Ashton Caton, community wellness program manager in Rogers brought the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) to Mercy Northwest Arkansas (NWA) in December 2016. The DPP is an evidence-based, CDC-recognized, year-long lifestyle change program. The program meets weekly for sixteen weeks, then bi-weekly for two months, followed by monthly sessions for six months. The program goal is for all participants to reduce their total body weight by 5-7 percent and increase weekly physical activity by 150 minutes per week during the first six months. Caton is one of the health coaches who lead the weekly classes, which offer a combination of information and encouragement to help participants reach their goals.

The DPP is for individuals who have elevated glucose levels or are at a high-risk for developing Type 2 diabetes.

The program teaches participants about nutrition, reducing portion sizes and ways to work more activity into their daily routines, among other lessons. “Making some simple lifestyle changes makes a big difference, and research has shown participants in the program can lower their risk and actually prevent the onset of diabetes by sticking with the changes,” Caton said.

“Not only did we learn from the class, we learned from each other, especially about our struggles,” Harry Palmer said. “Short term, you may not face all of the things that are discouraging. When it’s over 12 months, you’re going to hit a wall,” Judy Palmer said, noting Caton would help get her back on track.

Caton and her work with the DPP at Mercy NWA received the "2018 Chronic Disease Coordinating Council's Individual Trendsetter Award." Caton has helped train lifestyle coaches in other Mercy communities to spread the program across the ministry.

Mercy NWA has serviced 60 patients since December 2016.