



St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

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NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Resident Gets "Life Back" Through Innovative Heart Procedure at St. Joseph's

Janice Edmondson thought her health was gone forever. She couldn't take a morning walk, couldn't enjoy her family, couldn't play golf and couldn't even clean her home. She was dizzy, tired, weak and suffering from a worsening heart condition called atrial fibrillation (AFib.)

Even her hometown doctor back in Lawrence, Kansas told her – "you'll just have to live with it."

But one year ago Edmondson, 80, traveled to the Valley for her annual winter visit and she and her husband stumbled upon a notice in the newspaper. The headline read: "*You Don't Have to Live with AFib.*" She was skeptical, but went to the seminar mentioned in the notice and, "I got my life back," says Edmondson.

"Mrs. Edmondson was a little leery," said Brian deGuzman, MD, associate chief of Cardiovascular Surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center who performs an innovative heart procedure called "Maze" on AFib patients. "Like a lot of people with AFib, she thought her health would never improve. We talked about the possibility of Maze surgery and she came in for an evaluation."

AFib is an irregular heart rhythm condition that impacts more than 2.2 million Americans. Edmondson had suffered from AFib for more than a decade and was trying to manage her worsening health by taking "a handful of pills in the morning and a handful of pills at night." Included among the prescriptions was Coumadin, a potent blood thinner with serious side effects.

Visiting Dr. deGuzman and his surgical partner, Lishan Aklog, MD, at St. Joseph's Heart & Lung Institute, she learned she also needed heart valve surgery. "I was almost 80 and had a hard time thinking about open heart surgery at this age. But, I'd read about a patient of Drs. Aklog and deGuzman in Sun City who is in his 90s and he's now riding his bike around the neighborhood. I'm so glad that I went forward."

In fact, Dr. deGuzman and Dr. Aklog have established one of the only integrated clinics dedicated to the treatment of AFib in the country. They offer the full spectrum of curative treatments for AFib including the Maze procedure. During Maze surgery a series of precise incisions are made in the right and left atria to interrupt abnormal impulses.

Within weeks of her surgery last March, Edmondson started to feel her old self again and returned to Kansas for the summer. Most importantly, she no longer has to take Coumadin. "I saw my doctor in Kansas last summer and he couldn't believe it. He was so happy for me."

Today, Edmondson and her husband are back in the Valley for the winter -- walking, traveling, playing golf and she is counting herself very lucky. "I don't think it was a coincidence that we saw that notice in the newspaper. I feel wonderful and very blessed. Now, I don't take any pills. Not even one."

— St. Joseph's —

