

GETTING TO THE

Heart of the Matter

Chest pains lead to battery of tests to help put Jefferson woman at ease

With a history of heart issues – including cardiac bypass surgery in 2016 – Cheryl Swanson is exceedingly cautious when it comes to her health. As such, when she began experiencing moderate chest pains just before Thanksgiving last year, she acted.

“I took three nitro tablets and the pains subsided,” Swanson says. “By the next morning, I wasn’t having any chest pains, but I was still feeling kind of crummy. I just felt that I needed to be seen.”

Swanson, 75, turned to the team at the Greene County Medical Center Emergency Room where Mark Buettner, DO, managed her care. After ensuring Swanson was stable, Dr. Buettner ordered a series of tests to see what was causing the symptoms. The tests included an electrocardiogram (EKG) to check the electrical signal from her heart, and blood tests including comprehensive metabolic panel to check for measures that may be out of range, and an enzyme test that would provide insight on whether Swanson had recently experienced a heart attack.

“Everything checked out okay,” Swanson says. “Dr. Buettner said that the hour or so I was experiencing chest pains was long enough to indicate a heart attack, but the various tests showed that it was not.”

Relieved that she had not had a heart attack, but still vigilant in staying on top of her health, Swanson continued to have additional testing performed after the Thanksgiving holiday. Swanson was already scheduled for an ultrasound of her carotid artery with Craig Stark, MD, on November 30. Dr. Stark, who is a cardiologist at UnityPoint Health and provides outreach services at Greene County Medical Center, also ordered chest x-rays, a nuclear stress test, and an echocardiogram.

To Swanson’s relief, the battery of tests showed that she had not had a heart attack and that she had no additional heart problems.

“It was Dr. Stark who diagnosed me with familial hypercholesterolemia back in 2016,” Swanson says. The hereditary condition contributes to a very significantly elevated low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (LDL-C) or “bad cholesterol” and an increased risk of early onset of coronary artery disease. “All of these tests were run because of that background.”



“I feel lucky,” Swanson continues, “because with the heart condition I have, the fact that they took the time to run all those tests to ensure they could rule out any heart attack or any further damage put me at ease.”

Swanson, who lives on an acreage just outside Jefferson with her husband Louis, says she feels fortunate to have access to such advanced care – to include the services of a board-certified cardiologist – so close to home.

“It is great that I don’t have to go out of town for any of these services,” she says. “I got great care in the Emergency Room, and the follow up care with Dr. Stark was excellent. I felt like they really took care of me all the way through the process.”

