



www.agewisekingcounty.org | November 2012

Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives Helps Kent Veteran Succeed at Problem-Solving

In 2007, U.S. Navy veteran Cliff Davis owned a specialty roofing business. He accidentally fell three stories from a roof and shattered both legs and both knees. He subsequently experienced additional health problems and found himself down and discouraged.

Davis was referred to the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives (PEARLS), an evidence-based practice offered by Aging and Disability Services that helps older people with medical problems to improve their mood and enjoy life more. Developed by the University of Washington about 10 years ago, PEARLS is now offered in 33 cities around the country.

When PEARLS counselor Carl Kaiser contacted him, Davis shared that he was having health problems and felt discouraged. The two met in Davis' home and agreed to work through the challenges together.

PEARLS, a free life skills training program, motivated Davis to take steps to improve his life. He implemented his own strategy to manage his blood sugar levels. Consequently, his doctor recently approved a long-awaited knee surgery, scheduled next month.



Veteran Cliff Davis learned to tackle problems one at a time.

The PEARLS method teaches that one of the best ways to help with depression is to increase physical and social activities. Davis now disciplines himself to get up and walk, even a short distance, every two hours, to build strength prior to surgery and to improve his mood.

Living in a close apartment with limited mobility for three years, and in a rehabilitation center for an extended time before that, has been frustrating for Davis, who was used to an active life. One challenge has been to keep frustration in check. Using problem-solving methods he learned in PEARLS, Davis decided to discuss this with his doctor and subsequently was referred to an anger management therapist.

To address the social activity, Mr. Davis has found creative ways to spend more quality time with his wife. He joined Netflix so that he and his wife can enjoy their favorite movies.

Now that he has nearly completed the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives, 58-year-old Davis plans to pursue new activities that will help him maintain his positive mood. He hopes to find volunteer work to help low-income people to fix or repair things around their

households. He also wants to drive a golf cart for a golfer-friend and continue to find ways to spend quality time with his wife.

"The program gave me a different way to look at things in my life ... I learned to break big problems into small tasks that I could tackle one at a time in baby steps," said Davis.

"Cliff was able to make some significant improvements in his life through the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives," said counselor Carl Kaiser. "Credit for this success goes to Cliff, who decided what problems to tackle and how best to solve them. I was there to provide assistance and encouragement, but he did the work."

Rewarding U.S. Navy experience

Mr. Davis joined the Navy in 1973 in order to get out on his own and be with his best friend, who joined the Navy at the same time. He trained at the Great Lakes Naval Station near Chicago to be an engineman. During his tour, he maintained and repaired ship engines, visited Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Australia, and spent several months repairing a gunboat engine on the Dong Nai River in Vietnam.

The Navy helped Davis learn self-discipline. He found that he had more physical and mental strength than he realized, and learned that he could handle emergencies such as shipboard fires.

Davis says he "grew up" and made lifelong friends during his Navy years; however, the experience was not all positive. For example, Davis was frustrated by the complex, expensive, and time-consuming process he had to follow in order to obtain engine parts. But if he had it to do over again, Davis says he would still join the Navy, especially because sailors are able to travel to many parts of the world.

PEARLS helps veterans set goals and solve problems

This year, the King County Veteran's and Human Services Levy provided funds to Aging and Disability Services to reach out to older veterans. The Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives helps veterans who are down, blue, sad, or who have lost interest in doing things.

Interested veterans must have served at least six months and received an honorable discharge. They also need to be at least 55 years old and live in King County. The program also serves the wives, domestic partners, or widows/ers of veterans. PEARLS life skills coaches visit veterans in their homes eight times over the course of six months, and check-in by phone for several months after participants graduate from the program.

—Paul Snow, Aging and Disability Service



PEARLS for Veterans

ADS case manager/counselor and Vietnam veteran Paul Snow shared his personal story in a three-minute video called "The Program to Encourage Rewarding Active Lives: A Digital Story," available online at www.agingkingcounty.org/veterans.

Paul is available to talk with veterans and organizations serving veterans about the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives. Weekday, evening, and weekend times are available.

For more information, call Paul at 206-615-0533, e-mail paul.snow@seattle.gov, or visit www.agingkingcounty.org/veterans.
