

Melvin

Melvin is 67 and the second-oldest of 10 siblings. His family relies on him when tough decisions need to be made. However, when he was facing discharge from the University of Cincinnati Medical Center after back surgery in November 2017, he didn't feel quite so in charge. "It'll put you in a panic real quick when you don't know where to go or what to do and you aren't used to asking for help," he said.

Enter Council on Aging's (COA) FastTrack Home program, and care manager, Lisa. A hospital social worker alerted Lisa that Melvin would need help if he was to stay at home while he recovered from the surgery, which fixed several vertebrae damaged years before in an on-the-job accident.

He lived alone. He would need immediate help learning how to get around without harming his back, and also months of physical therapy and follow-up visits. Lisa met with him at the hospital and enrolled him into the program. Immediately, he received an emergency response system.

Then Lisa visited Melvin at home. She discovered he was sleeping on the floor because it was too difficult to get into his bed. An office chair was the only other place for him to get off his feet. She ensured he received a "lift" recliner, a walker and "grabbers" so he could safely reach items.

"She came, and always came, and kept calling," Melvin said of Lisa. Thanks to FastTrack Home, Melvin's positive attitude and some assistance from neighbors, Melvin did not have to return to the hospital or enter a nursing home.

Melvin's FastTrack Home services were free for the first 60 days, then he underwent a full eligibility assessment for Hamilton County's Elderly Services Program (ESP). Melvin qualified for ESP, which now provides the services he needs to stay independent. His ESP care coordinator, Mandi, is working with him to schedule medical transportation, an aide for light housekeeping and shopping, and home-delivered meals.

It is still difficult for Melvin to accept help. "After two hours of arguing with him, I finally got Melvin to agree," Mandi said, with a grin.



Clockwise from top: (l-r) FastTrack Home Care Manager Lisa, Melvin, Elderly Services Program (ESP) Care Coordinator Mandy; Melvin uses his stationary bike as part of his therapy to recover from back surgery; Melvin discusses his life and how the FastTrack Home and ESP programs have ensured he can stay in his home, despite recovering from major back surgery and dealing with other related challenges such as lack of feeling in his hands.