

# FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS TEAM UP TO IMPROVE STROKE RECOVERY

There are close to five million stroke survivors in the United States, due in large part to the real progress that's been made in stroke rehabilitation in recent years. Today, quality stroke-recovery programs generally rely on three components:

- Multidisciplinary delivery of rehabilitation services to promote recovery and help prevent recurrence
- Repetitive practice to help relearn skills
- Family (psychosocial) support

The rehabilitation team at The Commons at Squirrel Hill, our facility in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, embraces the important role family members—and especially spouses—can play in the stroke-recovery process. Because of their family-focused stroke rehab program, Joseph Yano is a real-life stroke-survivor success story.

## How It All Began

Joe Yano is a 76-year old Korean War veteran who enjoys spending time with his children and grandchildren; traveling with his wife, Mary Ann; and tending to his garden. About a year ago, Yano suffered a minor stroke. Not long after, in February 2006, he had joint-replacement surgery on his left knee. While in the hospital, Joe had a

recurrent stroke that partially paralyzed the left side of his body.

After several weeks of inpatient care in an acute-care hospital rehab unit, Yano was well enough to move to a skilled nursing facility. After just one day in another facility, he transferred to The Commons at Squirrel Hill—a move that turned out to be the right one for Yano and his supportive family.

## A Family-Focused Goal

Yano's goal was simple: To be able to return home to spend time with his close-knit family.

## Making the Goal a Reality

To help Yano achieve the best possible clinical outcome, Squirrel Hill assembled a multidisciplinary stroke-recovery team. Together, they all worked tirelessly to help Yano relearn once-familiar tasks and skills, and learn how to circumvent or compensate for any remaining deficits.

"When Joe first moved into The Commons at Squirrel Hill," Mary Ann said, "we thought he might never walk again. But The Commons's staff used a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, and even a recreational therapist to help in his recovery. They coordinated all these related therapies and allowed



Yano tests out his brace and cane with physical therapist Tracey Hunydai.

our family to take an active role in his rehabilitation."

Tracey Hunydai, one of Yano's physical therapists, added, "In my opinion, two major elements contributed to Joe Yano's ability to return to his home. One was the customized brace that The Commons had made to support Joe's left knee. The second one was the family-friendly environment at The Commons that allows families to interact, coach, and support their loved one's rehabilitation therapy. With a knee brace and cane, Joe Yano can walk. His family played a huge role in his success."▲

## WORDS OF GRATITUDE FROM YANO'S WIFE

**M**ary Ann Yano was very pleased with the "remarkable progress" her husband made at Squirrel Hill. Here's what she had to say:

*"We have three living children, a son and two daughters. We also have four wonderful grandchildren. All of them played a role in Joe's rehabilitation, and our daughter-in-law was very involved as well.*

*"The Commons at Squirrel Hill's therapy staff was great about allowing us to have at least two family members a day come in to*

*coach and encourage Joe in practicing his motor and speech skills, and to provide him with emotional support. The Commons at Squirrel Hill values family participation and helped teach us how to play an active role in my husband's recovery....*

*"Their friendly atmosphere created a positive environment for Joe to gain independence and to return home. Say 'Thank You' to the staff at The Commons from me, Joe, and the whole Yano Family."*

