



Valerie Walker gets fit at the MCC Recreation & Fitness Center

By Lori Hansen

Four years ago, Valerie Walker, of Crystal, was a heart patient, fighting diabetes, struggling to keep up with her grandchildren, and weighed 174 pounds. She didn't like how she felt or looked.

Walker, now age 64, knew something had to change. She also knew she was the one who had to do something about it.

"I'd begun swimming at Montcalm Community College and got to know John (Davis, MCC Auxiliary Services Manager). I learned that he offers a wellness program, and decided to look into it," Walker said.

With Davis's background as a fitness trainer, personal trainer and nutrition coach, he and Walker met and talked about her goals.

"We do a nutritional evaluation and look at workouts, and look at that person's goals. We decide what they want to accomplish and what the roadblocks might be, and what we have to do to not go that way. We try to tailor it to them, then make updates or changes when necessary," Davis said.

"With Val's case, she was ready to make a change. She stayed determined to do this, and we are happy to be a facility to help people achieve their health goals and succeed. It was a great opportunity for me to watch her," Davis said.

"John helped me get set up where I do strength training, the pool, floor workouts and ab workouts. Each day is different. I might do yoga or Pilates, but it is really good because I am not just focusing on one part of the body, but the whole body," Walker said.

"There are a lot of options with the pool, the rock climbing, the fitness center. There is so much to offer," she added.

Along with fitness, Davis and Walker also looked at her diet.

"I'm eating a lot healthier. It is a much more plant-based way of eating. I don't call it a diet. I don't count carbs, but follow a sort of whole foods and vegan meal plans," she said.

Over the four years, Walker has dropped 42 pounds, has gotten her A1C down, and "I feel so much better," she said.

"I don't want to be a person who has to worry if they are going to fall and break a bone. I have better posture. I didn't realize I was that heavy. And I credit a lot to John as he has helped me so much," Walker said.

Walker explained that she had almost always been an active person "until I retired. Then I just began packing on weight."

With eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way, she wanted to make some changes.

"I wanted to be around for the grandkids and great-grandkids. I don't want to slow down. But I just didn't have the energy to do much," she added.

"Some days I wake up and think, 'Oh, I don't want to workout today.' But then I do it anyway and find it is a real mood booster, it is really uplifting. And then it is knowing that it is the first thing in the morning, but I've already accomplished something," Walker said.

"If you fail, or cheat, you just start over again. You just keep going. But you have to do this for yourself. You have to be motivated by you," she said.

Walker said she is glad to have the support from MCC's Recreation & Fitness Center.

"It is our college, those of us who live in Montcalm County. It's not just for college students. There is something there for everyone," she said.

Davis agreed.

"Our facilities are for all ages. You don't have to be a student here. It's available for everyone." ■



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