

Stroke Survivors Hit the Right Note

A special group of stroke survivors treated a crowd to a performance Wednesday at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria. As their name suggests, the Chime Stokers play the chimes, but their appeal is much more than their music.

The Chime Stokers group is composed of about a dozen survivors and caretakers. They often perform at local events and churches. And while the music is beautiful, even more striking is the sense of community the group provides its members.

Earl Lee of Washington, Illinois has been a Chime Stokers member for nearly three years. Lee suffered his first stroke in January of 2014, and his second just 8 months later in September of that year.

He says the Chime Stokers – and the regiment of playing the instrument – has proven invaluable to many of the members.

“It’s just the comradery. All of us together, and you’ve really got to think. Lauren keeps us on our toes. When she points you better be ready to chime, and if you don’t stop it in time she’ll be looking at you,” Lee said of the Chime Stokers Director, Lauren Kramer. “So this [points to his head] has to be working, this [gestures with his hand] has to be working.”

The Chime Stokers signature song is called Let Me Do, which is about the struggle of living with the effects of a stroke. The chorus says, “We can cry, we can rale, we can scream and shout. I’m in here, it’s still me, please let me out.” According to Lee, getting this message in front of their audiences is an important step toward understanding.

“They think, ‘Okay, he’s done. She’s done. They can’t do anything more.’ Yes we can. We might be a little slower, it might take us a little longer, might really have to think it through, but yes we’re still the same people,” Lee explained.

The Chime Stokers has been a creative outlet for stroke survivors for 10 years. Wednesday’s performance was part of the annual stroke fair at OSF Saint Francis, an educational event held in honor of National Stroke Month.

To learn more about stroke, or to learn your risk of stroke through a free online stroke risk assessment tool, visit osfhealthcare.org/stroke.