need help losing weight. Some, like a 63-year-old cancer survivor with high cholesterol, needed help with her medical issues, Davidson said. “Her diet wasn’t balanced, so we just promoted vitamins and nutrients from fruits and vegetables and made sure she ate a lot of protein.” The client also increased her physical activity by walking three days a week.

CMAP Board Member Maxine Pickens says she notices more people in the community are becoming aware of their health, and one reason is because of these Healthy Lifestyle programs. “Are we making a difference? I hope so because I really do think we are. A large percent of the people I talk to are concerned about their health. You see the gyms and the parking lots are full. You see more people running and walking.”

The long-term goal is that Healthy Lifestyle participants not only change their own lives for the better, but that they share their knowledge with their family, friends and loved ones.



## MT. CALVARY MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

*Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church DASH members learn how to read food labels to spot unhealthy ingredients.*

**A**t Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, DASH for a Healthy Lifestyle Coordinator Beverly Joan Brown believes it is important to lead by example. Because she was overweight and had medical issues when she stepped up to lead DASH in her church, she participated along with the other members.

"I love the way it was set up. After going through the training, it gave me good insight that we could help the church. But I knew I had to begin with myself." Brown's beginning weight

was in the mid-200 range. Like others in the group, she changed her lifestyle by cutting back on portions, reading labels, increasing fruits and vegetables and increasing her physical activity.

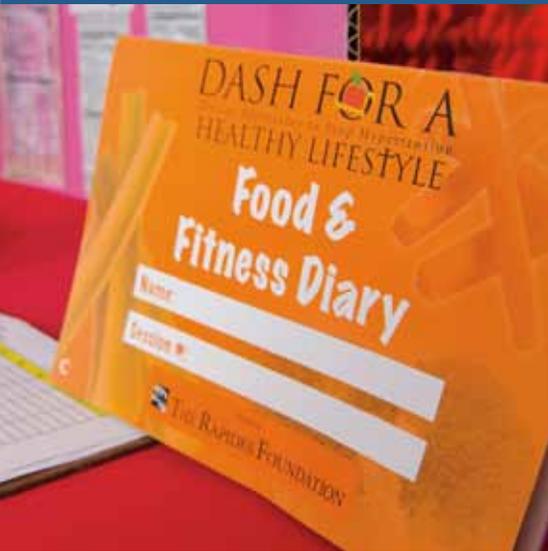
The first eight weeks of DASH was admittedly intense. She was afraid the 21 participants would get discouraged if they didn't see instant results. However, when the group would get together and see each other's progress – even if small – they would get excited and motivated to continue the program.

Six months later and

Brown lost close to 40 pounds, dropping three dress sizes. More importantly, when she last went to see her cardiologist "he said I had helped myself 100 percent because I was dynamite ready to explode. This program has been a wonderful outlet for my life. It gave me the lifestyle change that I was looking for."

Other participants also noted positive reports from their doctors, especially in regards to blood pressure and diabetes control. Participants say they walk more, eat more healthy foods and feel better. Another benefit is that they are becoming

[rapidesfoundation.org](http://rapidesfoundation.org)



good role models for their spouses, children and grandkids. "If they see me eat healthy, they are going to change too," Brown said.

Barbara Obey of Alexandria joined Mt. Calvary's DASH program to help control her high blood pressure. A colon cancer survivor, Obey started adopting healthy habits six years ago when she was diagnosed. The DASH program gave her new ways to stay healthy, and she enjoys sharing ideas with other members of the group.

"My blood pressure is good, I feel good and I like the enthusiasm when we go to the meetings," she said. "And you enjoy getting on the scale when you lost a pound or two."

When coordinator Brown encouraged participants to eat breakfast each day, Obey started eating yogurt and fruit. She also started doing a little more physical activity than before. "They're not saying you have to go out and run a marathon, but that you should do whatever you can do."

Other ways Obey has changed her lifestyle: "I am reading labels and watching what I eat. I try to stay away from fried foods altogether."

Her cancer diagnosis made Obey aware of her health and the foods she ate. But Obey said that wasn't always the case when she was growing up. "A lot of us would eat whatever we wanted. We never paid attention to labels, we just ate, and we didn't think about exercise," she said. Today, she and her husband are both trying to make healthy food choices.

While it's always better to eat at home, Obey found that planning ahead helps when eating at a restaurant. "Before you get there, you can look up the menus online." Some restaurants include nutrition information online as well, so



*Learning to read food labels is an important part of the DASH program.*

Obey knows what she will order even before she arrives.

Patricia Roque of Alexandria joined DASH because "I wanted to know how to live healthier. I wanted to change my lifestyle. It wasn't a diet thing for me but I noticed that by eating more fruits and vegetables I have lost inches."

Roque said DASH emphasizes making healthier choices. To that end, she eats more chicken and less red meat, more low-fat foods and more dairy. She adds fruits to salads, and she drinks plenty of water, which she credits with improving her complexion.

She is not able to do strenuous exercise because of knee surgery. However, she followed the DASH advice of getting 30 minutes of physical activity a day by breaking it up into 15-minute increments. "As long as you get it in," she said.

Since joining DASH, Roque has seen an improvement in her blood pressure, which was borderline high when she started. She checks her blood pressure at the DASH meetings, where she and members also learn clever ways to eat healthy. "There are so many foods out there that I didn't know were so nutritious," she said. "I've really enjoyed this. I hope we can continue this program. They keep us on the right track and keep us motivated."





*DASH Coordinator Beth Garland works with members of The Pentecostals of Alexandria on their DASH for a Healthy Lifestyle program.*

## THE PENTECOSTALS OF ALEXANDRIA

**A**my Adams and Rebecca Monk meet at The Pentecostals of Alexandria gym four days a week before work for exercise, then again after work for some walking. When they are not working out together, they load up on fruits and vegetables, watch their calories, drink more

water and read nutrition labels. They both lost a considerable amount of weight in the past eight months. They have more energy, feel better and know they are getting healthier.

Both are clear about one thing: "This is not a diet. It's a lifestyle change," Monk said. "You can still eat real food,

but the benefits you reap are tremendous."

They are among the 15 participants in the DASH for a Healthy Lifestyle Program at The Pentecostals of Alexandria. The group is led by church member Beth Garland, a holistic health counselor who jumped at the chance to bring DASH to the

[rapidesfoundation.org](http://rapidesfoundation.org)



*Amy Adams exercises at The Pentecostals of Alexandria gym with POA DASH Coordinator Beth Garland.*

congregation. "I thought this was a great opportunity to get people in the church. What a gift it has been for the people who were involved and stuck with it."

Members lost weight, learned some new things about nutrition and fitness and have become healthier. "I'm just so proud of each one of those girls," she said.

Amy Adams of Alexandria joined to lose weight and get healthy "so I can enjoy my grandkids. I don't want to be a diabetic and unable to take care of myself." Her work has paid off. She already lost 25 pounds and is working on the next 25, she feels better and she enjoys the meetings with the DASH group.

"It helps me realize what I am putting into my body. It makes me more aware of what I am eating and my daily exercise," she said. She said she makes smoothies to increase the fruits and vegetables in her diet, and she hasn't had a soft drink in over a year. Her morning and afternoon workouts with Monk keep her motivated. "It's nice to have an exercise partner."

Rebecca Monk of Alexandria joined primarily for health reasons. She was born with a heart condition, and heart problems run in her family. She said she is losing weight slowly, and has more energy than ever.

She said increasing vegetables in her diet was

an adjustment, but now she has developed a craving for vegetables. Another adjustment that has paid off is planning her daily meals and snacks a week in advance. With her full-time work schedule, it is important to bring healthy foods to the office instead of grabbing something unhealthy for lunch or snack. "If I have my lunches planned in advance I'm less tempted." If she does have to eat out, she'll choose healthier options, such as baked chicken instead of fried.

She makes a list before she shops for groceries, and the list includes those "simple" substitutions of healthier items, such as Greek yogurt instead of sour cream, coconut and soy milk instead of whole milk, and wheat tortillas instead of bread.

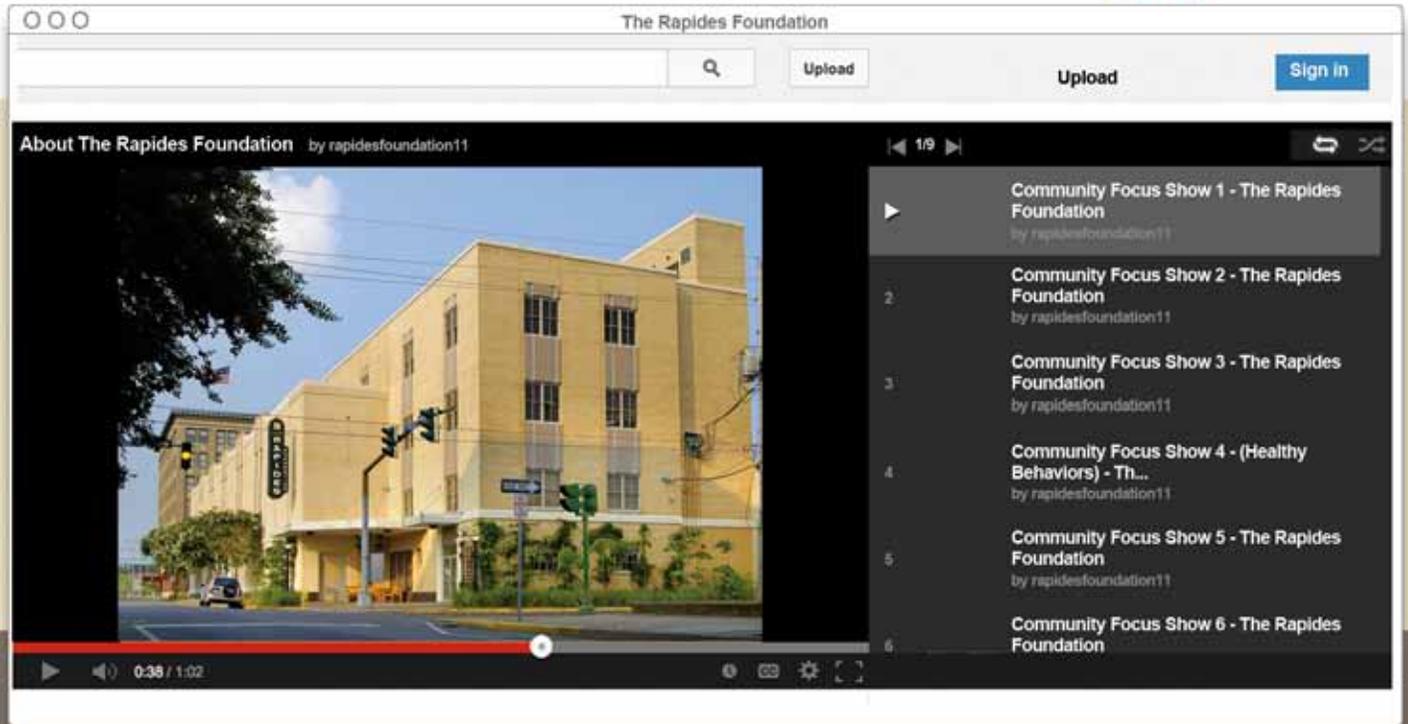
To encourage herself to drink more water, she adds fresh lemon, fresh lime or different fruits. She enjoys going to the DASH meetings to learn new recipes and simple tips to stay healthy. She credits coordinator Garland for keeping the group motivated and encouraged.

"Beth is a godsend. She keeps us motivated. She sends us inspirational text messages, and she's always there for us," Monk said.

In addition to seeing results on their own, Monk and Adams noted that their healthy habits are rubbing off on their family members.



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The Rapides Foundation continues  
a legacy of community healthcare  
initiated in 1903.

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