In support of our veterans and the community, approximately 25 MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital associates provided free health screenings and program enrollment assistance this summer at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center. The community Stand Down event provided veterans, as well as business and educational opportunities, with health information.

“MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital seeks to partner with community resources and the Veterans Administration to help close the gap in the military-to-civilian transition for veterans in our region,” said Denise McDowell, RN, director of Outpatient and Pulmonary Services and retired U.S. Navy captain, Nurse Corps.

“Being able to provide health screenings for conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and peripheral artery disease to all community members who may not have access to regular health care is important to us.”

Clinicians came from multiple departments throughout MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital to provide services, including Health Connections, Clinical Resource Management, Laboratory Services, Radiology, Nursing, and Outpatient and Pulmonary Services. In addition to clinical services, veterans received information on eligibility and enrollment for those living in the Health Enterprise Zone, an underserved area of the community targeted for increased primary care, outreach and other programs.
Diabetes is a disease that affects individuals of all ages and for Kirsten Knokey, 33, of Leonardtown, Maryland, prevention quickly became an important part of her life.

Referred by hospital Dietitian Becky Sutay, Kirsten began the program this spring after her A1C levels indicated she was not only pre-diabetic, but 0.1 percent away from diabetes.

“That’s what scared me the most,” she said. “My mom is diabetic and I didn’t want to go down that road.”

The focus of the program is to take small steps to obtain a larger goal.

“It’s been a struggle, but I’m determined to lose the weight.”

Kirsten notes that the support group associated with Simple Changes is half of what makes the program thrive.

“Writing down what I eat and knowing someone would read it is really the motivation I needed because you want to prove to them and yourself that you can eat correctly,” she said. “My self-esteem is also a lot better now that I can talk to other people and hear other points of view.”

Rounding out her 16-week journey, Kirsten has made tremendous progress and has since lost 25 pounds, a full 9.43 percent of her weight, and successfully lowered her A1C levels.

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Small Steps in the Right Direction

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