

Let the bells ring

By Sharon Pahlka, kidney patient and life coach



Yesterday everything seemed such an effort, I found myself complaining to a point where I was weary of my own complaining. “OK, what am I supposed to do here?” I thought.

Then my doorbell rang. It was a close friend collecting

on a promise I had made to throw her a birthday dinner whenever she asked.

“Hey,” she said. “The party is at your house in 30 minutes and I am going to pick up a guest.” I was NOT in the mood but changed gears. And guess what? I forgot my complaints! The focus was off me.

My friend’s guest, Patty, was a delight. She was raising two teens alone and working as a bell-ringer for the Salvation Army. “Wow, what would that be like?” I wondered. What if I had to earn my living at minimum wage ringing a bell for eight hours while huge numbers of people crossed my path, most rejecting me? Would my bellyaching look different? Patty admitted that she did find her work difficult, and she had to use strategies to keep herself smiling and ringing that bell.

A few bells rang for me as I realized how rarely I stop to think of how bell-ringers and others feel when they ask for donations. A smile or greeting is life-sustaining even if you are not giving. Treating every person as important makes a difference both to the person ringing the bell and the one hearing it. It’s what ties the human race together.

I plan to make more effort to turn my focus from me to others, especially those I never consider. I am so glad the bell-ringer rang my bells at my friend’s birthday party. When you hear bells ring, listen.

The Connections program: Share your comments with us

By Sonja Coffman, Northwest Kidney Centers community and patient relations coordinator

Northwest Kidney Centers’ Connections program provides a quick way for patients, families and visitors to:

- Ask questions
- Voice concerns
- Offer suggestions or
- Share compliments.

When you have comments or concerns to share, you can talk to your unit or center manager or clinical director. But if you’d prefer, you can mail a Connections form to my office or call me by phone. You’ll find Connections forms and my business card in a wall or counter holder in the waiting area at your dialysis center.

Thanks to comments in the Connections program, NKC has been able to make changes, help people better understand information, and let many staff members know how much they are appreciated. NKC uses this program to benefit and inform patients.

Your Medicare and NKC-guaranteed patient rights assure that you can speak your mind and that nothing negative will happen because you shared concerns. You can comment using your name, anonymously or through another person.

Keep in mind that, as a patient or a family member, you add to the number of people at NKC who can notice things that need changing or who can think of creative suggestions.

Let us know what we can do to make your experience at NKC as positive as possible. Fill out a form or contact Sonja Coffman at 206-292-2771, ext. 6923, or sonja@nwkidney.org.