

## Tailored physical therapy helps people with Parkinson's

A suspected case of [Parkinson's disease](#) took some freedoms away from Irene Vaught.

The 74-year-old found it harder to write, watch her grandchildren's sports and just get around her St. Joseph, Illinois, home.

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Irene Vaught, patient at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"I had dizziness. I would come to a step and freeze. My body would be stiff." (:10)**

But a bigger frustration came in an unlikely venue.

Vaught and her husband have a favorite dinner spot at a buffet restaurant in Urbana, Illinois, around 20 minutes from their home. Heavy chairs and a thick carpet made the simple task of sitting down at the table difficult.

But it's not as bad anymore.

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Irene Vaught, patient at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"It's such an accomplishment. It just makes me feel so good that I can do something on my own." (:06)**

Since July of 2022, Vaught has benefitted from the [LSVT BIG® program](#), a physical therapy program tailored to people diagnosed with Parkinson's or who have symptoms of the disease. Her therapist at [OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center](#) in Urbana, Caitlin Cleveland, is the only licensed occupational therapist in the Urbana area certified in the program.

Cleveland says Parkinson's is a progressive decline in fine motor function - small muscle movements like grabbing an object - and gross motor function - large muscle movements like sitting and standing. Speech may also be slow or quiet.

The LSVT BIG program is four, one-hour sessions per week for four weeks. Physical activity like walking and stretching is paired with brain sharpeners like writing and moving toy blocks from one bin to another. Patients focus on amplifying, intensifying and calibrating their movement in order to regain control of tasks that are important to them.

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Caitlin Cleveland, occupational therapist at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"Because patients tend to do smaller and slower movements, they're not used to the intensity of what a normal step or reach would look like. So we're really trying to override that with the intensity and effort of a normal movement." (:15)**

For Vaught, Cleveland mimicked that tricky restaurant maneuver.

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Irene Vaught, patient at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"I put some leg weights on a chair and simulated it. We would work on her walking up to the chair, pulling it out, sitting and scooting forward." (:09)**

LSVT BIG® participants should continue the exercises at home. Family and caregivers can also get involved.

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Irene Vaught, patient at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"To see patients regain independence and confidence in their own ability is awesome." (:05)**

**\*\*\*SOT\*\*\***

**Irene Vaught, patient at OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois**

**"Sometimes I feel like I need more help. So when I go to see Caitlin, she just makes me feel so good. If I'm not putting out as much [energy] as I should, she makes me put it out." (:16)**

**Learn more**

Check with your primary care provider or neurologist to see if the LSVT BIG program is offered at an OSF HealthCare hospital near you. Learn more about neurological therapy on the [OSF HealthCare website](#).