

## Couple Gains Support through Each Other

For Gary and Karen Wright of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, their goal in life is to “die healthy”. Had it not been for the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease\* this goal may have not been achievable.

Karen had always considered herself a healthy person. She had no family history, warning signs or risk factors for heart disease. It wasn't until September 22, 2001, eleven days after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, that Karen came to realize that her many years of living with stress would affect her health. On

that day she experienced an “uneasy feeling” and pain in the middle of her chest. Passing it off as indigestion, she tried to get through the rest of the day. However, that night, after going to bed, she awoke in a cold sweat with a feeling that her chest and both arms were on fire. She knew then that something was definitely wrong.

After arriving at the emergency room that evening, she discovered she was having a heart attack. Later, Karen underwent a heart catheterization and her doctors reported that she had a 95% blockage in one of her arteries and was going to require surgery to insert a stint. While recovering in cardiac rehab, a nurse suggested to Karen that she read one of the books written by Dr. Dean Ornish. Karen took her advice, and after reading the book, knew that this was something she would like to pursue. However, at the time, Karen was still working as a teacher and was very involved with her family, so making the commitment was difficult.



In 2003, at approximately 282 pounds, Gary had begun to not feel well while working on his rental property. He had started to notice that he would get short of breath while doing simple tasks. Many times, Gary admits that he would just ignore the issue and pass it off to “old age”. Looking back at that time period, Gary also realizes that he was depressed and would eat to feel better.

After going to the doctor, at the pleading of his wife and daughter, to have his hearing checked Gary discovered the reason why he had not been feeling well. When his hearing test came back normal, he casually started questioning the doctor about why it wasn't standard for people over the age of 50 to have a heart catheterization as part of their normal checkup. Wondering why Gary was asking such questions, the doctor asked him if he had been experiencing signs and symptoms of heart disease. It was then that Gary admitted he had some burning in his throat when recently raking leaves. At that point, the doctor sent Gary for a stress test, which he failed, and his later catheterization revealed he had two 95% blockages that also required stints.

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### Healthy Lifestyles

A quarterly newsletter for members of Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield, Inc.

Visit our website:  
[www.msbcbs.com](http://www.msbcbs.com)

Phone: (304) 347-7663  
Fax: (304) 347-7684  
E-mail: [debbie.starks@msbcbs.com](mailto:debbie.starks@msbcbs.com)  
Editor - Debbie Starks

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Because the Wrights babysit for their young granddaughters they decided to do the program at different times. Gary officially entered the Ornish Program in January 2007, and Karen started in April 2007. But together, they have experienced improvements in their health that have truly been a blessing to each.

In the fall of 2006, Karen received a letter from her insurance company inviting her and Gary to an Open House for the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease at nearby West Virginia University Hospital (WVUH) in Morgantown. After attending the Open House and reviewing the program first hand, the Wrights knew they wanted to enter the program to better their situations.

To date, Gary has lost around 72 pounds, and no longer feels like an "old man". He has noticed changes in his temperament and admits he looks at things more positively. Gary also feels he has become a better listener

as a result of his participation in the Ornish Program. The one aspect that has changed Karen's life through the Ornish Program is that she has regained her energy. Because her granddaughters are age four and eighteen months, she had found herself unable to keep up with them. Now that isn't an issue.

Karen adds that while looking back on her life she knows that stress played a big role in her health condition. She remembers going through life in a rush and never taking the time to practice stress management. When she entered the Ornish Program, Karen feared the stress management component would be the most difficult for her, however, it is now the one part she looks most forward to by regularly participating in a yoga class.

The Wrights have been married for 34 years. Gary, age 60, and Karen, 59, feel that together they have become each others motivator and support system. They are able to work together in the kitchen to follow the Ornish Program eating plan, and eating out has become much easier because they plan ahead. According to Gary, it is more convenient when your partner is eating the same healthy foods as you are, therefore, there are no "temptations" to lure you away from what you should be eating. The Wrights now realize that each day is a blessing and feel more certain that they will be able to achieve their goal in life.

## Join Us for an Experience that could Change Your Life



### "A Taste of Ornish" Open House

If you have heart disease or are at risk for developing it, now is the time to learn more about the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease®. Please join us for an Open House to learn the countless health benefits of this program. Experience and sample the four components of the program: Nutrition, Stress Management, Exercise and Group Support. Meet the professional team that will support you every step of the way in improving your heart health.

#### Find an Open House near you.

West Virginia University Hospital	Thursday, March 6, 2008	5:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Charleston Area Medical Center	Tuesday, March 11, 2008 (Registration and Heart-Healthy Food Sampling 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.)	6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
United Hospital Center	Wednesday, March 12, 2008	5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
St. Mary's Medical Center	Monday, March 17, 2008	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
The Wellness Center @ City Hospital	Thursday, April 3, 2008	6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Please call 1-800-879-2217 to register for the Open House. Space is limited.

