



## 2016 Celebration of Dreams Keynote Speech

### Bo Greaves, MD

At this point in my life I look back a bit more than look forward. Let me share the stories of Alan, who was my patient, and whose experience at the Center for Well Being was powerful for both them and for me.

Alan was on my schedule for a follow up visit. I grab his chart from the exam room door, and look at the note from his last visit. Oh yes, I remember now—we had confirmed at that visit that Alan did have diabetes. He had had that deer in the headlights look. “Shoot! I thought maybe I had dodged this bullet.” [you see, both Alan’s mother and sister have had diabetes for years] “Now what??” We spent a few minutes talking about his diet and activity levels. But mostly I remember trying to reassure him that, as long as he brings his blood sugar down, he can live with no diabetes complications. And that I know he can bring his sugars down. And I grabbed a referral form to send Alan to the Center for Well-Being to learn all he needs to learn about how to live with diabetes.

I am curious how things are going for Alan, as I enter the room and say hello. He looks.....good! And he volunteers, with excitement, “Doc, I am feeling so much better! More energy. Sleeping better. Thinking more clearly.” Clearly things were different, so I ask, “What helped turn things around”. His response was clear: “I feel like I am getting my health back under my own control. Going to those classes at the Center for Well-Being gave me much more than information about what I needed to do differently. It gave me hope and confidence that I could change, that I could be in control!” I leaf through his chart, and see the lab that confirms that his blood sugar is better control. And I also see that we had decided at that last visit to NOT start any medications. Alan had made this dramatic improvement on his own...with great help from the Center for Well Being.

Fast forward a few years, and Alan is back in my office for a routine visit. He continues to do great—feeling well, with more energy. He is more active than ever and eats sensibly. And his blood glucose remains well controlled, with no meds. If this continues he should not be at risk for any diabetes complications. Alan is also there to say goodbye. His job is relocating him out of state. He thanks me, indirectly thanking ALL on the team, most notably the Center for Well Being. He then says something profound: “You know, doc, getting the diagnosis of diabetes was the best thing that could have happened to me! Before that, I was just kind of drifting along, in terms of taking care of myself. I was gradually gaining weight, and just feeling blah. Dealing with diabetes really got my attention, and I found myself getting excited when I succeeded in taking charge of my life.” Much of that came through his work with the Center.

Over the years I have used Alan’s story almost every time I have a patient grasping at the reality of a new diagnosis of diabetes. As I am filling out the referral form, I tell that patient about Alan’s experience, about how getting this diagnosis can actually be a blessing. Many are doubtful then. But many come back, after working the Center’s diabetes educators and with their peers in the class, and they get it better. This sense of accomplishment, this confidence that they can do it, is one of the greatest gifts the Center for Well-Being has given my patients over the past 20 years.



Over 20 years ago, a few physicians from my group, PCA, and from Cardiology Associates, started dreaming together about building a resource for the community, a center for health education and promotion. Starting with high quality diabetes classes, and with a premier cardiac rehab program, the Center for Well-Being was launched. As you all know, its programs have, over the years, greatly expanded and deepened. Many physicians have come to rely on the Center as a key part of the team. Many thousands of patients, like Alan and Sylvia, have learned and felt supported, and have changed their lives.

The next 20 years will, with the continuing support of the community, be fabulous for the Center for Well-Being. Partnering with community organizations and developing community members to be community health workers and Promotores, the Center will make great contributions to decreasing health disparities between different neighborhoods. Through expanding the linkages between its electronic health record and those in our offices, the Center's role as a key member of the healthcare team will be strengthened. And whatever health needs arise in our community, we can be confident that the Center for Well-Being will be leading the way in bringing good information to its clients, and empowering them in the process.

Thank you for coming today, and even more thanks for your generous support over our first 20 years. It truly takes a village to get the outcomes we see in the Center for Well-Being. Keep supporting the Center for the next 20 years, and the sky is the limit to what we can achieve together.