

## Community Begins Taking Charge of Their Health Following Free Program

Margot Rossi and Geraldine Plato weren't sure what to expect when they created their community-based, health education program, Taking Charge of Your Health (TCYH), in partnership with the Yancey County Public Library. The goal of the 12-week program was to help community members not only better understand a variety of health concerns from a natural medicine perspective, but learn how to address them through education and simple diet and lifestyle changes. The free hour-long classes were made possible through the generosity of local sponsors, Friends of the Yancey County Public Library, and Possibilities of Wellbeing Resource Center (POWR Center) —A health resource promoting wellbeing through lifestyle strategies, integrative medicine, and health education.



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**Margot Rossi, co-founder  
Possibilities of Wellbeing**

POW was co-founded in 2013 by Rossi and Plato. The TCYH program covered a wide range of topics from allergy relief and strategies for reversing diabetes and obesity to promoting heart health and relieving pain. While Rossi and Plato taught several of the classes, they also invited other local complementary healthcare practitioners to share their expertise. "Obviously an hour isn't much time to talk about such important topics," says Rossi, a licensed acupuncturist and Eastern Medicine practitioner at the Celo Health Center. "Our goal was to open the door to a new way of thinking and show participants how they can begin to take charge of their health."

Participant Kim Simpson also didn't know what to expect. "I had no idea how many resources for healing we have in our small town," she says. "Initially, I thought I'd go to one class, say I made the effort, and be done with it. After attending the first class, however, I realized I wanted to learn more. Prior to the classes I had no idea that burning scented candles can irritate allergies or that eating local honey daily can help

prevent them. Because of the program, we try to buy organic food when possible and experiment with new recipes. I now exercise daily, just enough to break a sweat. This is by far one of the greatest and most practical opportunities I've had to improve my health and wellbeing."

Harriet Gibbs couldn't agree more. "I don't like taking prescriptions," she says. "What is so refreshing about these classes is that they offer a new way of looking at health. What I appreciate most about Margot and Geraldine is their advice not to make a lot of new changes all at once, which they said could lead to frustration. Instead, they thought it best to try a little bit at a time. I'm slowly trying some of the recipes and looking forward to more classes to continue my education."

For sponsors like Susan and Bubba Crutchfield and Dan and Susan Wilson, the community response is exciting. Both couples were delighted Rossi and Plato were willing to offer classes free of charge to educate the community. "We support POW and Geraldine and Margot because of their commitment to make alternative medicine and prevention available to people in our community who don't have the means to benefit from those healthcare options," Bubba Crutchfield notes. "If offered the choice, I believe we all would like an alternative to taking a pill to solve a problem," says Susan Wilson. "With some of the sponsorship money, Margot and Geraldine were able to purchase books on each of the topics presented. They donated them to the Yancey library to create an additional community resource."

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As they look to expand into Mitchell County, they are also seeking funding sources. "The list of topics community members want to learn about seems endless," Plato adds. "We're studying grant and sponsorship opportunities so that we can continue creating those possibilities of wellbeing."

For more information on the **Taking Charge of Your Health** program or to become a sponsor

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*Possibilities of Wellbeing Resource (POWR) Center: Our mission is to champion individual and community wellbeing through health education, lifestyle strategies, and integrative medicine.*