

## A Personal Story

My mother was a vivacious, fiercely intelligent, beautiful and thoughtful woman. I looked to her for mentoring and advice. I looked to her for a soft shoulder. I looked to her for unwavering support.



Berlinda  
Tyler-Jamison

And then, at just 59 years of age, my mother suffered a life-challenging and -changing event. My mother had a stroke. Stroke has profound implications for whole families, as my husband and I soon discovered. Mama needed constant care after she was discharged from the hospital, so she came to live with us. It was a huge challenge for her to regain some ability to walk. The simple, everyday tasks of selfcare became events that required tending by someone else.

Caring for my mother following her stroke was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I felt such grief for her loss, for my loss. I felt such powerlessness. I felt such frustration.

I also felt more rewarded than I could have dreamed. What a blessing to be able to care for the woman who had cared for me!

My experience tells me how wonderful Trinity Medical Center's new Stroke Camp is for stroke survivors and caregivers. I'd have given anything for a chance to give Mama some joy and fun with other stroke survivors. I'd have given anything to have some joy and fun with other caregivers. I am particularly proud of Trinity Health Foundation for funding this meaningful program. Let me echo Dorothy and Earl Gift when they say in our feature story, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, to all of our wonderful donors!

Blessings,



Berlinda Tyler-Jamison  
President, Trinity Health Foundation



Earl and Dorothy Gift say the road back from his stroke in May, 2007 was made smoother with the help of Trinity therapists and other stroke survivors.

## The Can-Do Spirit of a Survivor

On a pretty May morning three years ago, Earl Gift, Coal Valley, got out of bed feeling "funny." He sat down at his computer as he always does, but suddenly couldn't figure out how to use it. He asked his wife, Dorothy, for assistance but she couldn't understand his "babbling."

Earl was having a stroke.

As the third largest cause of death in the U.S., stroke also ranks as the leading cause of disability among U.S. adults. Four million Americans live with the after-effects of stroke, with memory lapses, language problems, physical disabilities and more.

Although that wasn't on Dorothy's mind as Earl was rushed to the hospital, she did begin to understand the enormity of his – and her – problem throughout the following days. Earl couldn't understand what was being said to him, and he couldn't make himself understood. The road back was going to be long and difficult.

"One therapist doubted Earl could recover much, but I knew he would," Dorothy says. "He just needed time."

"It's still in here," Earl says, nodding and pointing at his head. "It just takes a while. A speech therapist asked me to name a farm animal not too long after my stroke. Ten minutes later I shouted, Horse! He was walking down the hall but he heard me. The Trinity therapists really worked with me. They were great."

Earl still speaks haltingly and sometimes answers the wrong question. But he and Dorothy are busy, vigorous and happy in their retirement – they are both 68 – and credit Trinity therapists, their stroke survivors' group and Trinity Health Foundation for funding Trinity Medical Center's new Stroke Camp.

### Stroke Camp

Founded in Peoria by a stroke survivor's wife in 2004, Retreat & Refresh Stroke Camp

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## The Can-Do Spirit continued

allows survivors and caregivers to get away from it all for a weekend of sharing, crafts, entertainment and pampering. Trinity speech pathologist Kristin Koenig, who has been attending the camp for years as a volunteer, thought the Quad-City area needed a similar weekend camp. Together with other Trinity therapists and funding from Trinity Health Foundation, she succeeded in bringing it to nearby Camp Menno Haven, Tiskelwa, Ill., in August.

"We had an amazing time," Koenig says. "The campers were willing to try things that they'd never try alone or at home. For example, two survivors – one with a weak left side and one with a weak right side - decided to go paddle boating together. To see them working as a team that way was unforgettable. The caregivers were unforgettable too, sharing about how happy they were to see their loved ones socializing and laughing again."

### Rich Rewards

Koenig says camp experiences help create a can-do attitude among caregivers and survivors as they head back home.

"Stroke survivors and caregivers sometimes get down because of what they can no longer do," she says. "Camp shows them that they can do things. Maybe not in the same way as before the stroke, but in a new way."

The campers weren't the only folks to leave with new insights and joy. The 13 Trinity therapists who volunteered at the camp were richly rewarded as well. "Camp gives us a whole new perspective on what



Earl and Dorothy paint gourds during a Stroke Camp activity in Tiskelwa, Ill.

life is really like for stroke survivors and caregivers," Koenig says. "We become better clinicians for this experience. And better people. The survivors are such an inspiration."

### Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

Earl and Dorothy, who attended the Peoria camps before coming to Trinity's camp in August, say they can't imagine a better way to spend a weekend. "There are millions of us stroke survivors, and we're all different," Earl says. "But we all have a lot in common too. It's encouraging to be together."

Earl encouraged others at camp by making and handing out communication cards for survivors to use in situations when their words won't come. The cards are printed with: "I have aphasia due to a

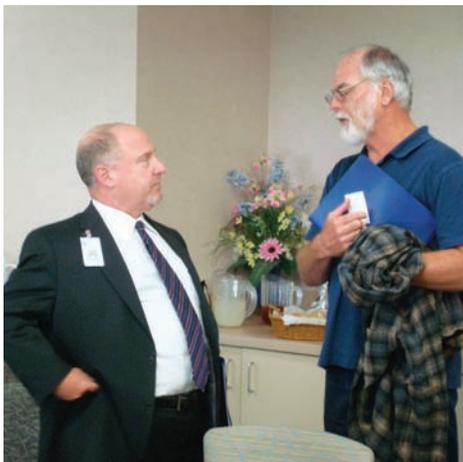
stroke. It is hard for me to speak, read and write. I usually understand what is said, but it helps if you speak clearly. I would appreciate your help and patience. Thank You, Thank You, Thank you."

Dorothy says Earl himself used one recently at a store, and had excellent results.

"We share stories like this at camp," Dorothy says. "We encourage each other and give each other new ideas. We are both very grateful to Trinity Health Foundation for funding this camp. What a wonderful experience. As Earl says, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, to Trinity Health Foundation."

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For more information about Trinity Stroke Support Groups or Stroke Camp, call Kristin Koenig at (309) 779-3872.



## Honoring Trinity Retirees

Trinity's quarterly Retirees' Luncheon was held Tues. Aug. 24, at Trinity Moline. Shown at far left are Rick Seidler, Trinity CEO (left) with Ken Keller (retired from Robert Young Center). Shown on right are Lynn Batcher (left, retired Trinity chaplain) and Dee Lazio (retired Trinity Continuing Medical Education Coordinator).