

# Stroke Support: Survivors Become Givers of Support

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Penn State Hershey Medical Center

## Background

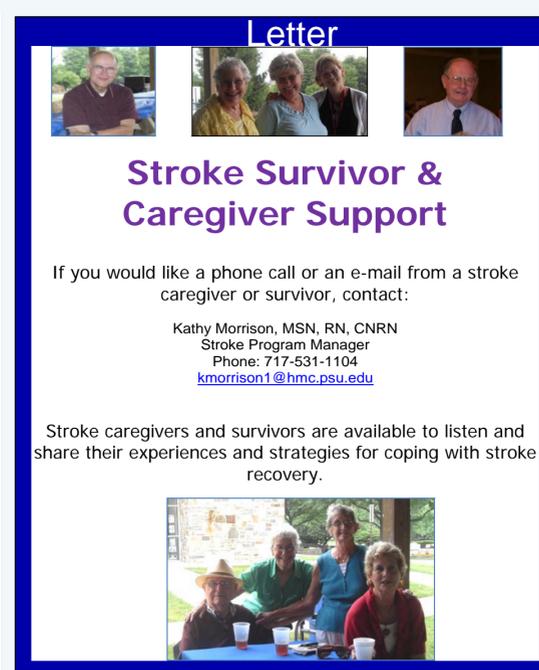
Stroke recovery is a different experience for every survivor. The recovery process can continue for many years after the initial event. Reintegration into the community can be difficult, as stroke patients have both short and long-term needs. A stroke support group must be flexible enough to assist patients over the time spectrum of their recovery. Our stroke support group was established 21 years ago and has many of the original members still active as leaders. Because younger people are having strokes and have different recovery demands, we were concerned that our program had not evolved to meet the full spectrum of our patients' needs.

## Purpose

To evaluate our current program with the goal to update and expand its programming, and to facilitate the passion of the members to provide outreach to others.



Schedule		
Month	Topic	Speaker
July 2011	Planning for next year	Group
August	BIONESS Device	Neil Dorfman
September	History of Hershey Medical Center	Judy Dillon, RN
October	Open session	Group
November	"I Can" Ability Specialists	Reuben & Debbie Balasundram
December	Christmas Celebration Entertainment: Harp Music	
January 2012	3:30 RLS	Dr. Stacey Clardy
February	CPR and IED's in the Community	Dr. John Field
March	Making Sense of Your Medications	Cindy Halas - Pharmacist
April	Kids' Stroke Awareness Poster judging - Open session	Group
May	Strike Back at Stroke Celebration - Poster Award recipients honored	
June	Summer Picnic	



**Stroke Survivor & Caregiver Support**

If you would like a phone call or an e-mail from a stroke caregiver or survivor, contact:

Kathy Morrison, MSN, RN, CNRN  
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Stroke caregivers and survivors are available to listen and share their experiences and strategies for coping with stroke recovery.

## Results

- ❖ New brochure created with snapshots of members to reinforce that stroke survivors can still be active
- ❖ Established 2 meeting times on the same day:
  - ▶ afternoon meeting for those who want to be home before dark
  - ▶ evening meeting for those who want to attend after work
- ❖ Group name changed to "Survivors and Thrivers"
- ❖ List of members willing to visit patients in the hospital, or to make phone calls to stroke patients and their caregivers
- ❖ Letter sent home with every stroke patient offering call or visit
- ❖ Steering committee created to facilitate meeting organization
- ❖ Meeting content selected by group members. Steering committee finds speakers, as needed. Quarterly sessions are devoted to open discussion for idea sharing and questions.

- ❖ Information provided via social media sites, email, and the stroke center web site in addition to traditional mailings
- ❖ Both groups walk together in the annual American Heart Association Heart and Stroke Walk.

## Conclusions

Involving members of the stroke support group to participate in the structure and function of the program has increased member satisfaction, improved attendance at meetings, and allowed the program to reach a broader range of survivors. As a result, the support group has become empowered to meet the needs of more stroke survivors and their caregivers in our community – helping them to become "Thrivers" as well.

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