



Neighbor Spotlight: Evalyn D. Keep the Faith

Evalyn D., never thought she would wind-up in a hospital breathing with a ventilator or even be close to dying. She survived and she is going home to live independently again. Meet Evalyn; who tell us her experience in her own words:

I lived in the Capitol Region of New York all my life. I am married with two adult daughters and I also have two grandchildren. I was a clerk for the State of New York for 20 years where I worked in employee services.

I left one day in September of 2006 and said to my co-workers: “Goodbye folks - see you in two weeks,” and left for vacation. It was during the end of the first week of that vacation that I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. I was staying at home at the time.

I noticed a change in myself prior to vacation. I was starting to have more trouble walking distances and I was getting shorter of breath. A couple of years before this I had gone to see a cardiologist and he told me that I had a couple of issues related to asthma but that he thought they weren't going to be a major problem for a long time.

One night I sat on the couch to watch the 11 o'clock news and I just couldn't catch my breath. We had family staying with us during my vacation and they convinced me to go to the hospital. When I got to the hospital, my CO2 count was way high as were my vitals and they admitted me.

Evalyn D.



I remained in the hospital for five days and then I was discharged back home. I felt a bit better but when I went to see the cardiologist, he told me that my heart condition had become worse and that I wasn't a good candidate for surgery at that time and so we decided to wait a while.

In April 2007 I had an aortic valve replacement and a few days after that my blood pressure dropped very low. It didn't look good for me, and the hospital called my husband and told him if he wants to see me he had better come right away. He came and somehow I got through it all but I was in the hospital for a month after that. From the hospital I went to a local rehab in the Albany area, but I kept going back to the hospital and I was readmitted again and stayed two weeks.

I didn't want to go back to the rehab in Albany that I had been at; I felt they did not understand my condition and they worked me too hard for the condition I was in, so I went to another nursing home and stayed from May to October of that year and then I was finally able to go home.

I was home but five days and my condition deteriorated and I was admitted to the hospital again and ended up in intensive care and breathing on a ventilator. I was close to dying but somehow I got through it.

I thought why did they do this to me? Being on the ventilator, I couldn't talk and sometimes I wasn't sure that I would survive, but I have a lot of grit along with a good strong faith in God and I'm just too stubborn to die but I needed help.

Two hospitalizations, major surgery, being placed on a mechanical ventilator and repeated failed rehabilitation stays made for a dire situation. Evalyn and her family needed a program with the expertise and experience to provide the kind of care and rehabilitation as well as expertise in ventilator weaning that would give her the best outcome so she could get well and go home. That Program was Northeast Center for Special Care.

I came to Northeast Center for Special Care here in Kingston, in November. I was still on a ventilator when I arrived and early in 2008 and soon I was weaned off the vent and I haven't been back on since. I learned to use the trach to breathe and eventually even that was removed. Then I could talk and eat normal.

My respiratory therapists here at the Center started cutting back on my oxygen. I still use oxygen some; I'm down to only one liter a day and the rest of the time I breathe mostly on my own. That's a good feeling after what I had been through and I'm thankful for the help I've received here.

When I first came to Northeast Center, I could barely stand up. I began working with physical therapy and occupational therapy. At first they got me so I could stand and sit, then I worked-up to walking a few steps on the parallel bars. Now I can walk eighty feet and I'm working on walking up and down the stairs in the PT Gym. I'm so much better that I can do some of the activities here. I have painted in the art studio as well as worked on crafts.

Because I've improved so much, I'm going home soon and I can't wait. They are installing a ramp at my house for me to use. My family is planning on a big party for me and I really hope I can get out to church as well. I haven't been to church in a year. I've had a lot of people across the country praying for me; there is a lot of support from my church and my Pastor has been down to visit me here. I'm very involved in my church; I am a Stephen Minister, which is a caring lay ministry. I did that right up until I got sick. Stephen Ministers help people through hard times - I even had a Stephen Mister while I was here at Northeast Center.

My husband was also a great support for me. He was here a lot day and night. The open visiting hours at Northeast Center allowed him to support me like that and it's wonderful to be able to have your family with you.



Evalyn with Northeast Center staff: (R to L top) Christina Stevens, CNA, Edna Blanchfield, PTA, (R to L bottom) Chastity Martinez, CNA, and Michael Quick, CNA.

Evalyn has been through some trying times and she offers some helpful words to others who are experiencing similar respiratory challenges:

If I could say something to someone who is going through what I have gone through, I would tell them to keep up their courage, do the things others ask you to do so you can get better - work hard and help yourself you can get through it. You also need good help you like I got here.

There are a lot of good people who helped me at Northeast Center, the nurses and the aides especially. Also a great help was Christina, my occupational therapist, and Sangita and Edna who were my physical therapists.

There are a lot of caring people at Northeast Center who try their best to make your stay a good one both in your needs and your recovery. The staff likes to keep you motivated and happy while you're here. And because of the work they do, I am able to go back home to live and be with everyone I care about. I'm grateful to God for watching over to me and my family and church for supporting me and I'm grateful to Northeast Center for helping me get my life back and go home.

Evalyn is one of the hundreds of Northeast Center Resident-Neighbors who have been able to wean from ventilators, get better and learn to live healthy and reintegrate back to their homes.

We have a long history of successful outcomes in working with people who have difficult respiratory conditions, including many like Evalyn, who have not done well at other programs.

Rehabilitation, recovery, and reentry is the mission and passion for our remarkable staff in the specialty rehabilitation programs at Northeast Center for Special Care.

Evalyn with Christina Stevens, CNA, (R) and Edna Blanchfield, PTA, (L).

