

## **Living Well can help with chronic conditions**

*By Ellen Waldman*

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As people age, it is not unusual for some to develop a long-term health issue. Diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, asthma, cardiac difficulties and cancer are not always curable, but can be managed quite well.

In our Rogue Valley of bountiful offerings, there is one program that stands out for its expert guidance and support for people who have one or more chronic medical conditions. These classes are called “Living Well with Chronic Health Problems” and are offered at various locations and dates in Jackson County. From the Living Well website ([www.sohealthyoregon.org](http://www.sohealthyoregon.org); 541-664-8611 or 541-864-9611), read this background information:

“This effort (meaning these classes) responds to the increasing presence of aging adults in the Rogue Valley and the accompanying reality of increased longevity and its companion, chronic disease. According to “The State of Aging and Health in America,” 2004, 80-plus percent of people over age 65 have one chronic disease condition; 50 percent have two or more. In Southern Oregon, there has been a 40 percent increase in the older adult population since the 2000 census, with half of all older adults expected to live to age 90 or beyond. The projected cost of health care for an elderly, chronically ill population challenges communities to explore new approaches.”

This six-week series of interactive workshops teaches people how to manage their medical conditions and their lives with healthier choices. The program was developed by Stanford University in the 1990s to help people more effectively manage their chronic diseases conditions. All the volunteer teachers have been well-trained and offer great support to the students.

Through these classes, many people feel like they can regain some sense of control over what they are facing with their ongoing health situations. There are Living Well classes starting all the time, so I encourage you to go to their website for current and upcoming workshops. Here are the different options available in Medford: “Living Well with Chronic Conditions,” “Living Well with Chronic Pain” and “Living Well with Diabetes.”

If you prefer to study on your own, you can enroll in “Better Choices, Better Health,” the free online version of Living Well, by visiting: <https://selfmanage.org/BetterHealth/SignUp>. There is no cost for these workshops. For a brief introduction to both in-person and online workshops, go to: <http://restartliving.org/learnHowItWorks.php>, for a video from the National Council on Aging.

In addition, the reference book written by the Stanford University program developers, “Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions,” is available at our own Ashland library.

One more local support to taking charge of your own health is a class held here in Ashland through the Parks and Recreation Department. It’s called “Building Bones Step-by-Step,” taught by Carol Lee Rogers. This class was designed from research at Oregon State University’s Bone Research Laboratory using balance and strength exercises to reduce the risk of falling and to slow the effects of osteoporosis.

There are three different sessions and the cost is reasonable. Register by calling the Ashland Parks and Recreation office at 541-488-5340. You can also check out Carol Lee's website for her other classes at: [www.YouCanDoItNow.net](http://www.YouCanDoItNow.net).

I know there are many wonderful and wide-ranging classes offered all over Ashland and Medford, and I hope to feature them in future columns. But you will be well-served in a positive, supportive way, by attending these excellent classes for chronic medical conditions. We all wish there was a cure for whatever ails us, but next best is having the tools to live our healthiest life, whatever we are facing.