

Providence St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, MT

Walking Side by Side

Now in their 70s, Edwin and Gladys Larsen worked all their lives. Ed started working at nine years old during World War II selling burlap bags of compost for the neighborhood's Victory Gardens. When he was old enough, Ed quickly joined the Army and he and Gladys moved all over the country. When they retired and decided to travel to Missoula, they were happy to be together, using their small retirement and veteran's benefits to see the world.

But somewhere between Biloxi, Mississippi, and Missoula, Gladys contracted E-coli and landed in St. Pat's for a week. When she was discharged, the couple stayed in motels, trying to find a place to rent, but for a year, they were told the waiting list for affordable housing was two years, or veteran housing wasn't available. Their money ran out.

Ed's health isn't great. He had heart surgery and a pacemaker. He had to have his pacemaker checked and went to the International Heart Institute at St. Patrick Hospital. Nicole, the technician, asked how he was doing. He said, "About as good as can be expected, living in a car at night and a storage unit during the day." And at that point, he said, Nicole just about went "ballistic," and everything started changing.

Nicole contacted Janet at the St. Patrick Hospital Foundation, who arranged for the couple to stay at St. Patrick House. Amber at St. Pat's Mission Leadership Department gave them food stamps and worked to find them housing, finally working with a property management company to find them a home outside of Missoula. St. Pat's also provided them with deposit money, and a moving company donated their services to transport Ed and Gladys to their new home by the river.

Now they watch the deer, elk and geese in their absolutely spotless home. Gladys' advice to others? "You don't know what the future holds. This could happen to anyone. St. Pat's was the only place in Missoula County where we found people willing to help."

They are home.