## SOMETHING GOOD FROM EVERYTHING

## A stroke survivor's story.

It had been a normal few days for Crystal Wackerly. The active, 64-year-old wife, mother, and grandmother had spent the March 2018 weekend with friends and family celebrating St. Patrick's Day at her daughter Amy's house. But that Monday, when she returned home from helping her daughter, Catherine, at her chiropractic office, she knew something wasn't right.

As she sat down on the couch, her vision became honeycombed. She couldn't see to dial, but she was able to find her husband, Neil, in her cellphone's favorites.

"At this point, I didn't think it was a stroke," Crystal says, as she was only experiencing vision symptoms.

Her vision had improved by the time Neil arrived home, but he suspected Crystal might be having a stroke. Sure enough, when he tried to get her to stand, they discovered Crystal's left side had been affected. Her balance was gone, and she had severe nausea and vomiting. Neil immediately called for an ambulance, and Crystal was transported to McLaren Bay Region.

Scans revealed a blood clot, or an ischemic stroke, making Crystal a candidate for a clot-dissolving medicine known as tPA (tissue plasminogen activator). Injected by a specialist directly into the blood clot, tPA dissolves blood clots that block blood flow to the brain. When administered within three hours of an ischemic stroke, tPA restores blood flow in the brain, limiting the risk of long-term damage or impairment.

By the time she was in her room, Crystal was alert. And while she was still experiencing balance issues, they had subsided enough so that she was no longer nauseated. Visitors could hardly believe how well she looked.

"I feel so fortunate that I was a candidate for the tPA shot, and that my husband recognized the warning signs," Crystal says.



While she was on the path to recovery, the rest of that year wasn't without challenges. After Neil received two heart stents near the end of 2018, a friend lamented the couple's bad year. Crystal disagreed.

"We didn't have a bad year," she says. "It couldn't have come out any better for either of us."

The experiences that year taught Crystal and Neil to appreciate each moment for what it is. And, while she's always been active and health-conscious, since her stroke, Crystal has eaten a mostly vegetarian diet and does yoga five days a week.

"Something good comes from everything," Crystal says. "It can sometimes be hard to find it, but that good thing is always there."

## IT'S A SOLID NEUROSCIENCES SERVICE LINE AT MCLAREN BAY REGION

Healthcare service lines—where providers across disciplines engage to provide specialized care for specific patient populations—allow for more effective communication, better delivery of care, and, ultimately, improved patient outcomes.

McLaren's strong neurosciences service line offers the highest quality diagnostic, treatment, surgical, and rehab services to manage numerous neurological conditions such as stroke, epilepsy, dementia, spinal cord injuries, and Parkinson's disease.

"Patients have a more streamlined, accessible health care experience," explains Stroke Program Coordinator Grace Rodriguez, RN-MSN. And providers are better able to quickly adapt, modify, and improve programs based on colleague and patient feedback.

"McLaren's service line uses a patient-centered approach to the delivery of healthcare services," Rodriguez says, "and is organized in the way that neurological patients experience healthcare as a whole system." This involves multi-disciplinary collaboration between EMS, Emergency Department, Inpatient Units, Discharge Readiness, and Outpatient Community Resources.

With a standardized approach across the McLaren system, patients experience the same high-quality, expert care no matter where they are.