HOPE • COMMUNITY • SUPPORT • RESOURCES

WISCONSIN PARKINSON ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

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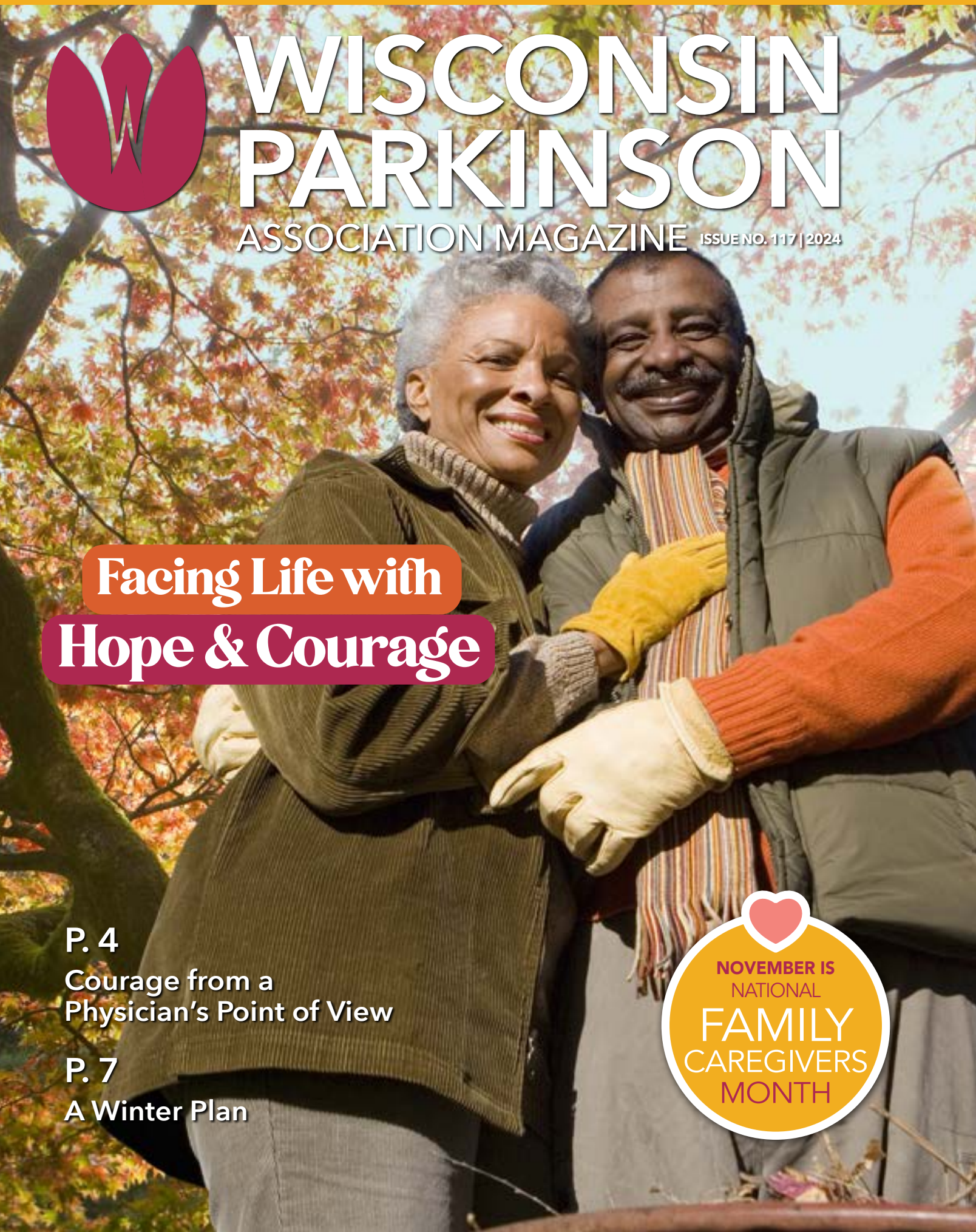

Facing Life with Hope & Courage

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

In this Issue

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Keep up to date with what's happening at WPA when you connect with us on social media. We are on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn! Be sure to like us and comment on our posts. We love hearing from you!

You can find us at: wiparkinson.org

Your Gift Matters!

WPA stands as a lifeline for individuals and families affected by Parkinson's. Through your generosity, we provide free support groups, educational programs, and vital resources that bring hope to those navigating this challenging disease. As an independent nonprofit, WPA depends entirely on the kindness of our community to keep these essential services going.

Every donation you make, no matter the size, becomes part of something bigger. It fuels the support that strengthens communities, the education that empowers families, and the resources that bring light into the lives of those living with Parkinson's. Whether it's a tribute in honor of a loved one or a simple act of giving, your contribution is a beacon of hope for thousands.

Please consider giving today. Your gift is a powerful statement of compassion and care. Together, we can make a lasting difference.

Three easy ways to donate:

1. Mail a check:
   Wisconsin Parkinson Association
   13400 Bishops Lane, Suite 120
   Brookfield, WI 53005
2. Venmo:
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3. WPA donation webpage:
   www.wiparkinson.org

Letter from the *Executive Director*

Hello WPA Friends,

Our theme for this issue is "courage." It seemed like an appropriate topic as we thought about you, our WPA members. We see the determination and resilience with which you approach Parkinson's disease and its effect on your daily lives. We're inspired by your examples of courage and bravery in ways that often look like this:

- Receiving a diagnosis of PD
- Learning to accept your body and the "new" normal
- Seeking mental health support as a tool along your PD journey
- Being willing to ask for or accepting help
- Trying something new – like a dance class for PD or a meditation practice
- Attending a support group for the first time
- Being the care partner or family of a loved one with PD

We are all faced with challenges and adversity of varying degrees throughout our lifetime and courage looks different for each one of us. It can be a small or large action, a change of heart, or acceptance of a new reality. In each situation it requires that we face the future and take the step forward, even when we're uncertain of the outcome.

In this issue you'll have a chance to hear from people who have been courageous in their own ways. We share stories of hope and community, resources and support. You'll read about Stephanie Johnson's PD journey and her quest to start a PD registry. Dr. Biemiller shares her perspective on courage from a physician's point of view. The WPA team continues to bring mission focused activities such as collaborations with Susanne Carter and Carter Productions, and the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club. Be sure to read these stories and check out those activities. They are beneficial for living with the disease, and fun too!

I also want to encourage you to check out our newest WPA podcast series called "Pearls for Parkinson's: Tips for Daily Living," that just launched on November 4th. This new series will air every Monday and offers you tips and suggestions to start off your week in a positive way. We know you'll enjoy these weekly "pearls" as much as our other new podcast "EmPower Talks: Insights from the Experts." You can find both of these resources on our WPA website. These incredible educational resources are produced locally by our own WPA team and hosted by Dacy Reimer, WPA Director of Medical Advising and Education. The great thing about a podcast is that you can listen at your convenience from the comfort of your couch. We encourage you to listen and spread the word about our podcasts to everyone you know.

So, enjoy this publication, share it with a friend, stay connected, and keep taking those brave steps forward.

With courage,

Kelly

Kelly Cieslak, MBA, Executive Director
kellyc@wiparkinson.org | 414.312.6990

Courage
from a Physician's Point of View

By: Dr. Rachel Biemiller, Movement Disorder Specialist from Gunderson Lutheran in LaCrosse, and member of the WPA Medical Advisory Committee

I was once told that Parkinson's is a continual mourning over the loss of independence. It doesn't happen all at once. It doesn't allow you to find a new normal and move on from there. It takes away things in little bites. As soon as you get used to this new state, another little bite is taken away. In addition to this, every day is different. One day may be amazing while another will be plagued by constant setbacks. There is frequently no rhyme nor reason to this variation. Parkinson's does as Parkinson's wills. And its will is to charge a constant battle down an unknown path.

Though the path is frequently dark and fraught with twists and turns, you do not give up. Every day is a new battle. Every day there is another chance to fight back. Maybe today you won't give into apathy. You'll go to that book club or that play and come home happy that you went. Maybe tomorrow you'll train your body to work against that shuffling gait with large steps. And later that week, maybe you let your body rest to fight better another day. Every day you rise again. You fight on against the disease that tries to make you a statue. You stand. You move. You speak. You live.

I frequently hear that it is the medical team that fights against Parkinson's. But we are the auxiliary. It is your courage that compels us forward. It is your determination and your will to succeed that inspires all of us to keep pushing. Every day I am consistently awestruck by the perseverance I see from you. Your dedication and tenacity are humbling. I may walk with you on this path but I'm not the one facing the enemy. I'm not the one feeling the nips and bites the disease takes. You are the heroes of this story. I'm just the sidekick.

Now we have a vast number of drugs, surgeries, and exercise therapies to extend and improve the lives of patients. We have started cracking the code of how the disease itself functions and research is underway on disease modifying therapies.

Every day the clinicians give you the tools to fight as we buy time for the researchers to discover a breakthrough. Because the truth of the matter is, Parkinson's days are numbered. It is easy to despair as you face the enemy, but we have gained ground. Through medical breakthroughs, new treatments and our ever-expanding knowledge about the enemy, the tide is turning. When you look back over the past 60 years, we have made huge strides. We had no treatments and encouraged people not to move to prevent them from hurting themselves. Now we have a vast number of drugs, surgeries, and exercise therapies to extend and improve the lives of patients. We have started cracking the code of how the disease itself functions and research is underway on disease modifying therapies. These therapies will eventually stop Parkinson's in its tracks. It is coming. Keep up your courage because this battle will be won.

Courage to Come Home to the Body:

A Self-Compassionate, Heart-Opening Practice

By: Jill Compton, WPA Director of Mission Impact;
500-Certified Yoga Teacher

Courage isn't always found in the heroic acts we read about. Sometimes, the deepest courage lies in returning to our own bodies, especially when we are faced with challenges like tremors, pain, aches, or stiffness. Many of us have spent our lives disconnected from our bodies. It takes bravery to sit in stillness, breathe deeply, and feel everything that arises within us. To be present with ourselves, in our full humanness, can be an act of profound courage.

Heart-opening meditation is a practice that invites us to reconnect with ourselves and the present moment. We allow our hearts to soften, expanding our capacity to feel, to accept, and to simply be with what is. When we expand our hearts, we come home to the body in a way that lets us fully inhabit today, with all its joys and challenges. We face the vulnerability of our emotions, and in doing so, we honor the courage it takes to show up for the present moment.

The courage to come home to the body is about embracing ourselves with compassion, knowing that to be fully present, even with discomfort, is a transformative act. It invites us to move through the world more authentically, leading with a heart that is open, a mind that is clear, and a body that is grounded in the here and now.

Try the following practice, even for just a few minutes each day:

1. Find a comfortable position

Sit in a chair or on a meditation cushion. Find a posture that signals to your mind that you are about to begin a practice. You may choose to close your eyes or find a soft gaze as you practice.

2. Focus on your breath

Begin by paying attention to your breathing. Notice where you most feel the inhale and the exhale. Use your breath as an anchor to return to when your mind wanders.

3. Place your hands over your heart

Feel the warmth of your hands and the rise and fall of your chest as you breathe. This simple gesture helps you connect physically with your heart space.

4. Focus on gratitude

As you continue breathing, bring to mind something within your body that you are grateful for. It could be your heart pumping, your lungs breathing, or the hair on top of your head. Let the feeling of gratitude remind you that in this moment you are enough, and your body is waiting for you to keep coming home to it. Send care and love from your heart center to this part of your body that always knows what to do.

If any aches and pains show up in this practice, send that part of your body the same care and gratitude.

5. Return to your breath

Place your hands in your lap and return your attention to your inhalations and exhalations. Take a moment to check in. What sensations arose as you consciously chose to come home to your body? When you're ready, open your eyes.

Take a breath. Savor the moment and acknowledge the reconnection you've made with your body. Celebrate yourself for the courage it took to be fully human in this moment, here and now. Welcome home to your body!

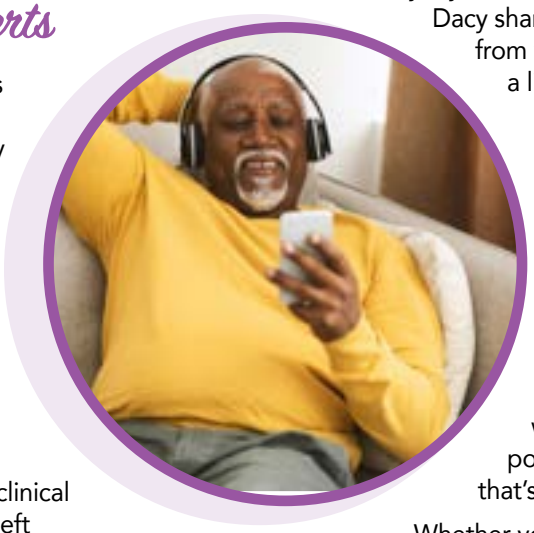
Listen, Learn, Live: Podcasts for Navigating Parkinson's

This month WPA adds a new weekly podcast, Pearls for Parkinson's to our programming options. Each 3-4 minute episode will cover topics like improving mobility, enhancing vision, adjusting home environments, and managing daily routines. These short, accessible episodes are designed to boost overall well-being with simple exercises and actionable advice.

The Wisconsin Parkinson Association (WPA) is excited to announce the launch of two new podcasts aimed at providing essential information and support to those affected by Parkinson's disease, as well as their caregivers. These podcasts, *Parkinson's EmPower Talks* and *Pearls for Parkinson's*, offer practical advice, expert insights, and foster a sense of community to help listeners navigate life with Parkinson's.

Parkinson's EmPower Talks: Insights from the Experts

Launched in September, Parkinson's *EmPower Talks: Insights from the Experts* airs on the third Wednesday of every month. Hosted by Dacy Reimer, Director of Medical Advising and Education at WPA, this engaging series features in-depth interviews with leading movement disorder specialists, care teams, and other experts in Parkinson's care.



Dacy's vision for the podcast was inspired by her experiences during clinical visits, where time constraints often left important patient questions unanswered. "I wanted to create something that would allow people living with Parkinson's—and their caregivers—to get the answers they need, without feeling rushed or overwhelmed," she shared.

In addition to being a resource for individuals, Parkinson's EmPower Talks also supports local Parkinson's groups by offering accessible educational content. "We wanted support groups to have reliable, meaningful content to discuss, even if they couldn't arrange for a guest speaker," Dacy explained. To make this easier, WPA provides discussion guides with six thought-provoking questions, helping facilitators lead deeper conversations.

Pearls for Parkinson's: Quick Tips for Everyday Challenges

Coming this November, WPA's second podcast, *Pearls for Parkinson's*, will offer quick, weekly tips to tackle the everyday challenges of living with Parkinson's. In this series, Dacy shares practical tricks and insights gleaned from years of experience to help make daily life a little easier.

Each 3 to 4-minute episode will cover topics like improving mobility, enhancing vision, adjusting home environments, and managing daily routines. These short, accessible episodes are designed to boost overall well-being with simple exercises and actionable advice.

"We want to ensure everyone has access to the education they need, no matter where they live," Dacy said. "These podcasts allow us to reach people in a way that's both convenient and impactful."

Whether you've just been diagnosed or have been navigating Parkinson's for years, these podcasts are designed to offer hope, insights, and practical tools to help you thrive. "Our goal is to empower, inform, and uplift the Parkinson's community at every step," Dacy shared passionately.

You can find *Parkinson's EmPower Talks* and *Pearls for Parkinson's* at wiparkinson.org, as well as on Facebook and YouTube. Visit the site to listen, learn, and join the community today.

A Winter Plan

By: Dacy Reimer, APNP, MSN, CCRC
Director of Medical Advising & Education

I am a passionate nature lover. I love hiking in Fall because there are no bugs, and I can bask in a palette of bright red, burnt orange and yellow. Autumnal leaves in vibrant hues are a beautiful part of the season, but those leaves are also a vital part of keeping trees alive. Most of the year, these leaves are green because of the chlorophyll they use to absorb energy from sunlight during photosynthesis. The leaves convert the energy into sugars to feed the tree.

As the season changes, temperatures drop and days get shorter. Trees get less direct sunlight, and the chlorophyll in the leaves breaks down. Then, of course, the leaves fall. Trees start building a protective seal between leaves and their branches as the weather turns. They take in as many nutrients as possible from the leaves, but leaves wouldn't survive the winter and would make trees vulnerable to damage if they remained. So, they fall off to help ensure the integrity of the tree itself.

All of nature has a winter plan. Do you? In my clinic, Fall was time to get on my soap box and ask that question. What is your winter plan? How are you going to prevent decline when the elements potentially hinder your activity level? Some don't feel comfortable driving in the snow to participate in group activities. This can depend on how close these activities are to their homes and/or if they have someone to drive them.

When Covid hit and community programs were shut down, I saw a significant decline in mobility in those who didn't have home equipment or knowledge of virtual classes. I knew that exercise was the key to sustaining a positive prognosis with PD, but that certainly confirmed it. Our mission at WPA is to help increase access to programs for individuals, especially in rural areas. Winter is a time of special consideration. Here are some ways you can stay active in winter.

Always Plan Ahead: In the Midwest, snow is not a surprise. If you know you become more restless and sedentary during this time, then be sure to think ahead. How are you going to stay fit and active? What resources are available in your community and home? If you cannot get to the gym, make sure you have the equipment you need at home to maintain your strength and health such as a NuStep recumbent bike. If you are on Medicare, this may be a good time to initiate a physical therapy referral, so you avoid decline and are ready to be more active come spring. Medicare covers an annual physical therapy "tune-up," so take advantage of yours during the winter.

- **Find an in-person exercise class near you. Go to wiparkinson.org, under the support & exercise tab.**
- **Download a pre-recorded class to practice at home. Go to wiparkinson.org, under the Exercise Resource tab to find and download pre-recorded classes.**
- **Attend an on-line exercise group!**

Virtual Dance Class. Empowered by Movement by Lisa Pritzl. For more information: 920-737-1140 | lisa@empowermentdance.com | www.empowermentdance.com/empowered-by-movement for a complete list of classes, registration, and cost.

Chippewa Falls, Mindful Movement for PD. Instructor Ellen Dovre will lead this FREE class including chair and standing movements to music for group fitness and fun. Thursdays from 11:00 am-12:00 pm. For more information, contact Ellen Dovre at edovre@charter.net

Don't forget your cognitive exercise!

This is also a perfect time for indoor activities that boost cognitive function. Jigsaw puzzles, Sudoku, trivia and crossword puzzles are excellent ways to keep your mind sharp. There are also brain-training apps for your phones, such as Lumosity: Brain Training, for tech-savvy seniors.

Learning new skills or hobbies such as playing a musical instrument, painting, photography or writing poetry can provide mental stimulation. Join a book club or try new brain healthy recipes! By planning ahead and establishing a winter plan, you can help maintain an active lifestyle and sharpen cognitive abilities, year-round.

A Community in Motion:

Building Hope, One Step at a Time

"It's amazing to see the shift in people. You see their spirits lift, and they find hope. The motivation comes from being together, from being alongside others who understand."

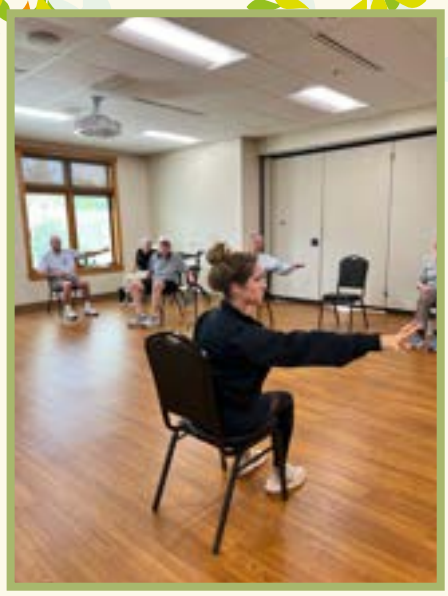
- Emily Nelson, Fitness Coordinator at Generations

When Emily Nelson walks into a room, it doesn't take long for everyone to feel her energy. It's the kind of energy that moves people—literally. At Generations, an intergenerational community center in Plymouth, Wisconsin, Emily has made it her mission to uplift the lives of people living with Parkinson's disease, helping them find strength in movement and comfort in community.

Three years ago, Emily started working at Generations as a Fitness Coordinator. Her passion for health and well-being runs deep, starting with yoga classes she began teaching back in 2014. This job has become more than just another step in her career—it's a calling. Emily quickly realized that there was a critical need for Parkinson's support in Plymouth and the surrounding areas. Her Executive Director, Greg Voss, identified this gap through a community needs assessment. Instead of waiting for someone else to fill the gap, they took action.

By January 2024, Generations launched the first Parkinson's-focused exercise class. It started with a few participants willing to take that first, brave step. Today, it has blossomed into two weekly exercise classes and a monthly support group, each session filled with laughter, camaraderie, and hope.

For Emily, the mission hit home. She had watched her grandmother live with Parkinson's before passing



away a few years ago. This personal connection to the disease has fueled her passion for making a difference. "It's my way of honoring her," Emily explained.

Emily's classes are a lifeline—a way for people to reclaim their independence, one movement at a time. From Tai Chi to chair Pilates and yoga for stability, her classes cater to all abilities and focus on what really matters: keeping participants moving, engaged, and confident. She even developed a specialized class called "Movement for Brain, Body and Balance" that helps improve neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to adapt and grow.

"Exercise is so important," Emily explained. "It does so much for the mind and body." The results speak for themselves. Participants are growing stronger, finding balance—not just physically but emotionally—and gaining confidence they once thought impossible. It's not just about the exercises; it's about showing up, week after week, and knowing you're not alone.

The support group, which meets on the third Friday of each month, provides a safe space for people with Parkinson's and their caregivers to come together and share their stories. Some meetings are filled with laughter and stories of triumph. Others are quieter, more reflective, as members open up about the challenges they face. Every month, they alternate between open discussions and guest speakers—experts who help participants learn more about living well with Parkinson's. There have been dietitians sharing the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, dance instructors leading empowerment sessions, and even representatives from Ping Pong Parkinson, a program that's as fun as it is beneficial for balance and coordination.

"It's amazing to see the shift in people," Emily said. "You see their spirits lift, and they find hope. The motivation comes from being together, from being alongside others who understand." She has created a space where people feel seen, heard, and supported—where they come to realize that the disease does not define them.

On Wednesdays and Fridays, you can find Emily and her Fitness Coordinator, Erika Pichette, leading exercise sessions. It's a tag-team effort that allows them to cater to different needs, whether participants are working on treadmill gait exercises or practicing stretches on the mat. This individualized approach ensures that everyone gets what they need to thrive, regardless of their level of ability. No one is left behind.

Emily often reflects on the impact the participants have had on her. "Their strength, perseverance, and dedication move and motivate me every single day," she shared. Watching them overcome obstacles and continue to show up week after week has deepened her passion for the work. It's not just about helping them physically—it's about witnessing their emotional growth, resilience, and unwavering commitment to one another.

For anyone interested in learning more about the exercise classes and support group, visit Generations.org.

When Lightning Strikes Twice:

A Journey of Love, Loss, and the Fight for a Parkinson's Registry

True strength doesn't reveal itself in how we live through joy, but in how we endure life's greatest trials. Stephanie Johnson came to understand this truth when Parkinson's disease reshaped her world—twice.

Stephanie met Rick in 1987 and immediately knew he was the love of her life. Rick's infectious laugh and warm personality drew her in. "He had this way of making you feel welcome,"

Stephanie recalls. By June of 1989, they married and built a life of fun and adventure, embracing their shared passions—scuba diving, hiking, and exploring the world. Every experience brought them closer.

Then, in 2010, everything changed. Stephanie noticed subtle changes in Rick—his slouched posture, flat facial expressions, and a shuffle in his walk. "At first, I thought it was grief," she explains. "He had just lost his father. It only made sense that it would take some time to return to normal."

But as the months passed, the symptoms persisted. Friends began voicing concerns, suggesting a dark possibility that Stephanie didn't want to admit: Rick's symptoms looked like Parkinson's.

In December 2010, an official diagnosis confirmed their fears and rocked their world. But Rick, ever determined, faced it with strength and resolve. For years, he fought back with exercise and, eventually, medication, while they clung to moments of normalcy. But as the disease progressed, it began robbing him of the things he loved most. The man who once thrived in the kitchen and on hiking trails struggled to walk or prepare meals. "It was heart-wrenching," Stephanie says. "I watched him lose himself, little by little."

By 2019, Rick's condition worsened, and they moved closer

to family in Madison. In March 2020, Stephanie retired from her healthcare career, determined to spend every possible moment with Rick. "I wanted to be there while he was still himself," she recalls. But in the same month she stepped away from work, the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe like wildfire. Instead of quality time with friends and family, they faced isolation, and Rick's decline accelerated. His once-bright spirit dimmed, weighed down by hallucinations and physical limitations.

"I was exhausted, constantly on edge, worrying he'd fall or hurt himself," she explains. "I lived in a constant state of hyper-vigilance." In 2022, after Rick's fourth hospitalization, they made the difficult decision to move him into assisted living at Attic Angel in Madison. Though hard, Stephanie knew it was the right choice. "I needed help so I could focus on being his partner again—not just his caregiver."

At Attic Angel, Rick found joy in exercise, art, and woodworking. He regained a sense of purpose. "We had date nights, eating together in the dining room," Stephanie says. "Those were special moments, even though it was hard not being under the same roof." But his health continued to decline, and in December 2023, Rick entered residential hospice care. Surrounded by family, he passed away 13 days later. "He was never alone," Stephanie says. "He left this world the way he lived—surrounded by love."

After Rick's death, Stephanie's world took another devastating turn. Around the time Rick moved into assisted living, she noticed a slight tremor in her right hand. At first, she dismissed it as caregiver fatigue and exhaustion. But as the tremors worsened, she could no longer ignore the signs. In March 2024, three months after the loss of her husband, doctors confirmed what Stephanie feared—she too had Parkinson's disease.

"We had date nights, eating together in the dining room," Stephanie says. "Those were special moments, even though it was hard not being under the same roof."

"It felt like a cruel twist of fate," Stephanie says. After years of watching Parkinson's slowly steal her husband's vitality, she now faced the same reality. The shock of her diagnosis deepened when she made an unsettling discovery: she and Rick weren't alone. In their old neighborhood, a cluster of people had been diagnosed with Parkinson's—astonishingly, all within a three-block radius.

"It couldn't just be a coincidence," she thought. How could so many people in such a small area develop the same

debilitating disease? As she began piecing the puzzle together, Stephanie realized that their neighborhood had once been farmland—land likely treated with chemicals known to have links to neurodegenerative diseases.

In her research, Stephanie learned that Wisconsin did not have a registry to track Parkinson's cases. "There's no systematic way to track Parkinson's here, and that has to change," she says. Fueled by her grief and determination, Stephanie began working with prominent local legislators and the Michael J. Fox Foundation to begin the process of creating Wisconsin's first Parkinson's disease registry.

"This registry will allow us to track cases, identify patterns, and understand the full scope of this disease—all while keeping patient information anonymous," Stephanie explains. "Clinicians will submit data directly to the registry, but the information will be de-identified, ensuring privacy for everyone involved."

Her fight to create the registry has gained significant momentum. Stephanie is working with lawmakers to draft a bill for the 2025 legislative session. "I believe this will happen," she says with confidence. "We're already making real progress."

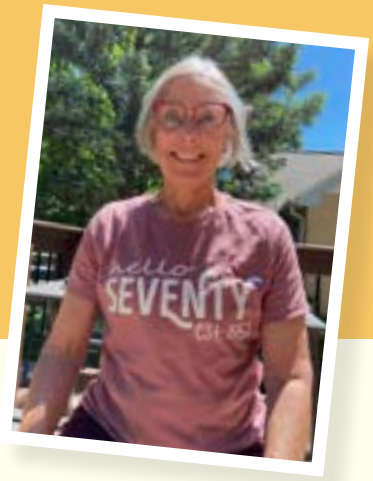
For Stephanie, the registry is a way to honor Rick's legacy. "Through this registry, we'll protect others and give future generations a chance to understand this disease in ways we never could," she explains.

Stephanie's journey—much like the winding hiking trails she and Rick once loved—has been at times rocky and filled with unexpected turns. But in her grief and mourning, Stephanie has found renewed purpose and hope. "I know it won't bring Rick back," she says, "but this registry can save lives. That's what keeps me going."

If you're interested in helping make the Wisconsin Parkinson's disease registry a reality or want to learn more about how to get involved, reach out to Stephanie at StephanieGJohnson@gmail.com.

Finding Their Groove:

How Dance Classes Help Parkinson's Patients Rediscover Movement, Confidence, and Joy



Susanne Carter's passion is infectious. Her smile radiates warmth, her eyes shine with purpose, and her energy leaps through the screen, captivating all in her Zoom dance classes. Her mission is clear: to bring movement, joy, and connection to individuals living with Parkinson's disease.

In 2009, Susanne discovered the profound impact that dance could have as a therapeutic tool for individuals with Parkinson's disease. Inspired by a groundbreaking program in New York, *Dance for PD®*, she and colleagues began experimenting with how dance could benefit this community. They started with a simple in-person dance class at the Wisconsin Athletic Club (WAC). As the class grew, it eventually found a new home at the Jewish Community Center.

At first, her students appeared hesitant, nervous about what to expect. But as the weeks went by, their apprehension turned to joy. Laughter filled the room, hesitant steps grew bold, and dance became not just an exercise but a transformative force. More than that, it created a community where individuals felt truly seen and supported.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many in-person programs were forced to pause. For Susanne, it became an opportunity to adapt and continue her mission in new ways. She transitioned her classes to Zoom, refusing to let the physical distance dampen the spirit of connection. Every Thursday from 1 to 2:15 PM, Susanne continues to lead her classes, ensuring that her students remain connected, active, and supported—no matter the circumstances.

The benefits of these dance classes extend far beyond physical movement. For many, dance rekindles a connection with their bodies—restoring rhythm, improving balance, and enhancing range of motion. Most importantly, it offers empowerment and instills confidence, helping to combat the isolation that often accompanies a Parkinson's diagnosis.

Susanne's classes are filled with laughter and creativity, offering moments of freedom that are rare for many of her students. Beyond the physical, the true impact of dance is the human connections formed. After every session, students stay to chat, share stories, and support one another, creating a close-knit community that feels like family.

"These classes are special," Susanne shares. "It's not just about movement. It's about a sense of belonging that comes from being part of something bigger than yourself."

Her philosophy is simple: there's no right or wrong way to dance. Susanne encourages her students to let go of their inhibitions and embrace the joy of movement—whether standing or seated.

Students dance to a wide range of music, exploring diverse dance styles such as modern, tap, ballet, folk, and social dance. They experiment with different movement patterns, engaging every part of the body. Whether following choreographed routines, improvising, or letting their imagination lead the way, each dance offers a unique opportunity for creative expression.

Over the years, she's seen incredible growth in her students: improved fluidity, greater confidence, and a willingness to improvise. "They trust themselves more," Susanne says. "They've realized it's not about perfection, but about the freedom to try."

Susanne's students are living proof of the power of movement and connection. And her journey is far from over. In January, Susanne will launch a *Mindful Movement* dance class for WPA.

To learn more or join Susanne's Thursday Zoom classes, visit her website at www.carterproductions.com or email her at carterproductions@sbcglobal.net. Visit wiparkinson.org for the latest updates on the Mindful Movement dance class.

Table Tennis

Brings Support and Connection to Those with Parkinson's

It's a chance to meet in a group setting, spend time with others in the Parkinson's community, and explore table tennis—a sport many hadn't considered before."

Through a collaboration between the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club and the Wisconsin Parkinson Association, the game of table tennis is making a significant difference in the lives of people living with Parkinson's disease.

Over the past year, WPA and the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club have hosted specialized table tennis sessions, providing participants with a welcoming space where they can receive guidance from experienced instructors on proper form and fundamentals.

The response from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. "They really enjoy themselves," said Michael Burchfield, president of the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club. "It's a chance to meet in a group setting, spend time with others in the Parkinson's community, and explore table tennis—a sport many hadn't considered before." Several attendees have even returned for the club's general sessions, making table tennis a regular part of their lives.

Table tennis offers a unique combination of physical and social benefits for those living with Parkinson's disease. On the physical side, the fast-paced nature of the sport improves hand-eye coordination, balance, and reflexes—key areas that can become compromised as the disease progresses. The quick movements and precise coordination required by table tennis help participants sharpen their motor skills, while also providing a low-impact, full-body workout that strengthens muscles and improves flexibility. For many individuals, the ability to engage in a dynamic activity that targets these areas can be empowering, helping to manage the physical symptoms of Parkinson's in a fun and engaging way.

Beyond the physical advantages, the social benefits of these sessions are equally impactful. The inclusive, supportive environment fosters a sense of community that is vital for emotional well-being. Living with Parkinson's can often lead to feelings of isolation or frustration, but the table tennis sessions provide a space where participants can connect with others facing similar challenges. The shared experience of learning a new sport, combined with the camaraderie built around the table, creates a sense of belonging. "Participants find emotional support through laughter, conversation, and encouragement from fellow players and instructors," Michael explained.

With four events held so far and more planned every other month going forward, the partnership continues to grow. To learn more, visit the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club's website at www.MilwaukeeTTC.org or follow them on Facebook for the latest information about upcoming sessions.

SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE!

Wisconsin Parkinson Association
Annual Symposium
April 22, 2025

Brookfield Conference Center
Brookfield, WI

2025 WPA spring symposium

WPA's symposium promises to be educational and inspirational as we bring 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.

Watch the WPA website and social media for more information. Registration will begin in early 2025.

> **Symposium sponsorships are available. For more information, contact WPA at 414-312-6990.**

New this November!

Pearls for Parkinson's: Tips for Daily Living with Parkinson's

WPA brings you our latest podcast educational resource with ***Pearls for Parkinson's: Tips for Daily Living with Parkinson's***. In these mini-episodes Dacy Reimer, WPA Director of Medical Advising and Education and WPA podcast host shares tips and "pearls" of wisdom for making daily living with your Parkinson's journey just a little easier. The episodes will be short format, usually five minutes or less.

These easy-to-listen-to "pearls" air every Monday. Grab a cup of coffee or your favorite morning beverage and listen in for positive insights and helpful ideas. It's a great way to start your week!

EmPower Talks: Insights from the Experts is WPA's other podcast, airing the third Wednesday of every month. In these episodes Dacy Reimer interviews movement disorder specialists and other experts in the field of Parkinson's to bring you the latest information and resources on topics of interest and relevance to the Parkinson's community.

You can find *Parkinson's EmPower Talks* and *Pearls for Parkinson's* at wiparkinson.org, as well as on Facebook and YouTube. Visit the site to listen, learn, and join the community today.

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

Recognizing and Appreciating Our Family Caregivers

National Family Caregivers Month, observed every November, is a time to honor and support the over 53 million family caregivers across the United States. Family caregivers provide care such as managing medical appointments, administering medications, and providing emotional support. Even with juggling multiple responsibilities many individuals do not recognize themselves as caregivers. Self-identification as a caregiver is crucial for several reasons:

1. Access to Resources: Recognizing oneself as a caregiver opens the door to a variety of support services and resources, including counseling, respite care, support groups, and financial assistance.

2. Emotional Validation: Accepting the caregiver role can provide emotional validation. It helps individuals acknowledge the significant responsibilities they are shouldering, which can be a crucial step in seeking and accepting support.

3. Health and Well-being: Caregivers who identify with their role are more likely to engage in self-care and seek out health services for themselves, helping prevent burnout and reduce the risk of physical and mental health issues.

4. Community and Advocacy: Self-identification fosters a sense of community among caregivers. It allows them to connect with others in similar situations, share experiences, and advocate for better policies and support systems.

5. Improved Care Quality: When caregivers recognize their role, they are more likely to seek out training and education on caregiving best practices. This can lead to improved care quality for their loved ones.

By understanding and embracing their role, caregivers can better navigate the challenges they face and access the support they need. It is also important for those of us around the caregivers to find ways to offer care for the caregivers. Here are meaningful ways to help:

- **Give Them a Break:** Offer to take over their caregiving duties for a few hours or a day. This allows them to rest and recharge.
- **Show Up:** Regularly check in with them, whether through visits, phone calls, or messages. Let them know they are not alone.
- **Listen:** Sometimes, caregivers just need someone to talk to. Be a compassionate listener without offering unsolicited advice.
- **Help with Daily Tasks:** Assist with chores like cooking, cleaning, or running errands. This can alleviate some of their daily stress.
- **Share Information on Support Groups:** Connect them with local or online support groups where they can share experiences and gain emotional support. WPA offers a monthly Support Group for Care Partners. For more information go to the WPA website at wiparkinson.org.
- **Encourage Self-Care:** Remind them to take care of their own health. Encourage activities like exercise, hobbies, or simply taking time for themselves.
- **Provide Financial Support:** If possible, help with expenses related to caregiving, such as hiring a professional caregiver for a few hours.
- **Express Appreciation:** Small gestures like thank-you notes, flowers, or a simple "thank you" can go a long way in making them feel valued.

By recognizing and supporting family caregivers, especially during National Family Caregivers Month, we can help alleviate some of the burdens they face and show gratitude for those who tirelessly care for their loved ones.

Would you like to receive the Wisconsin Parkinson Magazine?

Join our mailing list at wiparkinson.org or scan the QR code below to sign up!

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

WISCONSIN PARKINSON ASSOCIATION

414-312-6990 | mail@wiparkinson.org
wiparkinson.org

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

WPA Team

Kelly Cieslak, MBA
Executive Director
kellyc@wiparkinson.org

Jill Compton
Director of Mission Impact
jillc@wiparkinson.org

Dacy Reimer, APNP, MSN, CCRC
Director, Medical Advising and Education
dacyr@wiparkinson.org

Raven Hamilton
Operations Manager
ravenh@wiparkinson.org

Jennifer Armbruster
Community Engagement and Events Coordinator
jennifera@wiparkinson.org

If you would like to receive *Wisconsin Parkinson Association Magazine*, join our mailing list at *wiparkinson.org*. You will receive this magazine, as well as periodic information about educational events, support & exercise groups, and other resources in your area. This magazine is funded by your donations. Your support helps those living with Parkinson disease by allowing us to enhance and expand our services to you and your families. For more information or to make a donation, visit *wiparkinson.org*.

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