Stroke Support Group Receives Funding | CPD

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Sydney Schaefer

Stroke is a health event that is misunderstood and feared by many people because it can affect mobility, emotional control, communication ability and personality.

A Faculty Fellow at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities started a support group last year for people who have had a stroke and others who have been affected by stroke, such as family members. That effort, called Soup n’ Stroke, is now being supported by the first-ever Faculty Fellow Student Support award.

Sydney Schaefer, an assistant professor of health, physical education and recreation and member of the 2014 class of CPD Faculty Fellows, will use the $5,000 award to help fund research assistant Abbie Waite, who will develop ways to promote the support group.

CPD director Bryce Fifield said the award is a logical extension of the work being done at the CPD, and is a way to acknowledge and facilitate new and innovating disability-related projects being done by Faculty Fellows.

“Age-related disability, like stroke, affects families and individuals differently,” he said. “A lot of our interventions may look the same, but they require a different approach. Her work in stroke recovery is going to be groundbreaking, and the support group is a way to help disseminate that information.”

Schaefer’s research background is in the neuroscience of movement, specifically in the upper extremities. Her work has focused on the recovery of mobility after stroke.

After she arrived at USU in 2012, Schaefer said she tried to find a stroke community, and found there really wasn’t one.

“There is a TBI support group, but nothing specifically related to stroke,” she said.

Soup n’ Stroke is intended to be a platform for the community to raise awareness.

“There is a lot of fear, a lot of questions surrounding stroke. There are a lot of people affected. There are concerns about how it affects the rest of your life,” she said. “I thought it was needed.”

Soup n’ Stroke meets at 4 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month at Sunshine Terrace, 209 West 300 North in Logan, in the Aquaworx room on the second floor. Soup is provided by Angie’s Restaurant.

“We offer stroke education—what is stroke, how to prevent it, what life is like after stroke,” Schaefer said. “All of that information is on the web, but many older individuals don’t access information through the Internet.”

The group began with zero budget, Schaefer said, and has a handful of regular attendees.

“We let the people decide if it’s an emotional support group, or more for education or advocacy,” she said. “There is a consistent need for more education.”

Schaefer surveys current research and presents it meetings in ways that are more easily understood by attendees who may not have a research or medical background.

“We cover learning, recovery, aging, brain injuries—we help people get back to activities of daily living and quality of life,” she said. “I get to work with people and hear their
stories. I love that about human research, and Soup n’ Stroke is an extension of that.”

For more information about Soup n’ Stroke, or any of Schaefer’s research, click here.