

Member Profile: Lorraine Calderone



For 1199SEIU member Lorraine Calderone, taking advantage of a Benefit Fund worksite health fair helped her take control of her diabetes.

A little more than a year ago, Lorraine Calderone attended a health fair at Mount Sinai Queens Hospital in Long Island City, New York, where she works as an Admitting Registrar, and took part in a free screening for blood sugar levels. “I thought it was great that 1199 had the health fair right here because it allowed me to take advantage of the screening,” she said, “and my A1C level came back very high.”

The A1C test measures a person's average blood glucose level over the previous two to three months, and a high reading like Lorraine's can indicate diabetes. A week after the health fair Lorraine visited her doctor, who confirmed that she has Type 2 diabetes. Told that she would have to change her diet and closely monitor her blood sugar level if she wanted to stay healthy and maintain an active lifestyle, she was actually a bit relieved to know what was going on.

“I had been suffering symptoms for some time, like always being thirsty and feeling tired,” she said. “But I passed it off as probably due to old age and wouldn't have followed up if it wasn't for the 1199SEIU health fair.” Lorraine, who is 63 and has worked at Mount Sinai for 18 years, knows that her Fund benefits provide full medical coverage and a wide range of doctors, but she said that, like many busy people, she always put off making an appointment.

After her diagnosis, her next stop was an endocrinologist, who provided the necessary kit to test her blood sugar and gave her guidelines for a more nutritious – and safe – diet. She said she feels “very fortunate” not to have to inject insulin as part of her treatment, but she does take a medication that helps control her blood sugar, and has to test her levels twice a day, in the morning and at night.

Since learning she is a diabetic, she's been committed to a healthier lifestyle that begins with a revamped diet. She eats more fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods – which are often high in sugar and saturated fat. Lorraine was always a high-energy person, and now her energy is back. Her two grown sons tell her she doesn't need a gym membership now because she's “always on the go.” Her children have also helped her stick to her diet, reminding her – whether she cooks for them at home or they go out to eat – which foods are approved and which are not.

“They worry about me,” she said. “But I've lost weight, I eat better, and of course I watch my sugar intake very carefully. The whole ordeal has actually been a good thing.”

Do you have a healthy story to share? We're always looking for the opportunity to spotlight members who have used their 1199SEIU benefits to help lose weight, bring a chronic condition under control or just improve their lifestyle in general. If you would like to be featured in an upcoming issue of For Your Benefit, please contact the Fund at communications@1199Funds.org.