



**For Immediate Release:** 12.20.05

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### **Help Dealing with Chronic Diseases Offered**

If you or a loved one is sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, a free program offered by the Oak Park Department of Public Health could help you live with the pain of a chronic disease.

Residents suffering from chronic diseases are invited to participate in a workshop developed by the Division of Family and Community Medicine at Stanford University to teach symptom management and help individuals learn how to cope with the effects of a long-term illness.

The six-week *Chronic Disease Self Management Program* is scheduled to begin in mid-January, and will be facilitated by Margaret Provost-Fyfe, a nurse with the Oak Park Health Department.

"Living with a chronic disease is not easy," said Provost-Fyfe. "Dealing with the daily symptoms over a long period can take its toll on the person with the disease, as well as on members of the family. The *Chronic Disease Self Management Program* was designed to help individuals deal with the wide range of impacts their illness can have."

Classes are highly participatory, and use the *buddy system* where mutual support and success build participants' confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives. The classes are focused on making action plans and giving feedback, Provost-Fyfe said.

Subjects covered include techniques to deal with frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation, appropriate exercise, appropriate use of medications, communicating effectively with family and health professionals, nutrition and how to evaluate new treatments.

Participants of the program at Stanford University were shown to have significant improvements in exercise, cognitive symptom management, communications with physicians, self-reported general health, health distress, fatigue, disability and social/role activities limitations. They also spent fewer days in the hospital.

Any resident with a chronic disease is eligible for the workshop. For answers to or to sign up for the program, contact the Health Department at 358.5492 or [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

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