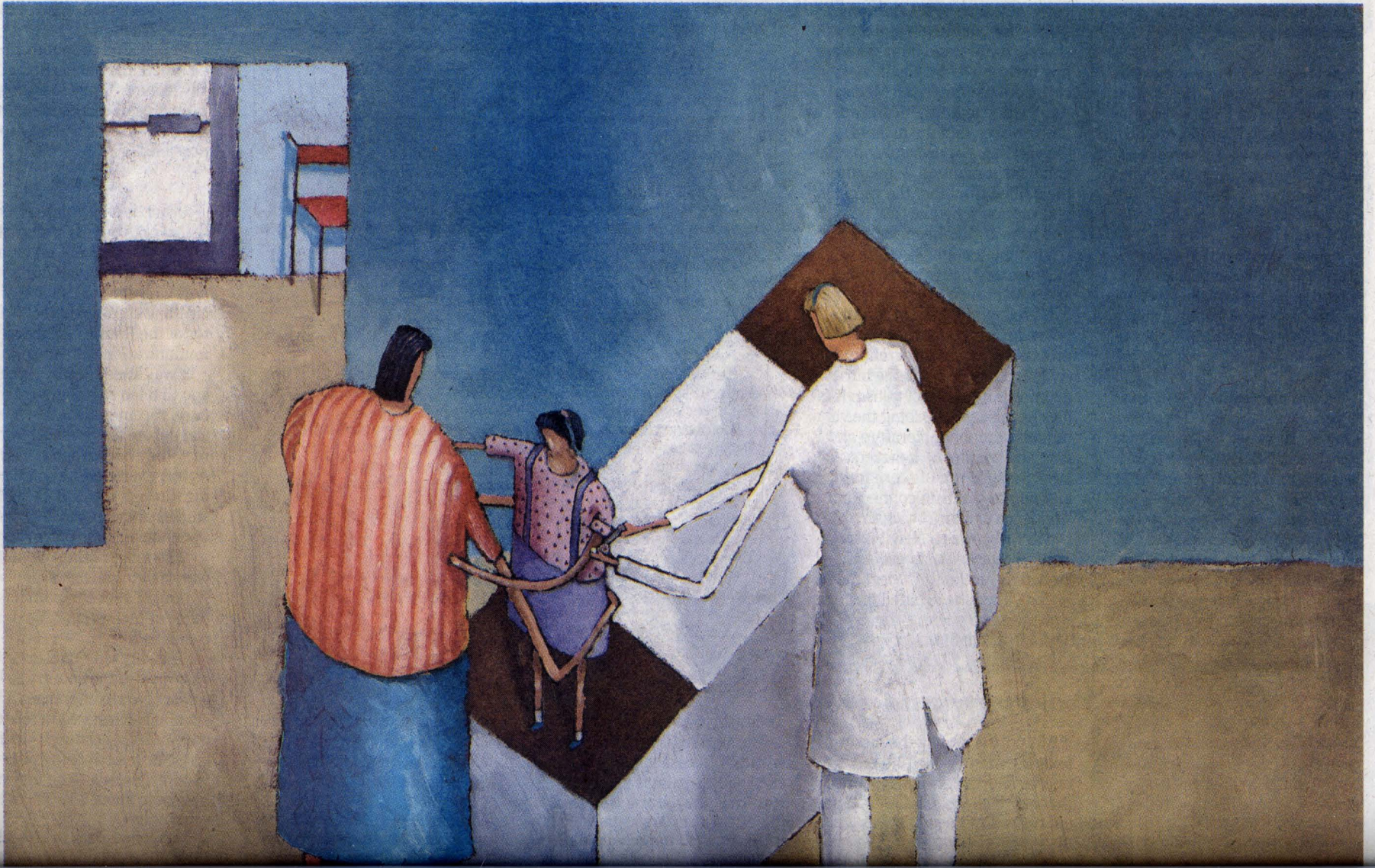


HEALTH

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Medtees offer a dose of humor

By **KELSEA GURSKI**

VOICE EDITOR

There wasn't much Alice Magos could do for her ailing younger sister.

Last fall wasn't kind to Diana Reid. A trip to the emergency room for abdominal pain resulted in the 67-year-old Skokie woman going into cardiac arrest; doctors had to shock her heart some three dozen times to revive her.

Once stabilized, Reid was transferred to Evanston Hospital for abdominal surgery. Three weeks later, she woke from a coma in intensive care with little recollection of the ordeal — or anything else for that matter — and couldn't walk.

She faced weeks of grueling physical therapy, new medications and living

"THE THINGS *you think you can't joke about are the ones that sell best.*"

— **DIANE GOULET FISHER**
OF **MEDTEES.COM**

with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator, or ICD. Her memory slowly returned.

A resident on the hospital's rehab floor, Reid's outlook was grim.

"She was terrified of this defibrillator," Magos said. "In physical therapy, it'd go off because of the exertion."

Reid was so discouraged with the

ICD that Magos suggested they name it in hopes of improving Reid's attitude. The nickname, Sparky, lightened the mood, but not enough to lift Reid's spirits.

In her search to find other ways to encourage her sister, Magos took to the Internet.

That's when she found Medtees.com, an online shirt company created by Springfield native and psychologist Diane Goulet Fisher and her husband, cardiologist Wes Fisher.

Medtees.com tastefully pokes fun at health struggles people face. The first shirts the couple offered were geared toward cardiac patients.

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Medtees.com
was created
by Springfield
native **Diane**
Goulet Fisher
and her
husband,
Wes Fisher.

MEDTEES

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"These shirts were hilarious," Magos said. "So I ordered a T-shirt that said, 'Be careful, I'm wired.' And then I ordered a sweat shirt that said, 'Danger. High Voltage.'"

As soon as they arrived, Magos took the shirts to her sister at the hospital.

"She just laughed and laughed and said, 'Oh, I have to wear this to my rehab ward.' She put it on right away."

Since then, the Medtees shirts have become part of Reid's everyday uniform. She wears them so often that she ordered three more.

Magos said they were the turning point in Reid's recovery.

According to Diane Goulet Fisher, that's why Medtees exists.

Fisher's husband, who works at the Evanston hospital where Reid was staying last fall, had noticed how difficult it was for cardiac patients to accept life with a pacemaker or ICD. He began searching for ways to help them adjust and make light of their new situation.

After reading a journal article about humorous T-shirts focused on medical ailments, Medtees was born. Since the site was launched last spring, the couple has sold 1,500 shirts to patients and their families as far away as Germany and Argentina.

Diane Goulet Fisher, who traveled to Springfield recently from her North Side home for a family gathering, said it's interesting how willing people are to

make the best of a daunting situation.

"A lot of (ailing people) out there want to be more real and be more truthful," she said. "Most of us don't live in perfect bodies, and those who are know someone who isn't."

There's no single bestseller among the dozens of offerings, which tackle everything from Crohn's disease to cancer, and Fisher said the lineup constantly changes. At least half of the designs are suggested by patients, such as one for amputees suggested by a war veteran that reads, "Dude, Where's My Leg?"

"The things you think you can't joke about are the ones that sell best," she said.

Ten percent of the company's profits are donated to charities that tie in with the different themes. Most shirts come in sizes for adults and children, but a few are specifically meant for toddlers and babies diagnosed with cancer or diabetes. Parents of sick children often find healing power in the shirts' humor, Fisher said.

While it's counterculture in this country to talk about disease, she said most people don't want to keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves.

That's what Magos and Reid have found since Reid left the hospital last November. Today, Reid is back to a full schedule teaching at a neighborhood senior center.

"You learn other people have been through these same things or worse," Magos said. "It just kind of facilitates communication and takes the fear out of things. I think it gets people to see a little humor in every situation."

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