

Patient Makeover

Training for Life

The Women in Training program helped a young stay-at-home mom realize her heart could be at risk—and that she could do something about it

Thank goodness for girlfriends. It was Elizabeth Jarvis' girlfriend of 20 years who persuaded her to participate in Saint Luke's Women in Training (WIT) program last year.

"She travels for her job, and I'm a stay-at-home mom with two young children, so we're not able to get together very often," Jarvis explained. "This was a chance for us to see each other."

For Jarvis, it also turned out to be an eye-opening experience.

A physically active person since age 6 and with a passion for sports, Jarvis was 38 years young and felt in terrific health. But the results of her cholesterol test, which was offered last year for the first time as part of a new heart-health screening, suggested otherwise.

Her LDL level—the "bad" cholesterol that clogs blood vessels—was 168. Optimal level is 100.

"It alarmed me," said Jarvis, who lives in Overland Park, Kan. "I thought I was healthy."

Back-burner mom

Women like Jarvis aren't just stay-at-home moms; they're also back-burner moms. "I'm not afraid to go to the doctor, I just procrastinate," Jarvis explained. "I tend to put the needs of my family first and my own on the back burner."

But what her family needs most is for Mom to be healthy.

"Elizabeth's question to us was, 'How do I go about being healthier?'" said Saint Luke's Nurse Clinician Linda Bunten, R.N., B.S.N., who developed a personalized program for Jarvis during a follow-up heart-health assessment after the WIT program. "I told her she should start by eating breakfast."

Jarvis had been eating "Atkins-style" for about 10 years. "It helped me maintain my weight," she said. "I've always been scared

of gaining weight, so I was afraid to change my eating habits."

But a diet like Jarvis', loaded with red meat, cheeses, and fats, is not heart-friendly. Bunten helped her switch to a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, with raw veggies and nuts for snacks, and ground turkey replacing ground beef. Jarvis now cooks with olive oil and has cut back on cheese.

She's 10 pounds lighter as a result.

"I was shocked that I actually lost weight," she said. "And I've eaten more than I had for the past 10 years." She also dropped her LDL cholesterol by 58 points.

Marathon mom?

While she worked to lower her cholesterol, Jarvis was also working to raise her energy level. She now follows Bunten's recommended vitamin regimen, faithfully taking CardioTab supplements to boost omega-3 levels and antioxidants.

And she decided to have a mammogram—her first. "It had been on my list of things to do for about six months," Jarvis said.

She also continued the WIT walk-run exercise as part of her fitness routine.

"I was running farther than I ever had before," she said. She still struggles to maintain the six-day-a-week exercise regimen that Bunten recommended. However, she's exercising frequently—walking, kick-boxing, and playing tennis once or twice a week.

"I'm a lot healthier than I was, and I thought I was healthy before," Jarvis said. "Women in Training made me more aware of what I need to do to keep my heart healthy. It gave me the push I needed to take care of myself."

In fact, this former back-burner mom may just become a marathon mom.

"I told myself I'd run a marathon before I turned 40," Jarvis said. "It's on my list." ✦



"I've always been scared of gaining weight, so I was afraid to change my eating habits."

—Elizabeth Jarvis, who lost 10 pounds by eating more, thanks to a new regimen she learned through Saint Luke's Women in Training

Well Trained

Women can learn to put their heart into being healthier

Now in its 11th year, Saint Luke's Women in Training program offers women of all ages and fitness levels the chance to talk with medical experts about heart-health issues, participate in a self-paced walk/run, and complete a series of heart-health tests.

The eight-week course is offered in conjunction with Saint Luke's Muriel I. Kauffman Women's Heart Center. It's held once a week from 6:30 to 8 p.m., on different nights at three Saint Luke's locations. The program costs \$35.

Each session opens with a 15-minute talk by medical experts, who share the latest information on heart, breast, bone, and bladder health, as well as nutrition, diabetes, and injury prevention. Next is an hour-long walk/run at each woman's pace.

An optional but valuable part of the program is the heart screening. For no

additional charge, the participants receive a complete:

- Cholesterol profile
- Thyroid and glucose check (for diabetes)
- Blood tests and blood pressure check
- Weight and waist circumference measurement

Michelle Dew, M.D., a cardiologist who specializes in women's cardiac care, spearheads this part of the program. She's built in a six-month follow-up screening plan to keep participants motivated.

"Raising awareness about heart health is great, but we also want to see how much we can affect results," Dr. Dew said. "It's easier when you can follow a plan."

The 2008 program begins the week of March 31 at three locations, every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

To register, visit saintlukeshealthsystem.org or call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

And tell your girlfriend. ✦

Catalyst for change Elizabeth Jarvis learned she wasn't as healthy as she believed when she had a heart-health screening through Saint Luke's Women in Training program.

