

## **Sycamore resident coaches others on achieving wellness**

*By Dennis Hines*

A local health expert is coaching residents on how to live a healthier lifestyle and to manage their stress.

Rebecca Cohen of Sycamore recently started her own private practice, Partnering for Change Wellness Coaching. Cohen said, as a wellness coach, she helps clients relieve stress and overcome illnesses.

“Wellness coaching was really developed to help people achieve a higher level of wellness, their optimal level of wellness regardless of whether they have an illness or they don't have an illness, maybe they're just trying to prevent an illness to keep themselves well,” Cohen said. “People, pretty much, want to be well. They want to feel good about themselves, but they don't always have the skills, and they don't know how to do it, and sometimes the journey is very overwhelming, because there's too many changes, and we all have barriers that we encounter inside and outside of ourselves that keep us from accomplishing our goals.”

Cohen said she also works with clients to help them lose weight, eat more nutritious foods and develop an exercise program. She said she also works with clients to help them obtain more energy to complete daily tasks.

“I act as their cheerleader, and what I do is someone will come to me and the first thing I do is find out what their wellness vision is, what is it that they want to be, what do they want to feel, what do they want to look like down the road,” Cohen said.

According to Cohen, she establishes a three-month program with her clients to help them develop steps to accomplish their goals.

“The vision is really important, because if you don't know where you're going, you can't ever get there, and you have to have a picture in your mind of what it is that you will look and feel like when you get to this place you call wellness and what you will achieve,” Cohen said. “What we do is we work week by week setting up weekly goals to get them to those three-month goals. The client has to do the work. I don't tell them what to do. Every plan is very individualized, and it has to fit into their life, but my job is to be the

cheerleader and the motivator and to support their changes in a way that nobody else in their life is doing for them.”

Cohen mostly works with her clients over the telephone. She said using the telephone allows her to work with her clients in a confidential setting. She said clients also are more willing to share whether they are struggling to accomplish their goals if she talks with them over the telephone.

“It's confidential. People don't have to drive. They don't have to say, ‘How am I going to arrange to go from this place to that place, and you have a lot of people who don't drive or don't have transportation. You have no distractions. You're on the phone for half an hour, and that's what you focus on...,” Cohen said. “I'm not going to judge them for what they do or don't do. I'm not going to say that's bad or that's good. What I'm going to say is ‘What got in your way? Why didn't you do it?’ Let's work on that, and let's try to figure out, next time, how can you get past that barrier.’ So, they know when they talk to me, I'm not going to be judgmental. I'm not going to make them feel guilty about it.”

As part of her practice, Cohen uses a program called Heart Math which helps a patient lower their blood pressure and heart rate variability by regulating their breathing and thinking about positive experiences.

“The technique combines emotional regulation with breathing. You learn to breath slowly, and you focus on your heart, and you close your eyes, and you see your breath, then you heart breathe, where you visualize your breath going in and out of the heart, then you heart feel. You bring in an emotion that is positive,” Cohen said. “It's about seeing the blessings and feeling gratitude for what you have and combining that with the breathing.”

Cohen said several clients have reported that they were able to accomplish their goals after completing the wellness coaching program.

“Everybody who I have worked with has felt that they have gained a tremendous amount of direction and excitement, because they have reached their goals, and they feel good about themselves, and they feel good about the process they have been in,” Cohen said. “In a two- or three-month period of time, they don't need you for the rest of their life. It's that I help teach them the skills, and when they're done with that two or three month period, they have gained self confidence and that empowerment that allows them to go out and do it for themselves.”

Besides her private practice, Cohen also conducts presentations for local businesses and organizations. Cohen has worked in the wellness coaching field for many years. She has developed wellness programs for hospitals, corporations and universities. Cohen also has established wellness programs for children.

“We need very desperately to start wellness education with little children to teach them, so by the time they get older, one day they won't need all of us, because they will know what to do,” she said.

Cohen said there are other methods residents can use to live healthier lifestyles such as acupressure, physical therapy, nutrition management, massage therapy and visualization therapy.

“There is so much out there that can help us heal, and I've seen it work,” Cohen said.

“There's so many new things, and they're not far out things. They're researched. They're used all over the world, and I think, a lot of times, people just don't have access to this information. So one of the things that I try to do with coaching is to tell people you use the hospitals, you use the doctors and you use your mind and your spirit.”

For information about Cohen's practice call (815) 895-9389 or send an e-mail message to [Partneringforchange@yahoo.com](mailto:Partneringforchange@yahoo.com).