

Can you bring clinical trials awareness to your community?

7 Theda Martin, a 61-year-old nurse from New Albany, IN, bubbles over with enthusiasm about her work. Convinced that most people knew little about clinical trials and the important medical developments they produce, Theda held a 'grass roots' community education evening at her local church. Through her own initiative, Theda gave a talk about clinical research that opened the eyes of her fellow churchgoers.

Theda, a quality and compliance manager with Kforce Clinical Research (which provides staffing to pharmaceutical companies), had worked as a research site coordinator. "I love what I do," says Theda. "My life is my work."

Theda is an active congregant with the Harvey Browne Presbyterian Church in Louisville KY, just about six miles from New Albany. She's also a member of the church's Wellness Committee, which presents a different speaker each month after the Wednesday evening services. "Our committee is always looking for a presentation that would be interesting to people who attend the Wednesday services," says Theda. "Most of the presentations have been disease-related, about subjects like Alzheimer's, heart disease, and stroke, although we have also had other subjects."

Church is often a place for inspiration, and Theda was struck with the idea that church members would be interested in hearing about clinical trials. For about a year, Theda toyed with the notion of giving a talk to the group. Finally she proposed it to the Wellness Committee. They responded with enthusiasm.

Theda thought that creating a presentation might be daunting. But it turned out to be much easier than she anticipated. "I started just throwing together some slides and then I learned that CISCRP had material they made available to volunteer speakers," says Theda. "They had a PowerPoint presentation and background material that I could use." The ready-made mate-

rial simplified the task of putting together a professional-quality presentation and handouts.

While some speakers struggle with stage fright, that wasn't a hurdle for Theda. "I'm used to doing presentations as part of my job as trainer, and besides, I love to talk," Theda laughs.

The presentation was a hit. Turnout at the Wednesday night presentation was excellent, as was the audience response. About 25 people gathered to hear Theda's talk. "It was well received and was really great," says Theda. Theda's friend, a coordinator at the University of Louisville helped with the presentation and was on hand to provide support and questions.



Several attendees stayed afterwards to talk more. "Usually people just come to the meeting and leave," says Theda. "But in this case, people were staying and asking for more information. I think they were very engaged."

Theda's successful evening, the warm audience response, and the valuable information she provided, illustrates how 'regular' people can spread the word on clinical trials awareness in their own communities. "It's a wonderful and worthy thing to do," says Theda. "There doesn't always have to be a big organized event that takes the whole day. Anyone can do this."

CISCRP welcomes those who would like to do volunteer community presentations about clinical trials. CISCRP can provide a PowerPoint presentation template with background information and statistics, which volunteers can customize to add their own information and experiences. Also available from CISCRP are educational brochures that can be distributed to the attendees.

To learn more about doing a presentation or volunteering, go to <http://www.ciscrp.org/professional/speaker.php>