

James

As he sits in his apartment on a wintry day, hooked up to a tank of oxygen that helps him breathe, James thinks about going fishing. He'd like to do that again. Just him and a buddy, maybe on his birthday.

Although James has an array of health problems, including leukemia, diabetes, and severe pain in his hip and back, a fishing trip is not out of the realm of possibilities. "It's good for patients to have plans and goals," said Danielle, his Council on Aging (COA) care manager.

But, for people like James, goals require advocacy and teamwork among health professionals from different organizations. A member of COA's MyCare Ohio team contracting with Aetna Better Health of Ohio, Danielle has been an effective advocate for James. In the process, she has not only helped him feel better and stay in his home, but saved health care costs with interventions that help keep him out of a nursing home or hospital.

"I wouldn't be able to stay here without assistance," said James, 71. "I'd be in a nursing home."

Danielle has lined up services for James that include home-delivered meals and home care assistance five days a week. To reduce delays, she has facilitated communications between his doctors and service providers. As a veteran, James is entitled to physical therapy from a home health organization via the Veteran's Administration, but couldn't get it started until Danielle intervened. She also helped get his hip and back pain injections coordinated so they could be delivered at the same time and he could be temporarily pain free.

Danielle also discovered that James was only using his inhaler when he felt out of breath instead of every day, as prescribed. Now that he uses it regularly, he is feeling much better, he said.

"Whatever it takes, she has been there to help me," James said.

The next task is to try to get payment for a smaller, more portable oxygen pack to replace the heavy tanks that James can't carry. That would bring him one step closer to that fishing trip.



Pictured in top photo: James (r) and his COA Care Manager, Danielle, review the proper way to use his inhaler. Council on Aging contracts with Aetna Better Health of Ohio and Molina Healthcare (our region's two MyCare Ohio health plans) to assess members' care needs and manage or coordinate their long-term care services. For James, Danielle helped start up physical therapy through the Veterans Administration and also coordinated hip and back pain injections so he could get them on the same day.