

A heartening experience

Patient credits care team with saving life

Patrick Kilby first started noticing signs that something might be wrong when he was out in New York City finishing up a stint as Santa. "I started having a strange pain next to my neck in my upper shoulder. It was a sharp pain in my upper arm, as if I'd stretched a muscle or something like that. When I got back from New York, I started having the same pain there again," Patrick says.

At the time, Patrick was 50 years old and otherwise feeling fairly healthy. In addition to his seasonal Santa gigs, Patrick also kept busy as the owner of two businesses, Sugar Creek Woodworking and A Simple Pine Box, in New York Mills.

Despite his busy schedule, Patrick decided he should call to set up an appointment to see his primary physician, Dr. Thomas Seaworth, at the Perham Health New York Mills Clinic.

At his appointment on January 11, Dr. Seaworth was able to determine that Patrick's problem wasn't muscular in nature. "Pat presented with a complaint of episodes of indigestion," Dr. Seaworth explains. "It was a sharp pain and antacids provided relief, but the discomfort was in the upper chest below the left collarbone and the left side of his neck and upper left arm.

"This isn't typical heartburn nor is it classic angina. Pat had a history of a number of coronary risk factors including, being a male aged 50, sleep apnea, elevated cholesterol, hypertension, and diabetes. He wasn't having pain at the time of his clinic visit, so I did an EKG [an electrocardiogram,

also called an EKG, is a simple, painless test that records the heart's electrical activity] and gave him a prescription for Nitroglycerin to use if the pain came back. I also arranged for him to take an echo stress test."

An echo stress test uses ultrasound imaging to show how well a patient's heart muscles are working to pump blood to the body. It is mainly used to detect a decrease in blood flow to the

heart. Patients are first monitored while resting and then while exercising.

"The day of his stress test Patrick was going to cancel the appointment because he was feeling fine and we were really busy here at the shop," Patrick's wife Karen admits.

Thankfully, he kept his appointment and the echo stress test ended up preventing him from having what could



New York Mills resident Patrick Kilby credits Dr. Thomas Seaworth with saving his life. Earlier this year, Dr. Seaworth ordered an echo stress test for Patrick that ended up revealing a problem with the blood supply to his heart. He was immediately transported from Perham Health to Sanford Health in Fargo where a stent was put in to correct the heart condition.

have been much more severe heart problems.

"This clinic and my doctor kept me from dying. That's no little thing. That's a big thing," Patrick says. "If I hadn't had such a good relationship with my doctor, I probably would have just blown him off and not taken the stress test. If I didn't have such confidence that Dr. Seaworth knew what he was doing, I wouldn't have taken it seriously."

According to Dr. Seaworth, typical candidates for an echo stress test are patients who are at high risk for coronary artery disease or have been having symptoms that may be heart related such as chest discomfort, unexplained fatigue, or shortness of breath. He also suggests echo stress tests for patients who have multiple risk factors and are more likely to have heart disease.

During Patrick's January 22 test at Perham Health, he was first monitored at a resting state. As soon as he started exercising on the treadmill and the severity of the test increased, Patrick began having difficulty breathing.

As Patrick recalls, "I don't think I even made it halfway through. They had me lie down on my side and did the ultrasound imaging. At that point they could tell that there was something wrong." His results were then compared with the EKG he had just done with Dr. Seaworth.

Dr. Joshua Chapman was called in during the test to address what appeared to be a clear-cut "positive" test, showing a problem with the blood supply to Patrick's heart. According to Chapman, stress testing allows medical professionals to identify individuals like Patrick, who are at high risk of having a heart attack, before an event happens that permanently damages the heart. In the worst-case scenario, an unexpected event can mean sudden death.



Patrick Kilby is once again hard at work at his Sugar Creek Woodworking shop in New York Mills. He is thankful for the opportunity to continue to do the work he enjoys without experiencing the sharp pain he once had that alerted doctors to his heart problem.

"We spoke with the cardiology team in Fargo and reviewed Patrick's history, symptoms, and test results and agreed he needed an intervention immediately," Chapman, an Internal Medicine physician at Perham, explains. "Patrick was at an extremely high risk of having a heart attack. Fortunately, we were able to find and fix the problem before that happened."

"It helps so much that they have the latest detection equipment. This made it possible for them to make an informed decision on the spot about whether or not to send me to Fargo," says Patrick.

Patrick was transported directly from Perham Health to Sanford Health in Fargo by ambulance. Dr. Craig Kouba, a Fargo cardiologist, performed an

angioplasty and put in a stent on January 23. The next day, Patrick was released from the hospital with an appointment to see Dr. Susan Farkas, a cardiologist based out of Fargo, at Perham Health for a follow-up visit on March 19.

"She works really closely with Dr. Seaworth. They have a great working relationship, so it's really easy to transition from one to the other. Now I'm back to seeing Dr. Seaworth," Patrick comments.

He mentions how pleased he was to be able to have the echo stress test and all of his follow-up care in Perham. Karen agrees, "If we would have had to go to Fargo for all of this, I don't know that we would have been as diligent about his care."

Patrick also met with Perham Health's Cardiopulmonary Rehab Coordinator Julie Peters for a few months. "Pat's medical history and cardiac risk factors were reviewed on his first session," says Peters. "A plan was then made with Pat to work on modifying his risk factors. Pat was started on a gradually progressive exercise program and his cardiac rhythm, blood pressure, and exercise tolerance were monitored."

At his therapy appointments, Patrick would exercise on a treadmill, bike, and NuStep. Warm-ups were also done with light weights. It was recommended that he continue to exercise 45 minutes to an hour five times a week. He was also prescribed medications to help with his high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Patrick is now feeling better and his pain is gone. He continues to keep follow-up appointments with Dr. Seaworth every few months in New York Mills.

"It's nice because I already had a relationship with Dr. Seaworth before this all happened. He was able to help me through it," says Patrick. "He saved my life, if you really think about it."

Canine comfort with pet therapy

Watch a hospital patient's day get instantly uplifted by a visit from a furry, friendly canine and you'll quickly remember there's a reason dogs have earned their reputation as "man's best friend."

Pet therapy is one of the newest programs underway at Perham Health. Volunteers bring their specially trained dogs to the hospital to visit both patients and staff members. The dogs are taught to quietly soak up any attention paid to them. In some cases, this is as simple as the dog resting its head on a hospital bed to provide comfort and companionship.

Chris Balch is the woman behind the pet therapy program at Perham Health. Balch and her husband live on West McDonald Lake during the summer months. In the winter, she and her dog Mackey provide pet therapy where they live in Colorado. Together Chris and her 6-year-old black lab, Mackey, are a certified pet therapy team.

Also volunteering in Perham is 16-year-old Michaela Sondag, a Perham High School student who lives in Dent. She just recently completed her pet therapy certification with her 6-year-old German shorthair, Shiloh.

When Chris and Michaela bring their dogs to the hospital, the first thing they do is check in with the nurses to see if there's anyone they feel could benefit from a pet visit. The teams are also informed if there are any rooms they should avoid. They then knock on

each patient's door and ask if they would like a visit.

"We talk to the patients and let them talk to us," Chris explains. "The whole time the dog sits there and the person can pet the dog. People immediately gravitate to the dog. I become very inconspicuous, which is fine. I want the visit to be about Mackey and the people she's visiting."

Many patients who are hospitalized have pets of their own and having a pet therapy team visit gives them an opportunity to talk about their furry companions. Chris says she's found that even people who wouldn't consider themselves dog lovers enjoy having a visitor they can talk to.

"If someone is in pain, for the five minutes that we are there they forget about their pain. It lets people think about something else for a few minutes. That's why we are there," she says.

Michaela adds how some people eagerly wait for the dogs to come visit each week. When Chris is back in Colorado over the winter months, Michaela plans to keep visiting Perham Health with Shiloh so the pet therapy program can continue. Despite her busy school schedule, she hopes to visit patients at least once a week. "Seeing the smiles on people's faces is why I do this," Michaela says.

Prior to starting pet therapy visits at Perham Health, Michaela and Chris have been visiting residents at Vergas Assisted Living for the past five years. "We decided to add the hospital this year and they welcomed the program," Chris explains. "The hospital has been

Perham Health patient Bessie Larsen enjoys spending a few minutes petting Shiloh, a 6-year-old German shorthair. Shiloh and her owner, Michaela Sondag, work together as a pet therapy team.



Sixteen-year-old Michaela Sondag, along with her dog Shiloh, and Chris Balch, with her dog Mackey, make weekly pet therapy visits to Perham Health to encourage both patients and staff.

so great about embracing us."

Patients aren't the only ones who benefit from the pet therapy team visits. Chris and Michaela also take the time to bring Mackey and Shiloh around the hospital to spend some time with staff members.

"I can think of so many people whose days have been brightened," Chris says of the program. "We've found that it's not always the person we intended to help who we help the most. Sometimes it's the loved ones who are visiting a patient or who are sitting in the waiting room who respond the most to the dogs. I'm amazed at how much good the dogs do."

Three years ago, Chris found herself in the hospital and someone stopped by her room asking her if she would like a pet visit. In that moment, she says she realized just how valuable the experience could be. "I really want this program to succeed," she says.





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Perham Health Scholarship Recipients

Perham Health is pleased to announce the recipients of its Health Care Career Educational Scholarship. Five area students pursuing careers in the health care field were each awarded a \$1000 scholarship. The scholarship program is awarded to high school seniors or post-secondary students residing in the Perham Health service area. Congratulations to this year's recipients.



Alexis Rankka

New York Mills High School
Alexis will attend North Dakota State University to pursue a nursing degree to become a Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner.



Leah Wuebben

Perham High School
Leah will pursue Radiologic Technology at the University of Mary - Bismarck.



Shane Novak

New York Mills High School
Shane will study Pre-Med/Physical Therapy at Minnesota State University Moorhead.



Allison Smith

Perham High School
Allison will attend the University of North Dakota and enroll in the Pre-Med program.



Matthew Formanek

Perham High School
Matthew is enrolled at the University of Minnesota - Duluth in the Pre-Med/Biology program.