

Su Mercier has been a resident of Beaufort for 45 years. Originally from New York, she is a retired teacher, having taught at Broad River Elementary, and English as a second language at Beaufort High and Battery Creek High. Last year, while on vacation out of the country Su suddenly had a problem walking. This is her Y story.

“When I was on a trip to Russia all of a sudden I could not walk very well. I was pulling my right leg and felt as if I could not take another step. At the time I thought, “Well, it’s just because I’m tired and the excitement of being on vacation has me a little off”. But it kept getting worse and by the time I was on my way home I had to use a wheelchair in the airport.



Su Mercier, YMCA member and fitness fan, July 2015.

When I returned to Beaufort, I went to my doctor and got an MRI. The MRI showed I have damage to my lower spine. So my doctor sent me to a neurologist where I had three more MRIs. The neurologist told me that my neck, upper and lower spine is damaged and any of these could be the cause of my walking difficulty. Luckily my brain was good!

At this point I asked the neurologist if he thought I would ever get better. And he said, “No, to be honest I really don’t think so. Hopefully you won’t get any worse, but I don’t know if you’ll ever get any better.” He recommended physical therapy. It was then that I decided that I was not going to let this thing get the better of me, to defeat me!

I went to physical therapy and they recommended I start using a walker. The physical therapist also gave me exercises to use here at the YMCA – with the machines in the fitness center and ones to do in the pool.

Before I went to physical therapy, Mike (Bostwick, YMCA CEO) told me to bring back the exercises I need to do and that he would help me with them. He said, “I’ll go back there (the fitness center) with you and make sure you use the equipment correctly.”

So he did that and helped me get started, showing me how to set up the machines just for me. If it hadn’t been for Mike I don’t think I would have made it very far. He told me not to use too much weight; it’s the repetition that counts.

So I started the exercise regime and Mike checked on me regularly. The guys in the back (in the fitness center) also really supported me, helping me when I needed it and encouraging me. Sometimes I would get discouraged and there was always someone here at the Y to motivate me forward.

I had no idea the other members were paying any attention to me! I thought they were probably scoffing, saying "the old goat is back there!", but it was actually quite the opposite! When I would get discouraged and felt like crying they would say to me, "Hey you're doing great. You can do it!" They told me they had been watching my progress and wished they had a video to show me how I struggled with the walker when I first came back, so I could see how far I've come.



Honestly, I don't think I could have done this without all the support. I don't think those Y members realize how much they have all helped me just by the encouragement. My good friend Pat Sanders has also been very supportive, swimming with me in the Y pool, using the machines and dieting.

Now I am back seeing my regular doctor, Dr. Clark Trask. I'm on a diet and so far I've lost 60 pounds. I think losing weight and adding exercise has had a lot to do with where I am today. No longer do I use the walker. I WAS a diabetic on pills and shots. Now I am NOT a diabetic!

I see Dr. Trask once a month to check that everything with my diet and exercise regime is on track, and get even more encouragement. Thank you Dr. Trask! I have been able to reduce or eliminate many medications so that now all I take is 1 pill a day where as I WAS taking 6-8 prescriptions a day! My blood pressure is better that it has ever been.

I never thought I would be so fortunate to have this team at the YMCA plus my doctor to help me. People need to know that the Y is here to help them and all you need do is to make an effort - just ask questions and start a conversation. My secret is the Y ... the Y and eating right.



Su works out on the machines in the Y fitness center. She also swims in the Y pool and has been dieting - so far losing 60 pounds! Way to go Su!

I will say that motivation has kept me on my diet for 6 months - with no cheating! I made up my mind that I wanted to do this and I am committed to sticking to it. Yes, it is a long hard road, but it's a steady pace that will win the race.

Long term, my goal is to get back to traveling. I love to travel! I'd like to go back to Costa del Sol, Spain this fall but I've got to lose another 10-15 pounds and feel confident in wearing a two-piece bathing suit like the older European women

wear. My daughter, who lives in England, has told me she will be there when that happens – to see me in a two-piece suit. So that’s my goal – when I meet it, I’m going!

There are many times when I thought I would not get this far and my journey toward better health would fail. It takes commitment and a ‘don’t give up attitude.’ I have good people to back me up – Dr. Trask, Mike Bostwick, Pat Sanders, and the Y members – without them I truly believe I would not have made it so far.”