



Barbara Urban and Denise Pontbriand, PT-A

## AFTER 70-PLUS YEARS OF ACTIVE, VIVACIOUS LIVING, WARE BUSINESS OWNER BARBARA URBAN WAS SUDDENLY DEBILITATED.

Good health is something Barbara Urban had enjoyed most of her life. While living just up the road from Baystate Mary Lane Hospital (BMLH) since her birth there in 1934, she had never really had occasion to use its services. Then three years ago, unrelenting pain broke that streak. "One afternoon, I was sitting, and I got up and all of a sudden I had a pain in my leg," she recalls. "I don't know what happened. By the next morning, I could barely walk."

The pain soon radiated to her lower back, and she went to the Emergency Department at Baystate Mary Lane. When X-rays and other tests didn't provide any clear answers, doctors suggested she try physical therapy at Baystate Rehabilitation Care at BMLH. Urban decided she had nothing to lose—and potentially everything to gain. "I really had no expectations, except to be helped," she says.

### HER JOURNEY BEGINS

Manager Peter Ouellette, PT, assessed Urban's situation and immediately paired her with a physical therapist's assistant, Denise Pontbriand, whose expertise in geriatrics, osteoporosis, and orthopedics made her an excellent choice. She introduced Urban to the Meeks Method, an effective treatment for osteoporosis and compression fractures. Initially, this treatment presented a stumbling block:

# BACK ON HER FEET

## THE JOURNEY OF BARBARA URBAN

By Amy Breguet

as part of Urban's therapy she would have to lie down, a position which tended to worsen her pain.

"She was afraid the first day I worked with her," Pontbriand says. "But I showed her what I was going to do, and I encouraged her, and the next time she was agreeable to try. Things just went from there."

### A PHENOMENAL OUTCOME

Urban continued to see Pontbriand two to three times a week for several weeks. They did strengthening exercises in therapy, and Urban changed the way she did certain daily activities based on Pontbriand's advice.

Her progress was evident early on, due largely to her own determination. "She's really one of the best patients I've ever had," says Pontbriand. "Everything I told her to do at home, she did to the letter of the law, and the outcome was phenomenal."

Within two months, Urban graduated from wheelchair to walker, from walker to cane—and then reached her ultimate goal. "I just walked away from the cane," she says.

### URBAN'S GENEROSITY

Since her husband Eddie Urban left a foundation in 2002, Barbara Urban has been a generous supporter of Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. The Baystate Mary Lane Oncology Department, where Eddie Urban had been treated, and Baystate Rehabilitation Care at BMLH, are among areas that have received major donations from the foundation. "We try to do what we can locally," she says, "and at the top of the list is Baystate Mary Lane."

"Barbara's generosity has allowed our department to have equipment we really

wouldn't have been able to afford, and we're grateful to her," says Pontbriand. The sentiment is mutual. Barbara Urban feels the department has allowed her to have something, too—something best illustrated by a single, joyful memory. "I went to a wedding and I danced polkas all evening long," she says.

More of Barbara Urban's journey can be found online, including additional photos and video clips. Go to [baystatehealth.org/annualreport](http://baystatehealth.org/annualreport) and click on "Stories of Care."

Baystate Rehabilitation Care offers convenient locations in Agawam, East Longmeadow, Greenfield, South Hadley, Springfield, and Ware. For more information, visit [baystatehealth.org/brc](http://baystatehealth.org/brc).

