

# HealthWatch

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## Nothing Can Stop this Stroke Patient

A few months ago, business owner and stroke victim Frank Star could barely walk. Now, he's about to run a 5k.



by **KenMcEntee**  
Contributing Writer

As an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) patient at Southwest General five months ago, participating in a 5K run was not among Frank Star's immediate plans. Even before he suffered his stroke he had never run a distance race.

But when Southwest General's 30th annual Old Oak Run begins on April 16, the 54-year-old business owner and father of four from Brunswick will be among the more than 600 anticipated participants at the opening gun. In preparation for the race, Frank is working with Dave Saunders, certified athletic trainer in Sports Medicine in the Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) Department at Southwest General.

Only a few months ago, Frank could move around only with the help of a walker.

On October 21, 2010, Frank was working late at Fastar EDM Inc., his machine shop in Cleveland, when he noticed numbness in his right arm and leg.

"It became hard to walk, and I thought it would get better when I went home from work," recalls Frank. "But when I woke up the next morning, it wasn't better, so I had my wife take me to the emergency room at Southwest General. They admitted me right away and said I had a stroke that was caused



Southwest General, Frank spent the next four days in ICU and then had to relearn how to walk.

"I was able to walk a little, but it was difficult," he says. "They explained that after a stroke your body knows what to do, but it isn't in sync with your brain. Your body actually has to retrain the brain. I started getting around with a walker, then, eventually, I was able to walk with a cane."

After Frank was discharged from the Acute Rehab department, he began weekly occupational and physical therapy sessions while following up with David Stone, MD, a family medicine physician on the Medical Staff at Southwest General.

"Everything went marvelously well at the hospital and in therapy," Frank says. "The individuals there not only are doctors, therapists and trainers but also they are motivators. They always keep you going in a positive direction."

While going through therapy, Frank's therapist challenged him to train with Saunders and enter the Old Oak Run.

"In Sports Medicine, we train a lot of people for distance running, even people

by high blood pressure."

While being treated by Kemsagar Ravishankar, MD, a neurologist on the Medical Staff at

Southwest General, Frank spent the next four days in ICU and then had to relearn how to walk.

such as Frank who have never run before," Saunders says. "As the race approaches, Frank is definitely making progress. There are still some issue with Frank's stride that we have to work on and we're being very careful that he doesn't sustain overuse injuries," notes Saunders. While still participating in physical therapy, Frank began working with Saunders three days a week, starting on a treadmill, and later the inside track at LifeWorks of Southwest General—where PM&R resides.

"I feel like I'm getting stronger all the time," Frank insists.

His goal for the race is simply to do the best he can—and he intends to finish.

"Right now I'm happy when I pass up somebody using a walker on the track," he laughs.

Currently, Frank is back to work at his machine shop and considers himself blessed.

"The guys at the shop have really stepped up to help as I train for the race," he says. "The way family and friends help you, and the love they show for you when something like this happens is unbelievable."

But Frank is determined to push forward with the help of the experienced team of physical therapist and sports medicine trainers at Southwest General.

"I have to have challenges to keep me

going," he says. "I'm excited about doing this."

To learn how you can get up and running after having a stroke, call Health Connection at 440-816-5050.



### Old Oak Run— 30th Anniversary!

The 30th annual Old Oak Run, Southwest General's 5K run and one-mile walk, will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2011, at *LifeWorks of Southwest General*, 7390 Old Oak Boulevard (just ½ mile south of Southwest General in Middleburg Heights). For price listing and to register, visit [www.hermescleveland.com](http://www.hermescleveland.com).