Be the Change
Take Back the Federal Budget
National Priorities Project’s 30th Anniversary
October 18, 2013
The Academy of Music
Northampton, Mass.
nationalpriorities.org
Colombe Foundation and the Proteus Fund congratulate the National Priorities Project on 30 years of engaging the public to make the federal budget reflect the priorities of the American people.
National Priorities Project Celebrates 30 Years as the People’s Guide to the Federal Budget

This fall, NPP is on the front lines of far-reaching, nation-changing debates on the government shutdown, the debt ceiling, stop-gap spending measures, sequestration, tax reform, military spending, and more.

Fueled by impeccable research, eye-opening numbers, and powerful tools for action, NPP’s team is on fire – lit by a spark now 30 years old whose time has come.

It all started in 1983, when four friends from Springfield, MA, dug into dusty federal budget tomes at a local university library in a quest to save their city from economic ruin. They needed to understand why so many vital social programs were closing.

What they found stunned them. During the first two Cold War-focused years of the Reagan Administration, federal funds for cities like Springfield plummeted – and local economies, jobs, schools, and public health suffered.

Led by National Priorities Project founder, Greg Speeter, the friends set out to change these destructive and misguided budget priorities. They took back the federal budget for their own community and communities nationwide. Armed with irrefutable data directly from our nation’s budget, they convinced their U.S. Representative, Silvio Conte (R), then the ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee, to change his stance on federal spending.

Emboldened by this experience, Greg formulated a radical vision: a federal budget by and for the people – with spending priorities that reflect the interests of all Americans. NPP still operates under the very same moral imperative that inspired Greg, with a healthy mixture of urgency, impatience, and unwavering faith in the absolute necessity of our efforts.

Friends, very simply, today the federal budget is our nation’s crossroads. And if we care about education, healthcare, the environment, and our security, we must care – absolutely – about federal spending and revenue decisions.

From the grassroots to the national level, NPP’s data, information, and tools are fueling today’s activists, who – like Greg Speeter 30 years ago – want to change the destinies of their communities and our nation.

We urge you to become part of this movement. Every voice matters.

Greg Speeter knew change couldn’t happen overnight. That’s why he founded NPP – for just such a moment of political and social opportunity as this. We dedicate our 30th Anniversary celebration to Greg, to past staff and board members, and to thousands of donors from beautiful western Massachusetts and across the nation who keep us moving forward.

Onward!

Dennis Bidwell
Chair, NPP Board of Directors

Jo Comerford
Executive Director

Dedicated in memory of
Greg Speeter
(1943-2012)
NPP founder and visionary.

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entering

Northampton

1954

live.

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listen.

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neighborhood.

nation.

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1954

93.9

The River

music.

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National Priorities Project (NPP) is the only nonprofit, non-partisan federal budget research organization in the nation with the mission to make the federal budget accessible to the American public. NPP is the people’s guide to the federal budget, and we believe that everyone can understand and participate in critical debates about federal spending and revenue. We take a complex federal budgeting process and crack it open for ordinary folks – providing the information, tools, and motivation necessary to catalyze strategic citizen action around budget issues that affect us all.

How NPP Turns Information Into Action!

Research
Our team spends countless hours analyzing and distilling complex federal budget data and develops a sophisticated analysis of the material.
• We release in-depth publications on the President’s budget, Tax Day, and issue areas such as the military, education, environment, health care, entitlements, taxes, and tax expenditures.
• Our easy-to-access data tracks federal money flowing to states, cities, and congressional districts.
• Cost of National Security and Trade-Offs, two of our signature online interactive tools, count the dollars spent on a variety of federal programs by the millisecond – and show what else those dollars could fund if allocated differently within the federal budget.

Data and IT
NPP staff members create online tools that allow constituents to engage with the budget in fun, interactive ways.

Communication

The Life of One NPP Publication
One piece published by NPP, “Congress Tweeted While America Burned,” focused on the impact of sequestration and imagined what a post-sequestration nation might look like in 10 years. The piece, originally carried by Tom Dispatch, went viral and was ultimately published by 63 outlets nationwide, including Huffington Post, The Nation, The Guardian, AlterNet, Bill Moyers, Michael Moore, and more. More than 6 million people saw the article and 28,000 people interacted with it online.

Partnerships
Collaborating with national groups across multiple sectors and issue-areas allows NPP to scale the reach of our materials while supporting important, highly-effective national, state, and local efforts.
• We partner with national organizations to publish reports or provide data that strengthens advocacy campaigns.
• Our partners include: Roosevelt Campus Network, U.S. Student Association, MomsRising, US Action, Jobs With Justice, National People’s Action, Coalition on Human Needs, Grassroots Global Justice, National Women’s Law Center, Young Invincibles, Center for Effective Government, Free Press, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and many more.

Capacity Building
NPP conducts national trainings and presentations to educate individuals and partners nationwide. We recently developed a new popular education training curriculum in partnership with Peace Action and wrote a A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget, complete with an educator’s toolkit to be used in high school and college classrooms.

The National Priorities Project
In Celebration of 30 years of Critical Work

Lesser, Newman & Nasser, LLP has proudly served the Pioneer Valley for more than 30 years and witnessed the National Priorities Project elevate awareness around critical issues concerning how our tax dollars are spent, and, alternatively, how our tax dollars could be spent.
We are honored to support the National Priorities Project and to celebrate 30 years of extraordinarily important work. We can’t wait to see what’s coming next.

Lesser, Newman & Nasser, LLP
Serving the Pioneer Valley for more than 30 years.
39 Main Street, Northampton
(413) 584-7331 – www.lessernewman.com

Thomas Lesser
William Newman
Merry Nasser
Michael Aleo
In 2013, the federal government will spend $3.67 trillion -- most of it your tax dollars.

A budget is as much about spending as it is about raising revenue, and individuals like you fund the federal government through income taxes and payroll taxes. That means we’re all stakeholders in how that money is spent.

Federal funding comes into our communities in many ways, much of it in the form of cash assistance funneled through state and local agencies. Each year the federal government contributes hundreds of billions of dollars to state budgets through grants and assistance programs. Programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide support to families, while initiatives like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allow communities to fund important public and private infrastructure. Both of these initiatives are crucial for states and their citizens, particularly now, as tough economic times have forced states to make tough budget choices.

The federal budget also lands in our communities by supporting government services like building roads and bridges, and through the enforcement of safety regulations for things like food quality, drinking water, and clean air. Bottom line: all federal spending creates jobs.

And don’t forget, individuals receive direct federal spending through Unemployment Insurance, Social Security, and more.

As stakeholders, it is our right and our obligation to see that our tax dollars are spent in ways that reflect our priorities. To do that we need to know where that money is going and how budget decisions are made.

Federal Budget Affects Environment, Health Care, Education, and More

As lawmakers grapple with a mixture of pressing social and political issues, it’s imperative that all Americans understand how federal budget decisions affect our lives -- every single day. National Priorities Project’s research and tools make it easy to see the connections between federal funding and your child’s education, jobs in your community, clean drinking water, support for our troops, care for veterans, and more.

Here are just a few of the ways that the federal budget might affect you.

**Food & Nutrition Assistance**
This year, U.S. taxpayers will pay $116 billion towards Food & Nutrition Assistance programs funded by the federal government. These programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP also known as food stamps) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Millions of families nationwide have access to healthy foods and avoid chronic hunger as a result of this federal support.

**Energy Conservation & Environment**
National parks, clean air and water, pollution control measures, and alternative energy initiatives are all funded through the federal budget. In 2013, around $1 billion of the federal budget was dedicated to energy conservation programs, including renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives. About 1% of the federal budget – or about $52 billion this year – will go to all energy and environment programs.

**Education & Schools**
The federal government supports a variety of educational initiatives, including $14 billion in grants to local schools, such as Title I funding for schools that serve primarily low-income children, and $8 billion in funding for Head Start initiatives that offer health, education, and nutrition services to preschool children from low-income families. The federal budget also provides student financial assistance, such as Pell Grants and Federal Work Study, that enable millions of young people nationwide to pursue higher education.

**Health Care**
Health care programs supported by federal funds include Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, as well as occupational and consumer health and safety and health care for Veterans. For example, this year, U.S. taxpayers will pay $285 billion towards Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

**Social Security**
All wage earners are affected in some way by Social Security – either as recipients of benefits or through the portion of our paychecks that go directly to fund this earned-benefit program. Payments to Social Security benefits and the cost of program administration comprise about 22 percent of the total federal budget. Last year, the government paid more than $685 billion in benefits to millions of Americans receiving Social Security retirement and disability.

**Science, Research, & Innovation**
Without researchers who test innovations and develop new technologies with the support of the federal government, our nation never would have developed the best aerospace exploration program in the world or developed vaccines for debilitating diseases. Academic research, science, and technology sectors are supported by the federal government, which will spend around $12 billion on general scientific research this year.
Baystate Health congratulates the National Priorities Project on three decades of truth telling by making the complicated simple, so we can all be better informed and engaged citizens. Data is a powerful tool, but only if understood. Thanks for having the courage to reveal what our national priorities truly are, so we can all better participate and help shape our country’s future.
30 Years as the People’s Guide to the Federal Budget

1983
National Priorities Project is born

1983-1989

1989-1990

1990
Greg Speeter & colleagues produce “In Defense of the First District,” documenting a $54 million dollar funding loss over two years to the first Massachusetts Congressional District

1991-1992
Partnership with Common Agenda Coalition to launch “Creating a Common Agenda” in Washington D.C. providing an alternative to Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America”

1992
NPP’s materials on the state and local impact of the cost of the B2 Bomber and F22 Jet Fighter help stop its funding

1993
“Working Hard, Earning Less,” published with Jobs with Justice, is the first to provide living wage information for all 50 states.

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1995
Partnership with Common Agenda Coalition to launch “Creating a Common Agenda” in Washington D.C. providing an alternative to Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America”

1995-1996

1996

1997-1998
Cost of War data used by activists across the country helps shape candidate debates during midterm Congressional election campaigns

1998
NPP issues “Election 2012: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more

1999
NPP publishes “If Paychecks Could Talk,” NPP’s first animated video, a tool that is widely used by partners as an engagement and mobilization tool

2000
NPP releases “A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget,” our critically acclaimed book, is published and is soon carried by bookstores, universities, and libraries in every state in the nation

2001
NPP celebrates its 20th Anniversary

2002
Launch of “Cost of War” running counter for states and cities, a tool that ultimately is cited by hundreds of national, state, and local media, partners, and individuals over the next eleven years

2003
NPP holds the “If I Had a Trillion Dollars National Youth Video Contest”

2004
NPP issues “Election 2012: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more

2005
NPP releases military recruitment data by high school, zip code, income level, and race/ethnicity, providing the first-ever analysis of disparities in enlistment, and is featured in USA TODAY, the Washington Post, Boston Globe, Denver Post, and dozens more media outlets

2006
NPP releases an updated Trade-Offs tool to include localized spending data for 9,900 cities and towns

2007
NPP releases “Homeland Security: The Second Defense Department” with the first-ever analysis of the total cost of the Department of Homeland Security

2008
NPP transitions Cost of War to Cost of National Security, with running counters for federal spending on programs ranging from the military to health care

2009
NPP issues a groundbreaking analysis tracking changes in tax breaks over the past 40 years and a breakdown of who benefits the most

2010
NPP publishes “If Paychecks Could Talk,” NPP’s first animated video, a tool that is widely used by partners as an engagement and mobilization tool

2011
With US Action and a host of national allies, NPP creates “Build a Better Budget,” an online game and action tool

2012
A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget, our critically acclaimed book, is published and is soon carried by bookstores, universities, and libraries in every state in the nation

2013
NPP re-launches its Federal Priorities Database with cutting-edge technology and data tracking social indicators, as well as the county, state, and national impact of federal spending

2015
NPP releases “Election 2012: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more

“…”
If we are to have any hope of navigating the federal budget process and understanding the complex decisions our elected officials will make in future years, we need this book. A “People’s Guide is our way.”
—Barbara Ehrenreich, best-selling author of Nickel and Dimed

2016
NPP releases an updated Trade-Offs tool to include localized spending data for 9,900 cities and towns

2017
NPP issues a groundbreaking analysis tracking changes in tax breaks over the past 40 years and a breakdown of who benefits the most

2018
NPP releases “Homeland Security: The Second Defense Department” with the first-ever analysis of the total cost of the Department of Homeland Security

2019
NPP transitions Cost of War to Cost of National Security, with running counters for federal spending on programs ranging from the military to health care

2020
NPP issues a groundbreaking analysis tracking changes in tax breaks over the past 40 years and a breakdown of who benefits the most

2021
NPP releases “Election 2022: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more

2022
NPP issues “Election 2022: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more

2023
NPP issues “Election 2024: The Voter Guide,” a comparison of the presidential candidates on 12 key issues, plus fact sheets with key background information on Medicare, Social Security, taxes, and more
30 National Democracy Champions

In honor of National Priorities Project’s 30th Anniversary, we celebrate thirty allies and valued partners from all around the country and all walks of life who exemplify leadership and tenacity in their commitment to the democratic ideals upon which our nation was founded.

...And because there are so many people doing incredible work for our democracy, we’ve added a bonus Champion for a total of thirty-one. Read full bios and learn more about these remarkable individuals at nationalpriorities.org/en/about/npp-turns-30/democracy-champions

Democracy Champion awards are given in honor of Greg Speeter and Frances Crowe.
National Priorities Project’s 30th Anniversary Celebration!

Presented by Cooley Dickinson Hospital, an affiliate of Massachusetts General Hospital and Partners Healthcare

Friday, October 18, 2013 • 7:30-9:00 pm • The Academy of Music Northampton, MA

Doors open at 6:30 Come early to enjoy a glass of beer or wine with friends! (All refreshment sales benefit the Academy of Music.)

Tickets on sale at academymusictheatre.com

Featuring visionaries and change makers in the movements for peace and security, healthcare justice, environment, and education.

Former Congressman Barney Frank

Barney Frank served as Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee from 2007-2011. His legislative legacy includes efforts to reduce the deficit, shrink military spending, and fund important quality of life needs at home.

Ai-jen Poo,
National Domestic Workers' Alliance

Ai-jen Poo is a recipient of the Ms. Foundation Woman of Vision Award, Newsweek’s 150 Fearless Women list, and TIME’s list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World.

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner,
MomsRising

MomsRising has 1 million members working to increase family economic security, to end discrimination against women and mothers, and to help ensure all children can thrive.

Congressman Jim McGovern
Currently serving his ninth term in Congress, Jim McGovern is the second ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee, and a member of the House Agriculture Committee.

With Video Appearances By: Bill McKibben • Annie Leonard • Ben Cohen ...and more surprise guests!

Musicians

Alecia Chakour

Sonya Kitchell

Mitch Chakour

SciTech Band
“The Pride of Springfield”

Celebrity Hosts

Bill Newman

Monte Belmonte

Kelsey Flynn

Ericka Taylor

30th Anniversary Host Committee

Honorary Chair - Congressman Jim McGovern • Co-Chairs - Dennis Bidwell and Chia Collins

Host Committee

Harriet Barlow
Lori Divine-Hudson
Sally & Al Griggs
Clare Higgins
Jack Horner & Ron Skinn

Michael Cohen
George & Ann Levinger
Jim Levey
Terry Mollner
Mayor David Narkewicz

Representative Peter Kocot
Rus Peotter
Senator Stanley Rosenberg
Jessica Saalfeld
Preston Smith

Bill Newman & Dale Melcher

Sarah Stranahan
Susan Thrasher
Torn Willis
Cate Woolner
Jonathan Wright & Meg Kelsey Wright

Cooley Dickinson Health Care

Massachusetts General Hospital Affiliate

With additional support from: American Friends Service Committee; Bart’s Homemade/Snow’s Ice Cream; Bidwell Advisors; Bova, Harrington & Associates, PC.; Bueno y Soro; Clayton & Canby Dental; Collective Copies; Kelly & Charlie DeRose; Florence Savings Bank; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Gateway City Arts; Gazette; Goggins Real Estate; Greenfield Community College; Sally & Al Griggs; The Hotel Northampton; Interlink Publishing; Integrity Development & Construction; Mount Holyoke College Weissman Center for Leadership; Northeast IT Systems, Inc.; The Odyssey Bookshop; Ostberg Associates; Peace Development Fund; Principle Profts Asset Management, Inc.; RAINMAKER Consulting; Valley Home Improvement, Inc.; Webber & Grinnell Insurance; Jon Weissman & Joan Grenier; Women’s Action for New Directions & Women Legislators’ Lobby; and Wright Builders
What People Are Saying About National Priorities Project

“I’ve found NPP’s work to be an extraordinarily valuable source of insight and analysis with regard to what’s at stake for the nation, what our priorities ought to be, and how far we’ve drifted from those widely-shared goals.”

− Robert Reich

“I greatly value NPP’s work and use it regularly in my own work.”

− Bill Moyers

“All of our work is data-driven – in fact, we may be the only activist movement on earth that uses a data point as its name and rallying cry. And we’re grateful to the NPP for their data – in particular, understanding the pernicious role of fossil fuel subsidies has been highly useful. Thanks!”

− Bill McKibben, 350.org

“MoveOn has often used National Priorities Project data to empower our members to speak knowledgeably and compellingly about huge issues -- from military spending on the Iraq War (or now, the prospect of a military intervention in Syria), to the impacts of the sequester. NPP is a vital resource -- the progressive movement depends on you!”

− Anna Galland, MoveOn.org

“Each year, when the president presents his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year, NPP provides a variety of analyses that help clarify what is in the budget, how that defines the nation’s priorities, and how that affects communities and the lives of individuals. NPP provides a very helpful alternative lens to view and understand the federal budget that we turn to every year. There’s no way you can make good, thoughtful decisions and choices without good, thoughtful information and analyses.”


“National People’s Action has relied on our partner NPP for the hard data and lucid explanation they provide for everything from educating neighborhood leaders and staff on the budget process to understanding exactly where our affordable housing dollars have gone. We’ve used NPP to help write the signs that are carried at direct action marches on Wall Street and on legislative fact sheets carried on Capitol Hill.”

− Liz Ryan Murray, National People’s Action

“(NPP is) not only dedicated to having a national impact and providing support to national entities through their activities, but they are also admirably supportive of local efforts and are one of the very few national groups dedicated to providing local networks with data specific to their geographies.”

− Sarita Gupta, Jobs with Justice

“NPP’s work has demonstrated that another way is possible, and that we could start building it right now with a shift in spending and policy priorities. Whenever we’re faced with a doubter telling us that health care or education or pretty much any social good is just too expensive and we can’t afford it, we pull out numbers from NPP to show them the hard data that we can afford a better future. What we can’t afford is ignoring this data and continuing business as usual.”

− Annie Leonard, Story of Stuff

“Without NPP the movements for justice and peace would be less likely to win. The stronger NPP becomes the more likely a more just, equitable and peaceful world will become a reality.”

− Judith Le Blanc, Peace Action

“Our budget problem is not that we spend too much, but that we spend far too much in areas where we shouldn’t, and far too little in other places, which could do so much to improve the quality of the lives of all Americans. National Priorities Project has consistently been one of the few organizations to draw attention to this point. Providing vital advocacy as we shift away from grossly excessive military spending and into categories that will be far more productive for our quality of life is a great asset, and one that I believe will become increasingly important as we deal with a budget crisis that will only be resolved sensibly if the country pays attention to NPP’s advice.”

− Former Congressman Barney Frank

Dear NATIONAL PRIORITIES PROJECT;

Thanks for so many years of deciphering the federal budget for the rest of us. We couldn’t have done it without you! Maybe some day it will all make sense. Until then keep up the good work!

Sincerely, everyone at Paradise Copies

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Be The Change

Join The Change Makers Club

By supporting the work that NPP does, you give them the power to help make change!

National Priorities Project
www.nationalpriorities.org

Anonymous local supporters
The Stampede

is tens of thousands of Americans legally stamping messages on our Nation’s currency to #GetMoneyOut of Politics. As more and more stamped money spreads, so will the movement to amend the Constitution.

So far, 16 states have passed resolutions calling on Congress to support a constitutional amendment, and 125 members of Congress have sponsored or co-sponsored a bill calling on an amendment. That means we’re 1/3 of the way there. But more work needs to be done.

Stampstampede.org
@StampStampede

EVERY BILL YOU STAMP helps demonstrate growing and ongoing support for the movement. Join the stampede and help #GetMoneyOut of politics!
User Profile: Alia Holness

“I’m going to go home and tell people we can make a difference. Because I learned about the federal budget and came to Washington. Where I come from, people think nothing we do matters. But they’re wrong, I know they’re wrong after today.”

Growing up in Boston, Alia remembers being shocked by the juxtaposition of the State House and homeless people on the Boston Commons. She wished there was something she could do to help the people she saw suffering, but she didn’t know how.

When she got her first job, she saw the taxes being taken out of her weekly paycheck, and she wondered where that money was going. Was it going to the State House, while the homeless shivered in the cold winters outside?

Alia began to understand the connection between her tax dollars and the services in her community after participating in federal budget trainings provided by National Priorities Project as part of the If I Had a Trillion Dollars Youth Video Contest, co-organized by NPP and American Friends Service Committee. She realized that her tax dollars could be spent by the federal government in ways that would improve opportunity and support for struggling families – but that her priorities were not reflected in the decisions made by her lawmakers about federal spending.

As part of NPP’s training, Alia and dozens of youth from around the country met with lawmakers in Washington, D.C. They testified about the challenges facing their families and communities, and told their legislators what they believed should be the priorities for our nation.

Alia’s experience in Washington changed her profoundly. After years of being told that she couldn’t change anything, she realized that her opinion about federal issues matters, and that she can make a difference by speaking up. She reclaimed her power as a citizen in our democracy. Alia has said that NPP’s information, tools, and educational resources provided her with the opportunity to know that her priorities deserve to be heard.

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— SHAKESPEARE

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Free Press congratulates the National Priorities Project on 30 years of keeping everyone’s priorities straight.

Free Press fights for our rights to connect and communicate.

We’re building a nationwide movement for universal and affordable Internet access, diverse media ownership, vibrant public media and independent journalism.

Join us at freepress.net.
Stroke care from two amazing hospitals has one GREAT GARDENER back where she wants to be.

When Sylvia Mohr was showing signs of a stroke, her husband Bill knew just what to do – get help fast. Fortunately, there’s a Primary Stroke Center right here at Cooley Dickinson Hospital. Add to that our affiliation with the Massachusetts General Hospital TeleStroke Program, and you can’t get better care. Moments after Sylvia arrived at the Emergency Department, doctors at Cooley Dickinson and Mass General were treating her in tandem, real-time, via a computer video monitor.

“Cooley Dickinson made a difference that night,” says Bill. “We knew of their affiliation with Mass General, and that gave us a lot of confidence.”

Now Sylvia is back to working in her garden and enjoying life. If you or a loved one shows signs of a stroke, every second counts. Get to the hospital immediately.

To see the rest of my story, visit TheTalkisGood.com.

Cooley Dickinson Hospital