

Announcer: Carolyn Cohan grew up in Melrose, and lives close to Melrose-Wakefield Hospital, where she always received her healthcare. But it wasn't until a life-threatening experience, did Carolyn realize how important it was to have state-of-the-art Cardiac care close to home.

CC: You never think it can happen to you, especially if you take care of yourself. Because heart disease ran in my family, I was diligent about living a healthy lifestyle. Never smoked, didn't drink, ate healthy food and exercised. I was fifty-three years old and in perfect health, or so I thought.

Announcer: Carolyn was feeling tired and a little winded after exercise and recently had indigestion. She didn't think it was important, but called her physician anyway. During the conversation, she mentioned that she was experiencing a burning sensation in her shoulder.

CC: My physician suggested I go into the Emergency Department at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital. You always hear about people not taking little warning signs seriously and I guess I was the perfect example of that. I was so sure that my doctor was just being cautious and there was nothing to worry about that I drove myself to Melrose-Wakefield Hospital from my office in Andover. When I arrived, I had a battery of tests and nothing was irregular, so of course I felt – false alarm. The only symptom I experienced was a sore throat after my stress test. I often had a sore throat after I exercised. Didn't think much of it.

Announcer: Carolyn's little sore throat did not go unnoticed by her physician. He recognized that she was a potential candidate for a bypass. She was instantly transported to Boston.

CC: At that point, I realized this is serious, but I was in good hands from the moment I walked into Melrose-Wakefield Hospital's emergency Department and I knew my doctor would be caring for me. Everything was going to be fine.

Announcer: Carolyn was later admitted to an affiliated academic medical center for an angiogram, but thirty seconds into the procedure she flat-lined on the table. It was determined she needed a triple bypass, but the morning of her surgery, she went into cardiac arrest and was given last rites. Her choices were slim. Without the bypass she would die, with the bypass, there was still a risk of

dying. Carolyn had the surgery. She survived, but recuperating was much harder than she thought.

CC: I guess my battle started when I drove to the ED, but to me it really started after the surgery. Two months later, I'd see ninety year old woman who had the same surgery and they were walking, sprinting even and I was totally debilitated, could hardly walk. I had never been so despondent in my life, but that all changed when I went to Cardiac Rehab at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital. The staff knew they would never build my strength if they didn't first build my confidence. To them, I wasn't just another patient who had a triple by-pass, I was an individual. Of course, they didn't give me a pass, didn't allow any pity party. They knew their stuff and worked me hard, but somehow made it fun. I looked forward to going to cardiac rehab, not only because it lifted my spirits, but I was getting stronger physically and emotionally every day.

Announcer: After months of working with the nurses and therapists at Hallmark Health's Cardiac Rehab, Carolyn is back to work, taking vacations and enjoying her life again. While she still has some cardiac issues that are being addressed, she feels she has been given another chance at life.

CC: I know now that I can't ignore small symptoms. I know I'm lucky to be back to being active, lucky to be alive and lucky to have a hospital, like Melrose-Wakefield, with exceptional care and fast and efficient Emergency Department close to home! Now I'm delighted to be the spokesperson for Hallmark Health's Stride for Health Walk on June 6th which benefits the tremendous services provided by the Cardiac & Endovascular Center.