

The gift of Life

While there are many ways to improve your quality of life, whether it be emotionally, socially or physically, when it is done with love, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

By Susan McInerney

A few years back, my mother, CC went in the hospital for a heart valve replacement. By the grace of God the surgery went well. Unfortunately, within a few days she developed a life threatening staff infection that would set up a chain of life changing events. This is when my Mom's courage and fight for life began.

When the doctors gave her no hope for survival, our family and friends united to fight along with her and do whatever it took to save her life. Bed ridden in the hospital, with very little therapy, my dear friend and now business partner, Heather, decided to write a program for the family to help build my mom's strength. Using a deck of cards and following the exercise chart, your job as a visitor was to do five cards (which equated to performing five simple body weight exercises) with CC before your social time with her began. Thank God my wonderful family and friends took their roles as pseudo-physical therapists very seriously.

Each day CC grew stronger and she was finally released from the hospital; however, she was still very weak. Heather and I continued to visit my mother several times a day to perform additional physical and occupational therapy, which gave my mother hope. Together we set and implemented goals to aid CC in her fight for life.

Goal #1 was to see her grandson graduate high school and her granddaughter graduate grade school. **Six months later, CC got her wish.** Goal #2 was to see her grandson play college football and baseball and her granddaughter play high school volleyball and softball. **Four years and many games late – CC got her wish.**



Of course none of these goals would have been attainable without the many people who helped care for her. But the one thing we all learned was that courage + hard work + love = *Dreams and goals do come true.*

Sadly, my mother did not reach her final goal of spending Thanksgiving 2007 with her family. Although she passed away in early November, we did have five extra years with her due to her passion for life and our commitment to her rehabilitation.

As a result of what we had learned with CC's rehabilitation, we took the exercises that had worked best and began piloting them with other individuals in similar situations. Over time we were able to develop a series of exercises that were both functional and progressive in nature. We paired the suits from a deck of cards with various body weight exercises to create a product now known as Functional Flip Fitness. Whether you choose this program or some other form of interaction, the most important thing you can do is to get the person moving. Don't be afraid to get involved, to ask questions and request more help if needed. Push for more physical therapy. Ask the hard questions to the doctors, nurses and physician's assistants. Don't be satisfied with fifteen minutes of "physical therapy" twice a week because that is all the insurance company will pay for or that the patient will do. You MUST take an active role in the rehabilitation of your loved one and help push them to the next level of wellness, movement and overall health.

Of all the things I have learned throughout



the years, if you are ever faced with the dreaded "There's nothing more we can do," use the time to LIVE not to die. As I sit here on the one-year anniversary of my mom's death, it is not with sadness but rather reflecting on the wonderful times we spent together. I know how imperative physical movement was to her recovery. If she had been left bedridden the results would have been different and we would not have had the additional five years of experiences and memories that I will cherish forever. If I can implore you to do anything, please find a way to take an active role in your loved one's recovery or even in his or her general wellness program.

Make this the year that you promise to give the gift of health to yourself and to your family members. Your life is a gift – cherish it and find a way to pass this gift on to all those who are special to you.

DON'T JUST GIVE A GIFT. GIVE THE GIFT OF HEALTH.

Susan McInerney is a Fitness Director for the Summit Park Communities in Roxborough and has over twenty-five years of group fitness and personal training experience. She holds a vast number of fitness certifications and is Co-Owner of Flip Fitness, LLC. Contact Susan at Susan@phillyfitmagazine.com