



CATHY LEDFORD

Teacher Cathy Ledford had been raised to “suck it up” when life got hard. As a former collegiate athlete who never does anything halfway, she never dreamed a heart attack in the classroom at age 54 would bring her life would to a screeching halt.

“Teachers take care of everyone else before themselves,” said Cathy. “They take care of any child’s needs in the classroom. Then they do ninety-five more things after school.” She added, “They come in early and stay late, and are under constant stress.”

Cathy’s stress was compounded by regular trips to Elgin, Oklahoma, every weekend to serve as caretaker for her parents, who both had suffered strokes. Her father lost his ability to talk and only Cathy could understand what he wanted. Her routine of being “on call” seven days a week – weekdays in the classroom and weekends with her parents – led her to gradually quit taking care of her health. She quit exercising and ate foods on the go. She became tired, worn out and overstressed.

Cathy was fortunate she survived her heart attack in April 2019. Cardiologist, Dr. Bruce Palmer, restored her heart function with 3 stents. She then turned her life around 360 degrees.

Immediately, she changed her eating habits. During her cardiac crisis, she learned she was Diabetic. Cathy returned to cooking meals instead of eating out. She lost forty pounds and claims her new eating habits are not a “diet” but rather, a way of life.

Committed to a heart-healthy lifestyle, Cathy now has energy and is fit. She retired from teaching full time, but occasionally substitute teaches. She is passionate about sticking to this lifestyle so she can be part of her future grandchildren’s lives. “I know they’ll need me,” she chuckled.

Cathy has a warning for teachers and *all* who are living in overdrive, “I mistook ‘shortness of breath’ for ‘out of shape.’” She stresses the importance of listening to your body and taking appropriate action.