



PHYSICAL THERAPIST LIVES OUT WELLNESS AS A WAY OF LIFE

By Beth Chaplin, Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center, Lincoln, Nebraska

For Karen Stille, wellness isn't just a philosophy; it's a way of life. It's a way of life that she carries out on the job, at home and in the community.

"It's a lifestyle," says Stille, an Ashland resident who works in Lincoln as a licensed physical therapist and busy mother of three active boys. "It's the way we live our lives and I guess it just carries through to everything that we do."

Stille has no problem staying active herself, exercising two to three times a week at a local fitness center where she focuses on aerobic, strength and stretching exercises. She has to stay fit in order to keep up with her sons' sports schedules. All three boys participate in basketball, wrestling and baseball. Dennis, 9, and 6-year-old Ben, both play in the Lincoln YMCA league and the Ashland-Greenwood Soccer League, for which Stille serves as secretary. Her oldest son, Keith, referees games, and husband Kevin coaches, making it an ideal family activity.

"We have fun at it," Stille says. "That's what I try encourage my patients to do," she added. "When it's fun, you're more likely to stay active."

Stille works at Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center (MWPT) in Lincoln, where she is able to put her primary specialty to use doing aquatic therapy at a nearby indoor pool facility. Stille also sees patients in the traditional gym setting, but she particularly enjoys seeing patients benefit in the pool in ways they cannot on land.

Aquatic therapy is often utilized for people who cannot tolerate traditional, land-based physical therapy, either because of injury, or weight-bearing restrictions, which follow some types of surgery, Stille explains. "These patients tolerate aquatic therapy better," Stille says, noting that the water's buoyancy means a person only has to support 25 percent of his or her body-weight.

"That's significant," Stille said. In the case of many patients, such as those who have undergone some types of back surgery, this can mean getting a four-week jump start on rehabilitation, beginning strengthening exercises in the pool just eight weeks after surgery whereas therapy in the gymnasium must be postponed 12 weeks. Pool therapy can also provide a foundation for patients to continue in the gym later on.

"It's nice to see people be able to walk (in the water) without pain," Stille says. Patients with ailments such as arthritis and fibromyalgia especially benefit from warm-water physical therapy, Stille said.

Stille also employs a variety of physical therapy techniques for rehabilitation in Midwest's informal gymnasium facility, where therapeutic exercise is combined with functional training. "We have fun here too," Stille says of the laid-back gym atmosphere, where the goal is to educate patients to take care of themselves and to perform certain exercises on their own.

Depending on the particular needs of a patient, physical therapists may also mobilize a joint or massage a muscle to promote proper movement and function. Midwest Physical Therapy has two land locations and two pool facilities, and offers a variety of treatments including application of ice and heat, electrical stimulation, ultrasound and whirlpool.

Stille lives out Midwest Physical Therapy's philosophy, "Moving you to wellness." She holds a master's degree in health education, and is a certified strength and conditioning specialist. She is the Wellness Coordinator for Midwest Physical Therapy and is on a subcommittee of the Sarpy-Cass County Health and Wellness Committee. In addition she is vice president of the Junior Women's Club of Ashland, and vice president of St. Mary's Altar Society of St. Mary's Catholic Church where she also teaches catechism to fifth-graders.

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CUTLINE: MAKING PROGRESS – Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center's Physical Therapist Karen Stille takes a measurement for Patsy Mandery of Greenwood to determine progress in regaining the range of motion in her knee.



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