

# NORTH PORT WEST VILLAGES WEEKLY

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## Crawford keeps the balance in her life

By ALISON POSNER  
SUN WEST VILLAGES  
CORRESPONDENT

GRAND PALM — Children may lose their balance and fall from time to time, but for Deb Crawford it can be much more serious. Last year, Crawford was diagnosed with Meniere's disease. The disorder affects the inner ear and can cause vertigo, hearing problems and ringing in the ear. It may also result in losing one's balance. Crawford doesn't let it stop her from anything and sees it as a minor setback.

"It isn't life-threatening," said Crawford, who doesn't take any medication. "It's just an inconvenience."

She brings her own balance to her life by focusing on things she enjoys like creative projects in the community of Grand Palm, where she lives with her husband Eddie and her dog Persephone.

Crawford likes to refurbish old furniture that she finds at thrift stores. She also takes items and transforms them into her own personal art.

In her living room is a big wooden hope chest that belonged to her sister.

"It was in bad shape," explained Crawford.

She replaced the legs, covered a hole with decorative molding and used chalk paint to paint it antique white.

"Now she wants it back and I'm not giving it to her," laughed Crawford.

Her front room, which is her favorite room in the house, is filled with a large, heavy oak cabinet that she obtained from a restaurant in Pennsylvania where she lived, and refinished it herself. Her children refer to it as "the monstrosity." There's a lamp with a shade wrapped in maps which sits on



SUN PHOTO BY ALISON POSNER

Deb Crawford displays the first art project she did as part of a class she took at Westchester University. She was asked to make a project about herself.

"It's just a curveball."

— Deb Crawford,  
diagnosed with Meniere's disease

a small end table in between two old-fashioned chairs that she purchased for \$150.

While Crawford likes the mix and match flair, her husband prefers a more conforming style.

"The odd chairs make him crazy," she said as she pointed to three different chairs set around a table.

"For me, if it matches, my head will explode" she said.

The couple has agreed to compromise. Crawford found three different sized mirrors and agreed to paint them the same color just for him.

The couple is active in the community. He plays pickleball; she is on the activities committee and attends lunches with the ladies.

But there is one project that they do together. They set up a box to collect food for the local food pantry.

"People are hungry all year around, not just at Christmas or Thanksgiving. We are trying to make people

aware of that and give back to the community," said Crawford.

Last year in a two-month period they donated almost \$600 to the pantry. Their plans are to collect more this year.

As far as her disability, Crawford does have some bad days. Those days are spent in bed nursing migraines. Sudden movements can make her dizzy and from time to time she needs

to rest. "I can see how it can be depressing for people," explains Crawford.

Not being able to drive is her biggest disappointment. But when she does, the one thing she plans to do is to return to teaching—something about which she feels passionate.

Crawford didn't find her passion in teaching until later in life. Amid her various jobs, she always wanted to be a teacher, but never had the opportunity to go to school.

"Life got in the way," she said. She eventually went

back to school and obtained her elementary education degree in 2006 and started a position right away. She taught for three years until she moved to Florida in November 2013 and was shortly afterward diagnosed with Meniere's. Her teaching career is on hold for now.

"It's just a curveball," said Crawford, who remains upbeat and positive. In the meantime she doesn't worry. She lives her life one day at a time.

"Life is good. And if something happens, we'll just figure it out."

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