



WISCONSIN PARKINSON

MAGAZINE ISSUE NO. 114 | 2023



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Mindfulness to
Manage PD and
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Take Your Own Road Trip!

We live in the beautiful state of Wisconsin, and there are many wonderful places to discover. Just as WPA has been on a Road Trip Across Wisconsin, this is the perfect time of year to take your own road trip. It can be long or short, it's whatever you decide! You may want to explore the fall colors, a different location, a new restaurant, or take in a fun, fall festival or event. There are so many choices!

So, how do you plan for a safe and comfortable drive? Here are some tips and ideas from Nationwide.com on how to prepare:

1. **Get plenty of sleep before you drive.**
2. **Bring healthy road trip snacks.**
3. **Stay hydrated.**
4. **Plan your rest stops.**
5. **Chew gum.**
6. **Use energizing scents.**
7. **Sit up straight.**
8. **Keep passengers entertained.**
9. **Listen to audio books.**



For the full article and more tips and details, go to: blog.nationwide.com/family-life/travel-outdoors/9-tips-long-drives/.

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WPA Needs You! Donate Today!

Donations are vital to a nonprofit organization. They sustain the programs and services and ensure the organization continues to grow and serve its mission. WPA is grateful to our donors for your selflessness in serving others. We need your ongoing financial support, as our goal is to increase the number of people with Parkinson's disease that we can serve.

Donate because:

- YOU have Parkinson's disease
- You know SOMEONE with Parkinson's disease
- You DON'T KNOW someone with Parkinson's disease...YET
- You want to help someone LIVE THEIR BEST LIFE with Parkinson's disease

The motivation to donate starts with YOU, the impact of your donation SERVES MANY.

Please give...generously! YOU make a difference.

Donating is easy! Simply scan the QR code with your smart phone to make a donation today!



OR if you prefer, you can mail your donation in the attached envelope.

Letter from the

Executive Director

It seems like such a short time ago that I was writing my reflections to start the year out, and here we are closing in on the end of another year. When I look back over the past year, I am amazed and inspired at what we have done together. This issue focuses on our journey...as individuals and as an organization. We selected a "road trip across Wisconsin" as our theme because more and more groups, activities and individuals are coming forward to do this important work across the state. Life is a journey, and it is best traveled with others by your side. The same is true for Parkinson's disease. It, too, is a journey – different for everyone, and having the support of a community who understands can be powerful.

I started the year talking about the strategic planning our organization did to create a roadmap for our future. The process of implementing that 3-year plan continues, and one of the things I am most excited about is how we continue to expand our resources into more parts of the state. That happens through the engagement and commitment of all of you. People know and understand the value of walking this journey together and this edition shares how two families started support groups in areas where resources were needed. We also include a "how-to" article in the event you are inspired to start a group in your part of the state. You'll read about everyday people who saw a need, stepped forward and are leading with heart. I am very appreciative and grateful to them for being part of the PD community.

The end of the year is a time to say goodbye to some things and prepare to welcome new

opportunities. Our Board President, Rob McDonald, completed his term as leader, and we say thank you to him as he continues on in a board member capacity. We also welcome Dick Cosentino back to the board presidency. Dick has served many years on the board as both a member and previous president, so we are grateful to him as he steps back into that role for another term.

As I look forward, I am hopeful. I see so many positive things happening in our organization and throughout the state. I look forward the continued growth and expansion of our mission because my greatest wish is that we can connect with everyone with Parkinson's disease who needs WPA's support and resources throughout the state.

Wishing you a journey filled with hope!



Kelly Cieslak, Executive Director

kellyc@wiparkinson.org | 414.312.6990

Continuing your Legacy with the Wisconsin Parkinson Association



Imagine a future where everyone with Parkinson's feels a sense of community and unwavering support. Your choice to leave a gift to the Wisconsin Parkinson Association can play a pivotal role in making that happen.

Why the WPA?

WPA stands as a beacon of hope, helping individuals with Parkinson's and their loved ones find understanding, support, and resources to live life with—and beyond—Parkinson's disease.

The Power of Your Gift

- A Lasting Impact: Your generosity ensures that the WPA can thrive for many years to come.
- Tax Benefits: Many planned gifts come with tax advantages, maximizing the reach of your kindness.

Giving is Easy

Creating a lasting impact is simpler than you might think. With a few thoughtful steps, you can reaffirm your commitment to those affected by Parkinson's.

- Wills and Trusts: Consider including WPA in your will or living trust, specifying either a fixed amount or a percentage of your estate.
- Retirement Plans: Name WPA as a beneficiary for parts or all of your IRA, 401(k), or other retirement plans.
- Life Insurance: Designate WPA as a beneficiary, turning even modest policies into a significant gesture of support.

Your generosity today ensures a better, more hopeful tomorrow for many. Make a lasting difference. If you would like to learn more about supporting WPA through a planned gift, please contact Executive Director, Kelly Cieslak, at (414) 312-6990 for more information.

WPA Board Leadership

Thank You to Rob McDonald, Welcome Back Dick Cosentino

Our organization is fortunate to have leaders and members who are enthusiastic about promoting our mission. We'd like to offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to Rob McDonald, who has served as our Board President for the last 2 years. His term as president has ended this fall and he will continue to serve as a board member. Rob has served our organization with dedication, for which we are grateful. He knows first-hand the impact that Parkinson's disease has on a family, as his father lived with PD for many years. Rob, thank you for your leadership and commitment to WPA.

This board leadership change brings Dick Cosentino back in the role of Board President. Dick has been on the WPA board of directors for 9 years, and previously served as Board President. Dick is a huge advocate for the organization, being a long-term member, but most of all, a devoted husband and caregiver for his wife, Patty, who has PD herself. We thank you and appreciate you for leading the board as we continue to grow our mission across the State of Wisconsin.



The holiday season is a time of celebration, and togetherness. It can also be a time of increased stress, especially for individuals dealing with chronic conditions like Parkinson's disease. The practice of mindfulness offers a valuable tool for managing both the symptoms of Parkinson's disease and the stress that often accompanies the holidays.

The practice of mindfulness offers significant benefits for both individuals with Parkinson's disease and their care partners. When mindfulness techniques are incorporated into daily living, the results often lead to reduced stress, improved emotional well-being and an overall higher quality of life.

The following are a few examples of mindfulness tools that can be practiced any time of day or night:

1. **Deep breathing**

Find a quiet place, sit or lie down comfortably and take slow deep breaths. Focus your attention on your breath. Feel the rise and fall of each inhale and exhale. When your mind wanders, gently redirect your attention back to the breath.

2. **Loving-Kindness Meditation**

Send well-wishes and positive thoughts to yourself and others. Repeat phrases like "May I (or others) be happy, may I (or others) be healthy, may I (or others) live with ease." This practice can cultivate feelings of compassion for yourself and others.

3. **Guided Meditation**

Use guided meditation or recordings to follow along with a mindfulness meditation session. A soothing voice will lead you through relaxation techniques and help you stay present in the moment. There are numerous free meditation apps to use on your phone, computer, or smart TV. You can also visit your local library for CDs or DVDs.

Remember that regular practice is key to experiencing the full benefits of mindfulness exercises. Choose the ones that resonate with you the most and incorporate them into your daily routine to build up "muscle memory" so that you can access these stress reducing tools when you need them most.



Provider Spotlight Update

Why explore the treatment option of Deep Brain Stimulation?

by Isabella Dahlke, WPA Contributor and DBS Specialist

First, let's briefly go over what Deep Brain Stimulation, DBS for short, is. DBS is a neurostimulator that precisely targets a region of the brain that controls motor function. For Parkinson's patients the device is designed to put you in control of your symptoms.

Upon first hearing the term DBS you might think to yourself, "why would I want to undergo brain surgery?". Allow me to paint a picture for you. You were diagnosed with Parkinson's disease a handful of years ago and while the carbidopa/levodopa you take used to be very effective throughout the day at controlling your tremors, bradykinesia (slow movements), rigidity and freezing, you just don't feel like they work the way they used to. There are points in the day where you feel like your old self (ON time). You're able to drink that cup of coffee without spilling and work on a project. You're able to put mascara on and maybe even write a letter to a friend. But then comes the time when the medication stops working and your independence with all those tasks changes (OFF time). Maybe your hands get a little shaky or you start to experience dyskinesias (uncontrolled movements of the body) and suddenly, your activities of daily living become a challenge.

Now, what if I told you there was a way you could feel that ON sensation consistently throughout the day? No more fluctuations in responsiveness to meds. No more staying in due to fear of your tremor coming back in the middle of a meal. No more letting Parkinson's control your day-to-day. Well, my friend, that in and of itself is why you might be someone who should talk to your doctor about the benefits of DBS. It is not a cure, but it could be the right tool for your physician to give you back the freedom throughout the day that Parkinson's has affected.

Let's talk about what your life looks like after you have DBS. Following implantation there will be some down time before the stimulator is turned on. Then, you will follow up with your Movement Disorder Specialist (MDS)

for your initial programming session. At this visit your doctor will fine tune your stimulation to your specific needs. This is what makes DBS so unique, it is personalized to you. There may be a few more follow up appointments to get the settings to the "sweet spot" but after that you will only need a few adjustments per year. Good news is these can be done from the comfort of your living room. This seamless process is all made



possible through Abbott's iOS-based platform. Which allows you to download the app directly to your iPhone or to the iPhone provided. In a state like Wisconsin where winter is fast approaching, doctors at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin are utilizing Abbott's Virtual Clinic technology to remotely program your DBS device saving you time and money on a trip to the doctor's office.

If after reading this, you think this is something that would provide you relief I would encourage you to ask your doctor if you are a candidate.

For more information visit neuromodulation.abbott.com or contact Isabella Dahlke at (512) 202-8208 or Isabellea.dahlke@abbott.com to get connected with a specialist near you!

Through the Eyes of a Caregiver:

Battling Parkinson's Together



For years, Vance Haney and his wife, Tracie, lived a life of uncertainty. Tracie sensed something was amiss with her health, but for over a decade, doctor after doctor dismissed her concerns.

"It's just the normal aging process," they'd say. Or "It's a hormone imbalance." One doctor even suggested that Tracie was imagining the symptoms and recommended a psychiatric consultation. With every misdiagnosis, their already heavy burden became heavier. Even still, they remained determined to find an answer.

That answer came in December 2022, when Tracie was diagnosed with Parkinson's. The diagnosis lifted the fog of frustration and confusion, but the clarity was bittersweet. It signaled the start of a new journey filled with challenges and uncertainty.

"It not only has a huge impact on the person with Parkinson's, but it's hard on caregivers too. I found myself asking, 'Who takes care of the caregivers?'"

"There's a sense of relief when you finally have an answer. Now we can get her the right medications, the right treatments, and see the right doctors," Vance explained. "But that relief quickly turns to fear. What does the future have in store for us?"

Vance, who had already been living the caregiver role for many years, didn't miss a beat. He embraced it with unwavering commitment. "It doesn't change how I feel about her," he said, "I love her no matter what."

Vance and Tracie's days became a delicate balance of living life to the fullest while continuing to adapt to new challenges. Over time, Vance felt like he was pouring from an empty cup. He was emotionally exhausted and felt increasingly isolated.

"Most people don't understand this disease. Parkinson's takes your loved one away symptom by symptom,"

Vance said. "It not only has a huge impact on the person with Parkinson's, but it's hard on caregivers too. I found myself asking, 'Who takes care of the caregivers?'"

Vance recognized the need for a support group but there were none nearby in Columbia County, so Tracie and Vance decided to start their own.



The Columbia County Parkinson's Support/Social Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at the Cambria Fire Department Community Center at 6 pm. The mission of the group is simple: to help one another.

"Our group is a place to socialize, share advice, and find community with other people who know exactly what you're going through," Vance explained.

Through the highs and lows, Vance has remained a beacon of strength for Tracie and now, the members of his support group. He embodies the essence of a caregiver's undying spirit, loyalty and love.

"I'm there for whatever she needs. We're in this together."

If you would like more information about the support group, contact Vance at columbiacountyparkinsonsgroup@gmail.com or join the Columbia County Parkinson's Support/Social Group on Facebook.



Mission-Guided Road Trip Across Wisconsin: *What's Been Happening Across the State This Year?*

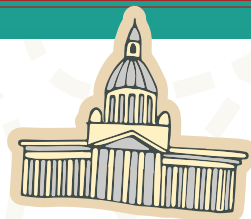
A road trip gives you a chance to explore and discover new things. While the destination is important, it's equally worthwhile to pay attention and enjoy the stops along the way to make the most of your journey. Jill Compton, WPA Director of Mission Impact says about this past year, "Our team has been on the road! As we have been meeting with people and organizations throughout Wisconsin, I am deeply touched by the collaborators, supporters and individuals living with PD working together to connect those seeking resources." As we looked back on all of the activities, events, and people who have made this year so impactful, we wanted to share some of this year's highlights with you.

We took a virtual road trip as we recounted what took place, and we want to share a few of the highlights.

One of our organizational goals is to expand our footprint throughout the state and we're excited about the momentum we are seeing in working toward that goal.

One area that we are very encouraged about is the increase in new Support Groups that are forming. We're seeing people step forward to fill a need, especially in more rural areas where resources are not as plentiful. Several of the new Support Groups that started this year include:

- **Wisconsin Rapids** – new Support Group, John Melke, leader
- **Columbia County** – new Support Group, Vance and Tracie Haney, leaders



- **Madison** – new Support Group at Capri Communities, Caitlin Mattern, leader
- **Wauwatosa** – New Support Group facilitators Sandy and Wally Klingensmith



Back on the road, we're checking out Movement and Exercise classes throughout the state. Movement and exercise are essential elements in staying healthy and living your best life with Parkinson's disease. Studies have shown the positive effect that exercise brings to our lives in general, but especially to those with Parkinson's. There are many dedicated exercise instructors who teach in-person and virtual classes, which means there are multiple options for people to participate. Two classes and instructors have been added this year:

- **Burlington** – Jen Norris, PT, DPT is a new instructor
- **Cudahy** – Joe Patnode is a new instructor

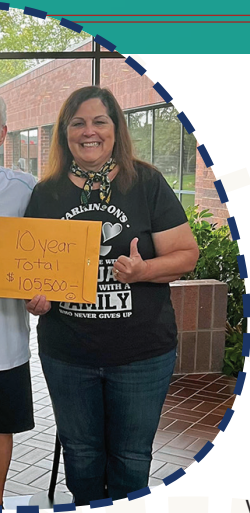
We also held the first ever Move More Challenge this year, with 29 participants committing to include exercise and movement as a priority in their lives. This challenge was inspired by Dacy Reimer's passion for encouraging her patients to exercise regularly and her Ice Age Trail hike.

The next stops on our virtual road trip are some of the Educational Experiences and events that took place in 2023 that were hosted by enthusiastic friends and supporters of WPA. This year's highlights include:

- Training of additional Urban Poling instructors by Dr. Joy Cochran. Demos and workshops to learn about the use and benefits of Urban Poling



“One of our organizational goals is to expand our footprint throughout the state and we’re excited about the momentum we are seeing in working toward that goal.”



has been one of our most requested activities this year, so we are preparing trainers to meet that increased demand.

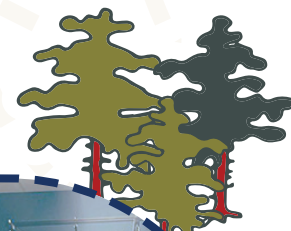
- The **CarePatrol** organization hosted a fantastic “Pitching for Parkinson’s” event at the Timber Rattler stadium in the Fox Valley area where they brought together other resources and information for people who have PD.

- Our friend **Dacy Reimer** lands in this virtual stop too. Not only does she educate her patients on a daily basis, but she is also on the WPA Medical Advisory Committee, and very involved with programs presented through WPA. What we love the most is that she educates by example. She knows the healing power of exercise and movement and has been an avid hiker and nature lover for most of her life.

- Our annual **WPA Symposium** is a perfect example an educational opportunity. We were so happy to be able to be back in person this year after the break we took due to the pandemic. We had a record attendance this year at 425 people. Not only is it an opportunity for people to come together and learn about living with Parkinson’s, but it’s also a great community builder and chance to meet others with the same experience. We look forward to seeing you at next year’s Symposium.
- We connected with the **Brain Center of Green Bay** for several presentations. They are a wonderful resource in the northern part of the state.

- The **Milwaukee Table Tennis Club** hosted a Ping Pong event which has been shown to have a positive impact on the progression of Parkinson’s by incorporating balance, eye-hand coordination and the rhythm and pace of reciprocal play.

These are just a few of the many things that are going on across the state that are part of serving the WPA mission of providing Hope, Community, Support, and Resources for people with Parkinson’s and their loved ones.



To find out more about Support Groups in your area, Movement and Exercise classes, and Educational Opportunities visit the Wisconsin Parkinson Association website at wiparkinson.org.





Partner Feature *Highlights*

Safer Care Solutions through CarePatrol



A passion for serving people with Parkinson's disease and aligned missions is what led CarePatrol and the WPA to connect and collaborate. CarePatrol is a national organization with six agencies in Wisconsin. Senior Care Advisors are the staff who meet with families, at no cost, to discover what their needs are and to guide families to determine the best solutions. CarePatrol's role is to work with families and all types of providers including assisted living, home care, respite care and others to identify the "safer care solutions" every step of the way. They focus on three areas in assessing family needs:

1. What are the individual's care needs, for today and the future? When coming up with solutions for a person with Parkinson's disease, the solutions need to be effective for today and tomorrow.
2. What are the family's financial needs?
3. What are the family's preferences/wishes for the care they receive? What the individual did professionally, their likes and dislikes when it comes to food, exercise and social enrichment are a few of the things that are considered when creating a care plan.

WPA had a chance to meet recently with Kim Patterson, Marketing Director for CarePatrol Northeast Wisconsin, based out of Appleton. Kim shared that she initially met the WPA team at one of our previous symposium events. It was through that experience that she saw the good things that WPA was doing regarding education, communication, connecting with resources and being good partners in the community. At that time, she worked for a different organization, and it was there that she met many individuals living with Parkinson's and developed her passion for serving the PD community. Kim is an educator and strongly believes that there can never be enough education, resources, and tools to help people navigate such a debilitating disease. Both CarePatrol and WPA's missions align in the shared focus of providing resources, education and support.

The mission alignment was demonstrated in a major way this year with the Pitching for Parkinson's event held in the Fox Valley. Kim shared that she always wanted to do a big event to let people with Parkinson's know they have support. WPA was thrilled to partner with CarePatrol and participate in this first ever event which drew a full house. Pitching for Parkinson's was such a success that there is talk about adding more events around the state in 2024. One of the positive outcomes was giving away 61 pairs of ACTIVATOR™ Urban Poles, which according to Kim, "put a lot of smiles on so many faces." She said she heard so many positive comments such as, "This has changed my life. It makes me feel that I can get out again and do things again." This event truly made an impact for people with Parkinson's. It brought together many sponsors and community partners all working for a common cause. Collectively they joined to build awareness about the disease, while providing education and movement opportunities, and raising funds to benefit Wisconsin Parkinson Association.



As Kim looks forward to making Pitching for Parkinson's even bigger and better in the future, she is excited about the continued partnership with WPA. She says, "it's all about partnering with the right organizations. When your passion and missions align and you understand the disease, it is life-changing for the people we serve. It's all about making a difference and providing the education that helps people live their best lives with Parkinson's disease."

The need for fall prevention is significant in Wisconsin, which ranks as the worst state in the nation for deadly falls. In communities like Wauwatosa, falling is the number one cause of non-natural deaths.



Fighting Falls in Wisconsin



Parkinson's patients often face a dangerous enemy: falling. Because Parkinson's can make movement more difficult, even a small trip can lead to a big tumble and serious injury.

Falls aren't just about bruises and the potential for broken bones; they can shake a person's confidence, making them afraid to move freely. That's why stopping falls before they happen is so essential.

The Wisconsin Parkinson Association is proud to partner with the Milwaukee County Falls Prevention Coalition (MCFPC), a group of community members, health systems, organizations and government agencies that have come together to advocate for fall prevention.

The MCFPC focuses on strategies such as increasing access to fall screenings and interventions, creating a broad awareness of fall prevention, improving collaboration between community partners, capturing data to monitor the success of initiatives and educating providers on evidence-based screening and interventions.

The need for fall prevention is significant in Wisconsin, which ranks as the worst state in the nation for deadly falls. In communities like Wauwatosa, falling is the number one cause of non-natural deaths.

Those with Parkinson's are at a much higher risk for falls, explains Carmen Pangilinan, a Public Health Strategist for the Wauwatosa Health Department and a member the MCFPC's steering committee. "People with Parkinson's are often on a number of medications that can cause dizziness or balance issues, leading to more falls. Plus, with the inherent mobility challenges that many with Parkinson's face, falling is a concern that should be taken seriously."

Suzie Ryer, Senior Project Coordinator at Advocate Aurora Health and co-leader of the MCFPC, doesn't see falling as inevitable. "It's important to know that falling is preventable. There's a common misconception that

falling is just a natural part of aging or Parkinson's disease progression. That simply isn't true. There are things you can do to minimize your risk."

Thankfully, there are many proactive strategies that can help prevent falls.

- **Exercise Regularly**
Engaging in consistent physical activity strengthens muscles and enhances coordination. Balance-focused exercises like yoga can be particularly beneficial for Parkinson's patients, helping to counteract the disease's impact on stability.
- **Medication Review**
Parkinson's patients often take multiple medications. Regular check-ins with healthcare professionals ensure that drug interactions or side effects, which could cause dizziness or balance issues, are minimized.
- **Home Safety**
Removing potential hazards, such as loose throw rugs or clutter, can prevent trips. Installing safety features like grab bars near toilets and showers, as well as ensuring proper lighting, can make a significant difference.
- **Proper Footwear**
Shoes with non-slip soles and good ankle support can provide a stable base. Avoiding high heels or shoes with slick soles can reduce the risk of slipping.
- **Vision Checks**
Regular eye exams are crucial. Clear vision can help in identifying and avoiding obstacles. If glasses are prescribed, wearing them consistently ensures that one's surroundings are always in clear focus.
- **Use Assistive Devices**
Walkers, canes, and other assistive devices such as urban walking poles can provide additional support. It's essential to use them as prescribed, ensuring they are the right height and are in good working condition.

For a deeper dive into fall prevention and to access additional resources, visit the Milwaukee County Falls Prevention Coalition website at www.MCFPC.net. Together, with the right tools and awareness, we can create a fall-free future.



How To Start a Support Group

A support group is a place where you can be yourself amongst people who have a shared understanding and experience. Research has found that social support is strongly connected to improved mental health outcomes, helps to decrease stress and depression, improves communication skills, and reduces the emotional effects of physical health challenges.

Support groups are a mainstay of WPA's services and many of our WPA members have found comfort and hope through these groups. Jill Compton, WPA Director of Mission Impact, shares that, "Our dedicated support group facilitators have been experiencing an increase in attendance at their groups recently. More people with PD and their care partners are seeking community and support." With the growing interest and need, Jill states, "There are new support groups popping up in rural areas. We're finding that the new groups are being started by individuals who have not led support groups before but have the passion and purpose to support their loved ones' needs." The WPA team is very grateful to all of our facilitators for their positivity and willingness to help others." Additionally, WPA hosts a monthly facilitator forum for support group facilitators to seek

their own support and inspiration in this peer-to-peer format.

How to Start a Parkinson's Disease Support Group

In the face of a condition like Parkinson's disease, community can be a beacon of hope. The journey with this neurodegenerative disorder can be isolating for both people with Parkinson's and their caregivers, but a support group can offer solace, understanding, and shared strength. If you're considering creating such a refuge, here's how you can bring it to life.

Identifying the Need

It all begins with recognizing the need in your community. Maybe you've noticed that existing groups don't cater to a specific age group, or perhaps there's no local group at all. Whatever the reason, recognizing this need is the first step.

Choosing the Right Meeting Location

Deciding where to meet plays a crucial role. Many support groups meet in community halls, libraries,

"There are new support groups popping up in rural areas. We're finding that the new groups are being started by individuals who have not led support groups before but have the passion and purpose to support their loved ones' needs."

churches and even local parks during the summer months. Virtual meetings can also be a great choice, especially if mobility is a concern or if members are spread out geographically.

Spreading the Word

Spreading the word about your support group is vitally important. Many support group founders start by crafting informative and eye-catching flyers to be distributed in community centers, local libraries, and health clinics. The flyers can be distributed with the digital reach of social media; Creating a Facebook group or page for your support group offers an interactive platform for members to connect, share stories, and provide resources. With both physical and digital outreach, you'll be well on your way to creating a robust support group.



Establishing a Safe Environment

A support group is built on trust. Once you've got your members, it's vital to ensure a non-judgmental, confidential space where every member feels safe sharing their experiences, fears, and hopes.

Nurturing the Group's Growth

While the initial meetups might be about introductions and sharing personal stories, it's essential to keep the momentum going. Maybe invite experts to talk about new treatments and innovative therapies, or perhaps dedicate meetings to practical advice to make day-to-day living easier.

Reaching Out Beyond the Circle

Remember, the power of a group also extends outward. Consider organizing awareness campaigns or collaborating with medical institutions to stay updated with the latest in Parkinson's research.

A Community of Strength and Support

As your group grows and evolves, it will serve as a reminder that no one has to walk this challenging path alone. From shared experiences to collective wisdom, the bonds forged in this circle can offer invaluable support.

Taking the initiative to create a Parkinson's disease support group is an act of profound empathy and courage. As you offer others a platform to lean on, you'll discover that in the shared journey of resilience and hope, there's immense healing.

Wisconsin Parkinson Association is here to help and support with existing and new support groups. Please reach out anytime, we are here for you.





Steering Through Storms: *John Melke's Story*

John believes in the power of community. His support group is a testament to that. With guest speakers, practical advice, and the power of shared experiences, the support group offers a space for understanding and growth.

The signs were subtle at first: smaller handwriting, difficulty opening and closing his right hand, and changes to his speech.

John Melke mentioned some of his symptoms to his wife, Karla. She urged him to see his doctor. After initially ruling out a stroke, his physician referred John to the Marshfield Clinic. Shortly thereafter, it was confirmed. Parkinson's. The news caught John by surprise.



"It was definitely a rollercoaster of emotions," John recalls. "I found out later that I was a case of early-onset Parkinson's, having been diagnosed at the age of 52."

John left his job at a frozen grocery delivery service and took on the role of outreach pastor at a local Lutheran Church. His faith and ministry provided the scaffolding on which he built an optimistic outlook. He had Parkinson's, but Parkinson's didn't have him.

Life threw John another curveball in 2022 when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. With the support of his wife and their three sons, John doubled down on his

positivity, determined to steer through the storms that lay before him.

Soon, John recognized the need for a Parkinson's support group in the Wisconsin Rapids area. "The next closest support group was 45 minutes away. I knew there was a need in this area."

John founded the Wisconsin Rapids Parkinson's Support Group, which meets on the first Wednesday of each month in the Legends Room at Ridges Golf Course. The group caters to those with a Parkinson's diagnosis, as well as their caregivers.

He started a Facebook page to spur interest and spread the word. Armed with flyers detailing the group's mission and meeting details, he distributed them throughout the town. From doctors' offices to therapy groups, John ensured that anyone seeking support or information about Parkinson's knew where to turn. This campaign paid off: 19 people attended the first meeting in October!

John believes in the power of community. His support group is a testament to that. With guest speakers, practical advice, and the power of shared experiences, the support group offers a space for understanding and growth.

For those newly diagnosed, John's advice is simple: "Lean on your loved ones. They might not get it, but they're there for you."

Outside of his advocacy, John has a hobby: model trains. It's more than just a pastime; it helps with his dexterity. He also plans on joining the YMCA to remain active.

John's story is one of resilience. Through faith, community, and a lot of determination, he's turned a diagnosis into a mission.

If you would like more information about John's group, join the Wisconsin Rapids Parkinson's Support Group on Facebook or email John at JohnTMelke@duck.com.

Golf Outing Successes in 2023



WPA had a great time at all of the golf outings this fall that raised funds and benefited our organization. These events were community builders that increased awareness for our organization and the resources that are available for people with Parkinson's. The outings provided opportunities for people with and without PD to come together for a common cause and enjoy fellowship and friendship while raising money that supports programs and services. The annual WPA Open was held on September 12th at The Legend at Brandybrook in Wales, WI. This outing continues to be a popular event, with 108 golfers participating this year. In addition to golf foursomes, WPA offered a PD Movement Clinic for anyone with Parkinson's and their Care Partners. Twenty people attended this session where the Golf Pro Team at Brandybrook provided golf tips, Dr. Joy Cochran of Joy Explorations provided demos with the ACTIVATOR™ Urban Poles (each person with PD received a complimentary set of poles), and Chris Potter, PT, and Caitlin Hill, SLP both from Aurora Healthcare led the PD Movement Clinic. The silent and live auctions, and paddle raise topped the day off and the outing brought in more than \$140K.

Dick Cosentino launched the inaugural Cosentino Family Golf Outing at Westmoor Country Club on August 28th in honor of his wife, Patty which generated a phenomenal outcome of over \$315K in its first year. Dick's leadership in spearheading this

event which brought people together through golf to build awareness for the disease and inspire people to give is outstanding.

Two other notable long-standing golf outings this year include: The annual Mini Golf outing hosted by Matt and Megan Puthoff, and "Punt Parkinson's with the Pack" event hosted by board member Craig Barbian and his wife Darlene. Puthoff's have raised over \$60K in the past 11 years in memory of Tim Puthoff. The Barbian's have raised \$105,000 in the past 10 years in honor of their daughter, Sam Felder who has Young Onset PD. Thank you to the Puthoff's and Barbian's for your tireless commitment to our organization!

These golf outings are all a true testament to the generosity and dedication of the organizers and participants for elevating the importance of providing awareness and funds that will be used to bring hope, community, support and resources for those whose lives are affected by Parkinson's disease. In a world where Parkinson's still exists, fundraising for ongoing support is never done. We applaud all of these amazing people who organized and participated in these events that make such a difference.

Thank You!





2024 WPA Spring SYMPOSIUM

Wisconsin Parkinson Association Annual Symposium

WPA's Annual Symposium brings together people with Parkinson's, care partners, medical professionals, aligned partners, businesses and vendors who are all focused on helping those affected by Parkinson's live their best lives. If your company would like to be a sponsor or vendor for the 2024 Symposium, please contact WPA at 414-312-6990.

More information regarding the date and location will be posted to the events page on the WPA website in early 2024.

Wisconsin Parkinson Association
13400 Bishops Lane, Suite 120
Brookfield, WI 53005

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Wisconsin Parkinson Association provides hope, community, support, and resources for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones.



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