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In the fall of 2009 I was diagnosed with high blood pressure. It was concerning to me because high blood pressure runs in my immediate family and I was the last one to be diagnosed with it. My doctor explained to me that with exercise, eating right and the right medication I could lower my blood pressure.

I knew I needed to make some lifestyle changes. Two years ago I started riding a bike because it was something my husband and I could do together and he is great support and motivation for me. Riding a bike was also good for me because I have osteoarthritis in my knees. I was out of shape and began riding a few miles at a time a couple of times a week. I managed to ride 25 miles at one point however it was a very difficult ride and I didn't enjoy it at all.

Last winter I worked out at a health club and rode my bike outside in the spring, summer and fall on a regular basis. In July I participated in the Cornhusker State Games and I did my first 50 mile bike tour from Lincoln to Seward and back again. It was a great accomplishment for me considering I could barely ride 25 miles the year before. In September I completed my first 62 mile ride in Leavenworth, KS. It was a proud moment for me. My goal this year is to do a 100 mile bike ride.

In addition to exercising I knew I would also need to change my eating habits if I was going to lower my blood pressure. Through the State of Nebraska wellness program I worked with a health coach. I knew I wasn't eating enough fruits and vegetables. She encouraged me to try new fruits and vegetables and find easy ways to add them to my daily diet. It helped to have a health coach who encouraged me and also held me accountable at the same time.

The reminders I receive in the mail regarding yearly check-ups, flu shots, etc. keep me on track. I want to take advantage of as many preventative measures as I can to stay healthy. The reminders are a good way to do so. With high blood pressure it is important to see your doctor on a regular basis. The last lab work I had done in December my doctor said all of my results were excellent except for one test. My blood pressure is improving and I am hoping that eventually I will be able to cut back on my medication. Seeing that the lifestyle changes I have made are working is very encouraging.

I would highly recommend to anyone who is interested in making lifestyle changes to improve their health and well-being to consider the State of Nebraska wellness program. They have several options to choose from and using a health coach is one of them. It was nice to have someone working with me to accomplish my goal.

My grandson is three months old and I would like to be around to watch him grow up. In order to do so I know I must continue to exercise, eat healthy and have regular check-ups. The State of Nebraska wellness program will be one of the tools I use to increase my odds of that happening.

