



HENDERSON, KY. - Keith Scott knew he didn't feel well just over a year ago when a couple of routine blood-pressure checks with elevated numbers sent him to a clinic for more investigation.

But what he did not know was that in 12 months he would have a changed lifestyle.

Scott found out that he not only had high blood pressure and his cholesterol was "out of whack," putting him at higher risk for a heart attack, and that he had developed diabetes.

There had been some other clues about diabetes, he now realizes, including some minor vision problems.

"I just didn't make the connection at the time," Scott said.

With that diagnosis, he knew he needed to make some changes.

But now, during Heart Health Month, Scott can say that by educating himself and staying motivated he's dropped 50 pounds that have been off since July and has been able to get off the diabetes medication he started a year ago.

"I've started exercising even more," Scott said. "I don't want to go back on medicine."

He's given his testimony to participants in the "Living Healthy" education programs at the hospital and spoke at a Diabetes Awareness 5K back in the fall.

That's a long way from the initial alarms when he was first called back to the clinic to go over blood work and instructed to bring his wife with him.

"They didn't tell me anything I didn't think we could manage," Scott said, noting that two good friends had just died, one a suicide and one to cancer, so managing diabetes and heart risks seemed to him to be a conquerable problem. "I told Vicki that it was something we could manage, and everything was going to be OK."

Scott's health success story unfolded even through the added stress of helping his late wife Vicki through the end stages of her life and while he was taking on a new assignment as plant manager of Big Rivers' Kenneth C. Coleman (Hancock County) and D.B. Wilson (Ohio County) power generating plants.

His first step was establishing a relationship with a regular doctor who could advise him in a course of action.

Dr. Amy Khera discussed his diagnosis and put him on diabetes medication, and she told him he needed to go through the diabetes self-management education program at Methodist Hospital to learn how to manage his condition.

"He was very eager to learn exactly what he could eat and what he couldn't," said Danielle Hazelwood, the wellness dietitian who worked with Scott. "He had lost some weight and was already at the motivated state."

She set up a 2,000-calorie meal plan for him, showing him how to balance his carbohydrates and read labels.

“He wanted me to explain everything to him and he took it and ran with it. He followed his meal plan,” Hazelwood said, noting that soon Scott was bringing her photocopies of product labels. “He was teaching me things.”

She said the outpatient classes teach a person everything they need to know to “keep blood sugar in control and live a long and healthy life.”

Hazelwood said Scott took that promise to heart.

“He has done amazing things through diet and exercise,” she said. “That is such a success story.”

As he learned, Scott said, he kept a log of milestones to keep himself motivated.

Hazelwood wanted him to lose 28 pounds in six months. Scott wanted to do more.

“That’s was a pound a week, and I thought I could do that,” he recalls. His goal was for 50 pounds, but he tackled it at 10-pound stages in order not to get frustrated.

“I knew it had to be a lifestyle change and change of eating habits,” Scott said, noting that he and his late wife both attended the classes.

“She was a big part of my success story,” he said, adding that even when she was having her own very serious health problems she was continually asking him about his diet, his exercise and his blood sugar and blood pressure numbers. “The biggest thing was learning to manage it instead of it managing me.”

He said he started eating healthier foods than he had been and increased his water intake to help keep his system flushed out.

“One thing Danielle told me is that I could eat anything I wanted, but it’s about moderation and portion control,” Scott said, confessing his weakness for mashed potatoes. “She told me I could eat them but I have to limit them.”

He learned all about how different foods work together and how to make better choices.

Scott used breakfast as an example. He eats 1 cup cooked oatmeal with no-sugar-added peaches, about 15-16 almonds and brown sugar Splenda.

“When I get up in the morning, I’m looking forward to my breakfast,” Scott said. “It’s like eating a bowl of biscuits and gravy.”

He said the meal plan Hazelwood helped him develop doesn’t require that he eats certain things, but simply offers ideas.

“I eat a lot of salmon and I eat a lot of chicken,” he said, and has learned to substitute a sweet potato for the white potatoes he loves.

“Breads and starches are the things I had to manage,” Scott said.

He started walking every day, and started building up the time he could spend at it.

He spoke at a Diabetes Awareness event in March, and his numbers had already improved through a combination of diet, weight loss and medication.

By the time his wife was admitted to the hospital in Louisville at Easter and passed away a few weeks later in mid-May, Scott had already lost 34 pounds.

“It was a remarkable gain in a short period of time,” Scott noted, adding that by July he had lost the 50 pounds he’d set out to drop. Since then he’s been able to maintain.

He knows he’s got to keep his focus.

“A lot of people lose weight, but finding it back can be a problem,” Scott said.



Keith Scott exercising with his girl friend Julie Gabhart in her home gym near Robards recently. Scott has become a "poster child" of managing diabetes and high blood pressure through lifestyle modification (diet and exercise), Jan. 29, 2015.