HOPE • COMMUNITY • SUPPORT • RESOURCES

# WISCONSIN PARKINSON ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

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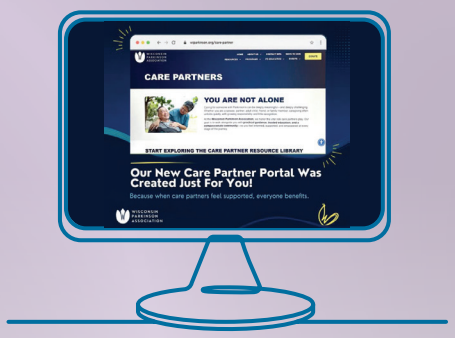



## Resilience:
## The Strength to Move Forward

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## Discover something new at WPA!

Our redesigned website puts trusted information, programs, and opportunities to connect right at your fingertips. Care partners can also visit the new Care Partner Portal, a welcoming space filled with practical tools, education, and support for the journey ahead. Stop by wiparkinson.org today, explore what's new, and find resources created to help you feel more confident and connected.


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## Resilience Grows with Your Support

*Your gift helps people with Parkinson's and their care partners stay active, informed and connected.*

Your gift helps people with Parkinson's and their caregivers stay active, informed and connected.

Parkinson's can transform life's simplest moments. Buttoning a shirt, taking a familiar walk or following a conversation may require greater effort. Yet every day, people living with Parkinson's find the courage to adapt and move forward. Resilience is the quiet strength to try again, celebrate small victories and hold on to hope. It is strengthened by care partners, family members and friends who give their time, patience and love. Their resilience deserves support, too.

At the Wisconsin Parkinson Association, resilience grows through programs that help people feel stronger, more informed and connected. Mindfulness and Mindful Movement workshops foster calm. Urban Poling, rock climbing and table tennis encourage movement and build confidence. Support groups create understanding, while symposiums and conferences provide trusted information and practical guidance. These experiences are more than activities and events. They help people form friendships, discover new possibilities and navigate Parkinson's one day at a time.

**Please make a gift to the Wisconsin Parkinson Association today.** Your generosity provides movement, trusted information, meaningful connection and hope to people living with Parkinson's and the care partners who stand beside them. Donate today to keep this vital community strong and ensure that no one has to face Parkinson's alone.

**Please consider making a gift today! Simply scan the QR code to make a donation!**

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

# Letter from the President & CEO

Dear Friends,

Resilience is at the heart of this issue, and it is something I see every day throughout the Wisconsin Parkinson Association community. Our members, families, care partners, volunteers and supporters continually show us what it means to meet challenges with courage, adapt to change and keep moving forward together.

WPA strives to bring that same spirit of resilience to our work. We are a dedicated team with a strong mission and a growing statewide impact. Every day, we show up to provide trusted information, meaningful connections and programs that support people living with Parkinson's disease at every stage of their journey.

I am especially excited to welcome Beverly Nelson and Chris Sheridan, BSN, RN, to our team. Their addition represents an important investment in WPA's future and in our ability to reach more people throughout Wisconsin. Beverly will help us strengthen how we share our mission, tell the stories of our community and connect people to the resources available through WPA. Chris brings decades of nursing experience and a deep knowledge of Parkinson's that will allow us to expand education and build stronger relationships with individuals, families, healthcare professionals and communities across the state. Together, they strengthen our ability to be more visible, more accessible and more present in the communities we serve. You'll have the opportunity to get to know both Beverly and Chris better in this issue, and I am incredibly excited about what their experience and passion will bring to WPA.

I am also energized by the impact of WPA programs across the state. From mindfulness and movement to rock climbing, table tennis, support groups, conferences and symposiums, these opportunities help people stay active, build relationships and find encouragement. Whether you are newly diagnosed or have been living with Parkinson's for many years, WPA is here for you. Again and again, we witness the power of shared experiences to connect people and become a valuable source of understanding and support.

This issue also celebrates two relationships that are especially meaningful to WPA. I am deeply grateful to Dick Cosentino for his longstanding leadership and commitment. He has served multiple terms as president of our Board of Directors and has strengthened WPA's financial health through the Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open, now in its fifth year. Dick understands the impact of Parkinson's firsthand as the devoted care partner and biggest cheerleader for his wife, Patty. His generosity has helped WPA sustain and grow its mission over many years.

We are also proud to recognize Jacob Misiorowski, who has chosen to use his growing platform to bring greater awareness to Parkinson's and to WPA. For Jacob, this mission is personal, too. His dad, Tom, lives with Parkinson's, and Jacob has been incredibly generous in sharing their family's story. His willingness to bring Parkinson's into the conversation is helping more people learn about the disease and the resources available right here in Wisconsin.

These relationships remind me that WPA is about much more than programs and events. It is about people.

As we look ahead, I am excited about where WPA is going. We are reaching into more Wisconsin communities, developing new partnerships and creating more opportunities for people affected by Parkinson's to find hope, community, support and resources close to home.

And we are doing it together.

Thank you for being part of the WPA community, for believing in this mission and for continuing to move forward with us.

Dacy



**Dacy Reimer,** President & CEO
dacyr@wiparkinson.org | 414.312.6990



## Spotlight:

# The Long View:

## A reflection on almost 30 years of learning and inspiration from caring for people with PD and their families

By: Karen Blindauer, MD, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Parkinson Association Medical Advisory Committee Member

After decades of caring for people with Parkinson's disease (PD), I have learned that the experience extends beyond tremors, medication schedules, or changes in mobility and function. Each person's experience is also shaped by the adjustments they and their families make, the sense of identity they work to preserve, and the determination they bring to daily life.

Early in my career, I focused heavily on the management of symptoms. I adjusted medications, evaluated tremors, coordination, balance and gait, and tracked changes and progression over time. While these tasks remain essential in providing good medical care, experience has taught me that what seems to matter most with time is often less measurable. People with PD want to remain active participants in their own lives and in their care. They want to make their own decisions, contribute to their families, remain productive and connected members of society, enjoy familiar routines and activities, and be recognized as people with value and not defined as just patients with a diagnosis of PD.



My patients have shown me remarkable examples of resilience. Resilience is not constant or unwavering optimism, nor is it the absence of fear. Resilience is the willingness to adapt when yesterday's plan no longer works today. I have seen my patients change from working to being retired and substitute physically challenging hobbies for less taxing, but still active and enjoyable ones. I have seen many people with PD gradually allow independence to evolve into interdependence, without surrendering their identity. I have seen acceptance and understanding that the most important resource is often not physical strength, but flexibility, having the capacity to accept help, change expectations, and discover new ways of engaging with family, friends and the community.

Many families and friends of people with PD will demonstrate resilience too. Spouses become care partners, children become advocates, and friends learn that companionship may require patience and changing up the familiar plan. The healthiest families are not those untouched by frustration or grief, but the ones able to speak honestly, share responsibility, and preserve moments of humor and affection alongside the work of caregiving.

Above all, Parkinson's care has shown me that purpose sustains health. Medications can improve movement, but purpose gives a person a reason to move. Watching a grandchild's sporting event or graduation, participating in a hobby like gardening or golfing, doing something creative like art, music, or dance, volunteering one's time to help others, or participating in a faith community all can provide structure when disease introduces uncertainty. Purpose does not cure Parkinson's, but it can strengthen motivation, support social connection, and remind patients that their lives still hold great value and meaning.

The long view has been humbling but has made me a more compassionate and caring physician. I cannot always improve my patients' symptoms or relieve their suffering. Nor can I control or stop PD symptom progression or restore every loss, despite my best efforts. But what I can do is care, listen, anticipate, treat, and accompany my patients with PD on their journey. Over time, I have come to understand that good care is not simply the pursuit of more years. It is the shared work of helping each person remain connected to what makes those years more valuable and worth living.



# Care Connects Us:

# *Honoring the Resilience of Care Partners*

**Every November, National Family Caregivers Month shines a light on the people who help family members, friends and neighbors live with greater comfort, safety and dignity. At Wisconsin Parkinson Association (WPA), we call them care partners, a term that reflects the shared journey of living with Parkinson's.**

The 2026 national theme, Care Connects Us, is more than a message. It is a reminder that care partners need care, encouragement and connection, too. WPA is here to make sure they do not have to navigate the journey alone.

That sense of connection matters more than ever. According to the 2025 Caregiving in the U.S. report from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, 63 million Americans provide ongoing care for an adult or child with a medical condition or disability. That is nearly one in four adults.

Across Wisconsin, care partners coordinate appointments, manage medications, provide transportation, help with daily activities and offer steady reassurance. This care often makes it possible for a loved one to remain at home, close to the people and places they cherish. Yet behind every appointment, errand and act of encouragement is someone who may be carrying questions, stress and uncertainty of their own.

Being a care partner can be deeply meaningful, but it can also be demanding. Many people balance care responsibilities with work, parenting and their own health needs, often while trying to hold everything together. WPA wants care partners to know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Sometimes resilience begins with a phone call, a conversation with someone who understands or the relief of hearing, "You are not alone."

For nearly 30 years, National Family Caregivers Month has reminded us that the love, strength and sacrifices of care partners matter. At WPA, recognition is only the beginning. Our virtual care partner support group welcomes people from anywhere in Wisconsin, making encouragement, education and community accessible regardless of where they live. Several new in-person groups have also begun meeting across the state, creating more places to share experiences, learn from one another and build relationships with people who understand.

WPA also offers educational resources to help families navigate daily care, changing roles and important decisions. Because caring for someone else can leave little time for personal well-being, mindfulness and meditation offer gentle, practical ways to manage stress. Care partners can find these tools and additional information at wiparkinson.org.

This November, take a moment to recognize a care partner in your life. Ask what would truly help. Share a meal, run an errand, help with household chores or offer a few hours of respite. Most of all, listen. A small act of care can bring welcome relief and remind someone that their needs matter, too. WPA stands beside care partners throughout the Parkinson's journey, not only during National Family Caregivers Month, but every day. When care partners feel seen and supported, the entire Parkinson's community grows stronger.



**63 MILLION AMERICANS**



**OR 1 IN 4 ADULTS**

**PROVIDE ONGOING CARE**

FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD WITH A MEDICAL CONDITION OR DISABILITY



**Visit www.wiparkinson.org to find current classes, virtual programs and support groups near you.**



# A Remarkable Year with The Miz

***Whether the starting point is a signed baseball, a conversation or an evening out, the purpose is the same: supporting education, exercise opportunities, resources and community connections for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones.***

Jacob Misiorowski delivered a historic 2026 regular season, leading the majors with a 1.80 ERA and 252 strikeouts. Brewers fans had plenty to celebrate. At Wisconsin Parkinson Association, we have another wonderful reason to cheer: the commitment he continues to bring to our community and organization.

Since partnering with WPA in 2025, Jacob has helped put a brighter spotlight on Parkinson's awareness and support. For Jacob, that commitment begins with family. His father, Tom, was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2014, making this a cause he knows firsthand. Last year's events gave this partnership a strong beginning and set the stage for more ways to come together in 2026.

One highlight was the June 15 ball signing in the Uecker Room at American Family Field. Fans had the chance to meet Jacob, pose for a professional photo and take home a signed and authenticated limited-edition WPA baseball with a display case.

The signing gave fans a way to celebrate their favorite pitcher while supporting Parkinson's awareness. That is what makes this partnership so meaningful: a shared love of baseball can open the door to learning about WPA, getting involved and helping families find support. For WPA, those connections are an important part of reaching people across Wisconsin.

This November, there are two unique Miz-focused events on our calendar. The bourbon-focused **MIZ'KEE Founders Selection Evening** on November 4 offers a limited-access experience for supporters. **An Evening with The Miz** on November 6 at Central Standard Craft Distillery in Milwaukee features a discussion with Jacob and fellow players, individual professional photos, food and craft cocktails.





Together, these gatherings give people different ways to connect with Jacob and WPA. Whether the starting point is a signed baseball, a conversation or an evening out, the purpose is the same: supporting education, exercise opportunities, resources and community connections for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones.

We are grateful to Jacob, his family, our sponsors and everyone who supports these events. It has been a joy to celebrate his success and watch this partnership grow. We are proud to have The Miz on our team!



# WPA News:
# *New Employee Profiles*

## Meet Beverly Nelson



As the Wisconsin Parkinson Association's new Marketing Communications Manager, Beverly Nelson brings a career built around creativity, strategy, storytelling and, most importantly, people.

Her career has taken her through the creative and financial industries, nonprofit organizations and, most recently, a national group of emergency and specialty veterinary hospitals.

"I've always been drawn to work that has a purpose beyond marketing itself," Beverly says. "I love the combination of strategy and creativity, but what really motivates me is the human side of everything. I love finding ways to help people connect with information that can make a difference."

For Beverly, WPA's mission is personal, too. Her father had Parkinson's, and the mother of her childhood best friend is also living with the disease. Those experiences have given her a firsthand understanding of how important trusted information, resources and support can be for families navigating Parkinson's.

**"I love the combination of strategy and creativity, but what really motivates me is the human side of everything. I love finding ways to help people connect with information that can make a difference."**
**- Beverly Nelson**

"I first discovered WPA when I applied for this role," Beverly shares. "And I couldn't help but wonder: if I didn't know WPA was here, how many other people navigating Parkinson's in Wisconsin might not know either? I'd love to help change that and make sure more people know there's a community here for them."

Outside of work, Beverly and her husband love traveling and live music. Last year alone, they saw 99 different bands, so they're always looking for their next concert or destination.

## Meet Chris Sheridan



Chris Sheridan, BSN, RN, joins the Wisconsin Parkinson Association as its new Parkinson's Education Specialist, bringing more than 25 years of experience working with people living with Parkinson's disease.

**"I learned a lot just by listening and seeing how people with Parkinson's live day to day. Listening is one of the best ways to understand what people really need."**
**- Chris Sheridan**

His work in Parkinson's began at Boston University Medical Center, where he helped support one of the country's early deep brain stimulation programs (DBS). After returning to Wisconsin, Chris coordinated the DBS program at Froedtert Hospital and later became manager of its Parkinson's and Movement Disorders program. He also spent several years with AbbVie, traveling throughout the Midwest to help patients and families learn to use advanced Parkinson's therapies.

Working so closely with people in their homes gave Chris a valuable perspective on the everyday realities of Parkinson's.

"I learned a lot just by listening and seeing how people with Parkinson's live day to day," he said. "Listening is one of the best ways to understand what people really need."

That approach will be central to his work at WPA, where Chris will connect with support groups across Wisconsin and provide education based on the questions and needs he hears from members.

"I'm really excited to be here," he said. "I can't wait to get out there and get involved again."

Outside of work, Chris enjoys hiking, camping and playing guitar, mandolin, banjo and just about anything else with strings.



# Side by Side:

## Chuck and Betty Majeski Face Parkinson's Together

"I'd follow him anywhere," Betty says about her husband, Chuck. After more than 60 years of marriage, that devotion remains at the heart of how they face his journey with Parkinson's. Together, Chuck and Betty Majeski have experienced joy and tragedy, sorrow and hope, meeting each new life experience side by side. When Chuck began stumbling and developed a slight tremor, they knew something was changing. The Parkinson's diagnosis was not entirely unexpected, but it gave a name to symptoms they had not understood. Their first neurologist provided an important starting point. As they learned more about Parkinson's and its treatments, they connected with a movement disorder specialist who could offer focused support and guide the next steps in Chuck's care.

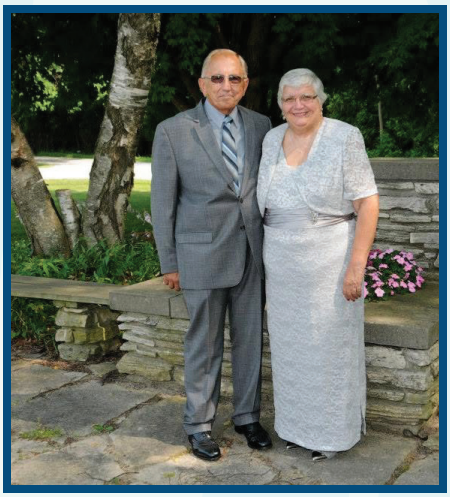
Specialized care brought encouraging signs of progress. After Chuck started taking carbidopa-levodopa, writing his name became a little easier. He also completed about 16 weeks of Parkinson's therapy at NeuroAdvantage in Mount Pleasant and joined an exercise program at the YMCA. Today, he and Betty feel confident in his care, with appointments



alternating every six months between his movement disorder specialist and a nurse practitioner.

At home, small changes help Chuck remain safe, active and independent. Because balance is his greatest challenge, he and Betty removed throw rugs to reduce the risk of falls and chose recliners that make standing easier. Chuck also wears supportive shoes and uses a cane or urban poles when he walks. Time in the garden







**WPA resources, including Pearls for Parkinson's and the Symposium, have helped them better understand the disease and its effects. They continue to pay attention, ask questions and learn.**

gives him another way to keep moving while enjoying something he loves.

Appointments reflect the same partnership and humor that shape Chuck and Betty's life. Chuck affectionately calls Betty his "form filler-outer." She completes the paperwork, and he adds his signature. Her support, however, reaches far beyond forms. Attuned to changes in his health, Betty sometimes finds it difficult to tell whether they stem from normal aging, another health issue or Parkinson's. WPA resources, including Pearls for Parkinson's and the Symposium, have helped them better understand the disease and its effects. They continue to pay attention, ask questions and learn.

Chuck meets each day with a quiet resilience rooted in action. "You can't sit and let it bother you," he says. He remains committed to exercise and therapy, even as balance problems and other limitations test him. Betty's resilience is rooted in gratitude. Meeting people whose Parkinson's is more advanced has not made her fearful of what may lie ahead. Instead, those encounters remind her to appreciate where Chuck is today and how well he is doing.

Life with Parkinson's is not always simple or predictable, but Chuck and Betty continue to meet it as they have met so much across more than six decades of marriage: with devotion, humor and gratitude. The adjustments they make, the questions they ask and the care they seek allow them to move forward without letting Parkinson's define their story. One step, one appointment and one day at a time, they face what comes next side by side.

COSENTINO FAMILY
PARKINSON'S OPEN
*Benefiting the Wisconsin Parkinson Association*

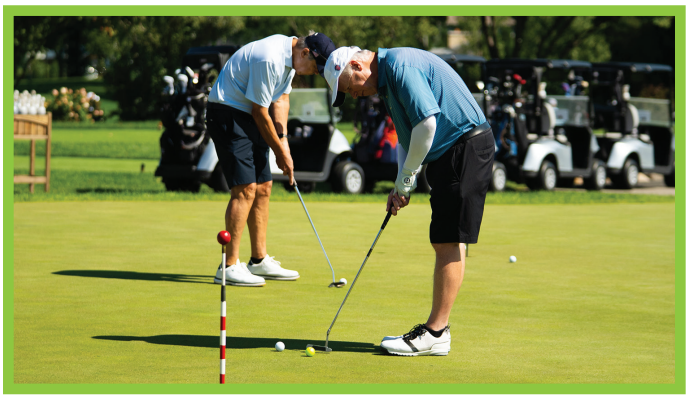
# *Playing for a Purpose*

## The Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open



Some ideas arrive quietly. They take root, stay with us and, in time, become something far greater than we first imagined.

That is how the Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open began.



Five years ago, a friend who had attended a successful charity golf outing suggested to Dick Cosentino that he create an outing of his own, in honor of his wife, Patty, who has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Dick's first reaction was simple: he didn't have the time.

He was busy running his business and couldn't imagine taking on the work and responsibility of creating an event of that scale. Still, the idea stayed with him. Eventually, he brought together a committee of people he trusted, reached out to friends and longtime business associates, and decided to see what they could build together.

What they built has become much more than a golf outing.

The Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open has grown into an annual gathering of families, friends and supporters whose connection to Parkinson's, whether personal or through someone they love, gives the day a deeper meaning. Its reach now extends well beyond southeastern Wisconsin, with some participants traveling from across the country to be part of it.

This year, 36 foursomes filled Westmoor Country Club for a sold-out day on the course. As the sun began to set, the event took on a new character.

For the first time, the evening celebration moved outdoors, bringing everyone together beneath a tent rather than dividing guests between the club's great room and dining room. The auction and paddle raise drew generous support, including a returning family supporter who offered a match to inspire even greater giving.

"We had a fantastic day," Dick said.

Yet the success of the day was measured in more than dollars raised.

For Dick, the evening was also an expression of gratitude to the Westmoor members who have supported the Open year after year. Many contribute and participate even though Westmoor is their own club. Dick wanted

**That willingness to stay, to keep talking, keep connecting and keep showing up, has become part of what makes the Open special.**

**"It's the people that really make the event," Dick said. "This outing has taken on a life of its own."**



to give them something different: an evening to come together, enjoy one another's company and celebrate the community they have helped create.

The weather cooperated. The outdoor bar was open. Music and entertainment carried into the evening. People stayed.

That willingness to stay, to keep talking, keep connecting and keep showing up, has become part of what makes the Open special.



"It's the people that really make the event," Dick said. "This outing has taken on a life of its own."

That may be the most meaningful measure of what has happened since that first conversation.

Some attendees have a loved one living with Parkinson's. Others first became connected to the cause through Dick and Patty and have returned year after year. Friendships have formed. Families have become familiar faces. What started with a handful of people who believed in an idea has become a community that continues to grow.

At the heart of that community is something Dick has wanted from the beginning: a sense of belonging.

"We want a family atmosphere," he said. "We want people whose families and loved ones have been affected by Parkinson's to feel welcome and know that there are people who care and will support them."

Dick's commitment to that mission extends far beyond the golf course. He spent many years serving on the Wisconsin Parkinson Association's board, including two terms as president. Through his experience with Patty and through his years with WPA, he has seen how profoundly important connection and support can be after a Parkinson's diagnosis.

The Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open is one way he continues that work.

Dick generously donates the proceeds from the Open to WPA, carrying his longstanding commitment to people living with Parkinson's and their families well beyond the golf course. His generosity helps someone facing a new diagnosis find a support group where questions are welcome and others understand, then discover opportunities to learn from Parkinson's experts or stay active through exercise programs. That support extends to care partners, too, offering practical guidance for daily challenges and a place to share their own experiences with others caring for a loved one. These resources give families people to turn to as their needs change.

Dick is quick to look beyond himself when he talks about what the Open has accomplished. He speaks instead about the people who participate, the families who give, the friends who return and the community that has embraced the cause.

Perhaps that is what makes the event feel enduring.

It was never really about creating one successful day on a golf course. It was about creating a place where people could come together for something larger than themselves, and where the experience of Parkinson's could be met not only with fundraising but also with friendship, compassion, hope and love.

Five years after a simple suggestion, the Cosentino Family Parkinson's Open has become a tradition. Traditions have a way of becoming legacies.

For Dick, the purpose remains remarkably straightforward. "If we can help people feel supported and know they're not alone, then we've accomplished what we set out to do," he said.

# Staying Safe & Connected this Winter



When snow and ice arrive, staying active and connected can take a little more planning. A class or support group you normally look forward to may suddenly depend on the forecast and the condition of the sidewalks. The good news is that you have options. With a few safety habits and both in-person and virtual ways to participate, winter does not have to put your routine on hold.

## Be Safe and Keep Moving

When you do go out, give yourself more time than usual and check the path from your door to the car. Choose cleared, well-lit routes and wear shoes or boots with good traction. Watch for slush tracked inside. Even the slightest amount of water on the floor can be hazardous.



Also, ask for help! Let someone know if you could use a hand. If the footing looks risky, do not push it. Choose an at-home option instead. Keep walkways at home clear and make a little space for the exercises you enjoy. The goal is to have a plan you can adapt when the weather changes, rather than letting one icy day interrupt your whole routine.

WPA's movement classes can give that routine a place on the calendar. Mindful Movement for PD offers Parkinson's-focused exercise in communities across Wisconsin. Some Mindful Movement for PD classes also offer a virtual option, so check the calendar for a format that works for you. If travel is difficult, virtual Parkinson's Dance classes let you move and groove to music from home with guided instruction and peers from the Parkinson's community.

If you are ready to try something different, WPA has also connected members with rock climbing at Adventure Rock and table tennis through the Milwaukee Table Tennis Club. Both bring movement and conversation into the same afternoon. And the best news? You do not need to be an experienced climber or player to participate!

## Make Time for Connection

Connection matters just as much as movement. WPA's statewide support groups bring people with Parkinson's and care partners together to share questions, stories and practical ideas. Some groups meet in person, while others meet virtually, including options for young-onset Parkinson's and care partners. An online meeting can be especially helpful when snow keeps you off the road: you still get to see familiar faces and hear from people who understand the everyday experience of Parkinson's. If it has been a while since you attended, winter is a good time to reconnect.

Between meetings, keep that connection going. Call someone from your group, invite a friend to join you for a class, or set a regular time to check in with a neighbor. Small plans are easier to keep, and they give you something to look forward to when the days feel short.

This winter, pick one activity you can attend and one you can do from home. Put both on the calendar. A class, a conversation or a familiar voice can make the season feel a little less closed in.

**Visit www.wiparkinson.org to find current classes, virtual programs and support groups near you.**

# Moving Forward with Strength and Grace



***Through Wisconsin Parkinson Association programs and weekly Pearls for Parkinson's videos, Linda has found information, encouragement and people who understand the journey.***

When Linda Kneser first noticed a tremor in her leg and hand during the uncertainty of COVID-19, she blamed nerves. Her mother was preparing to move into senior housing, and Linda was helping manage the transition. But the tremors persisted. At her daughter's urging, Linda eventually saw a neurologist and, in May 2022, received a Parkinson's diagnosis.

The news made something she had suspected feel suddenly real. Still, Linda did not let fear take over. She felt well, could do the things she loved and decided to continue living fully. Four years later, she remains active, independent and determined, even if some tasks take a little longer.





Movement has become one of Linda's most powerful tools. When changes in her feet made Zumba difficult, she found new ways to stay active. At Hatch Fitness in Pewaukee, she participates in boxing therapy, strength and stability, Basecamp and TRX classes. She also plays pickleball with her husband, Rick, and participates in Wisconsin Parkinson Association activities, including table tennis, symposiums and support groups.

One activity that has been especially meaningful to Linda is rock climbing, offered through a partnership between Wisconsin Parkinson Association and Adventure Rock in Brookfield. She cried the first time she reached the top, and climbing soon became a family adventure. Her youngest granddaughter enjoyed it so much that she began taking lessons of her own. For Linda, rock climbing is one of the unexpected gifts of life with Parkinson's, bringing new friendships, fresh challenges and a deeper appreciation for what her body can do.

That does not mean every day is easy. Linda has learned to pace herself, whether she is working in the yard or preparing for a day that involves too much sitting. Instead of measuring success by finishing the entire backyard, she celebrates completing one corner. Parkinson's has taught her patience, flexibility and grace, both for herself and for others.

Linda's family is part of her strength. Her grandchildren often ask, "How are you doing, Grandma?" and pray for her at school. Rick supports her while respecting her independence, offering help when she asks and sharing honest conversations about health and the future.

Her Christian faith also grounds her through blessings and challenges. Connection matters, too. Through Wisconsin Parkinson Association programs and weekly Pearls for Parkinson's videos, Linda has found information, encouragement and people who understand the journey.

Her message to someone newly diagnosed is simple: "It's not a death sentence." The road may include a detour or a bump, but no one has to travel it alone. Find an activity you enjoy. Meet others with Parkinson's. Ask for support. Most of all, she says, "Just keep moving."

# Caring for the Care Partners

## *Finding Community Alongside Parkinson's*



**For a care partner, Parkinson's can quietly begin to fill every corner of the day. There are medications to time, meals to plan, appointments to manage and new questions that seem to appear just as quickly as the old ones are answered. Somewhere in the middle of all that, care partners can find themselves putting nearly all of their energy into the person they love.**

Barb Schmidt understands that firsthand. When her husband, Jerry, was diagnosed with Parkinson's, she found herself searching for people who understood what life looked like from the care partner's side. She found resources for people with Parkinson's but struggled to find the community she needed herself.

So she decided to help create one.

Barb contacted Wisconsin Parkinson Association and, in July, began collaborating with WPA to lead a care partner session as part of the WPA Brookfield Support Group at the Brookfield Public Library. People with Parkinson's and their care partners arrive together, then meet separately so each can share experiences and find support among peers facing similar challenges. Just four months later, the care partner group has grown to 21 people, each bringing a different perspective and level of experience with Parkinson's.

Its strength comes largely from its simplicity: people talking to people. Some arrive near the beginning of life with Parkinson's, still trying to understand what comes next. Others have spent years navigating the disease alongside someone they love. Around the same table, experience gets passed along naturally. Someone shares a piece of adaptive equipment that helped. Another talks about handling the holidays. A question that once felt impossible gets answered by someone who has already lived through it.

"Those who've gone before us can teach us as we follow in their footsteps," Barb said.

Those conversations matter because caring for someone with Parkinson's can become all-consuming. Barb calls Parkinson's "a family disease," one that can reshape routines, relationships and the rhythms of everyday life. Medication schedules affect mealtimes. Appointments, symptoms and new concerns compete for attention. Care partners can spend so much time looking after someone else that there is little left for themselves.

For one hour each month, the group offers something different: a room where care partners can listen, talk, exchange ideas and simply be with people who understand. Barb hopes those relationships will continue beyond the meetings, which is why members share contact information and receive follow-up emails with resources and information discussed by the group.

Barb doesn't pretend a support group can make Parkinson's easy. She has learned there is only so much of the future anyone can prepare for. Instead, she tries to bring herself back to something smaller and more manageable.

"This is today," she reminds herself. "This is what I'm doing today."

And once a month, there is now a room full of people who understand exactly what she means.

The Care Partner Support Group meets the first Thursday of each month from 2 to 3 p.m. at the Brookfield Public Library.

# A Helping Hand, a Stronger Community



***"For us, volunteering with WPA is meaningful because every helping hand makes a difference. We truly enjoy being part of the WPA community, and we always look forward to the next opportunity to help." ~ Don and Cathy Adamczyk***

What is it like to volunteer with Wisconsin Parkinson Association (WPA)? For Don and Cathy Adamczyk, it is not about recognition or a specific assignment. It is about showing up, noticing what needs to be done and lending a hand. This simple, practical approach has made them familiar faces at WPA events, from golf outings and symposiums to Yacht Rock fundraisers.

The Adamczyks' connection to WPA began several years ago, when a friend invited them to volunteer at an event. Around the same time, a family friend was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, giving their service an even more personal sense of purpose.

Service has long been part of their lives. Don remembers accompanying his father to volunteer at church, especially while preparing for church festivals. Cathy found her own calling when their children were young, supporting classroom activities, school events and other projects. Together, they pitched in at church activities, bingo nights, community events and fundraisers. Volunteering, they say, is simply something they have always done.

At WPA, that means being ready for almost anything. Cathy gravitates toward registration and organizational tasks. As an event winds down, she often gathers name tags, stacking materials, sorting shirts and packing supplies so staff members can finish the day a little sooner. Don enjoys meeting attendees and keeping activities moving. He may carry materials for a sponsor or attendee, direct guests, hold a door, assist with parking or help assemble a display.

Their greatest impact often comes through small gestures. At a recent symposium, Don noticed guests balancing plates while navigating the room with walkers. He stepped in and helped them reach their seats safely. When Cathy saw a long line forming at the women's restroom, she held the door and helped guests using walkers and canes move in and out more easily. These moments reflect the way Don and Cathy serve: they pay attention, step in and make the experience easier for people living with Parkinson's.

The symposium is one of their favorite events because it brings together people living with Parkinson's, their families, professionals and valuable resources. Conversations with exhibitors and attendees have helped Don and Cathy learn more about WPA's programs and services. They carry that knowledge beyond the event, sharing information with friends and acquaintances who have recently been diagnosed and need support. Volunteering has deepened their understanding of Parkinson's while equipping them to connect others with WPA.



They also know their contributions are valued. Volunteer shirts reinforce their sense of belonging, while WPA team members greet them warmly and show their appreciation. The days move quickly; the people make the experience enjoyable and every task advances WPA's mission. To Don and Cathy, it never feels like work.

The Adamczyks encourage others to give volunteering a try, even if they do not have a personal connection to Parkinson's disease. Bring a friend. Meet new people. Learn more about the experiences of people living with Parkinson's. Most of all, arrive with flexibility and a willingness to help wherever needed.

## Would you like to receive the Wisconsin Parkinson Association Magazine and other updates?

Stay informed and get updates about educational events, support groups, resources, and other activities happening across the state with Wisconsin Parkinson Association. Joining the mailing list gets you access to the magazine and important WPA information. Go to wiparkinson.org or scan the QR code to add your name to the mailing list.

Your donations fund this magazine and help us expand services for those living with Parkinson's. To donate or learn more, visit **wiparkinson.org**.

WISCONSIN PARKINSON ASSOCIATION

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

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

### WPA Team

**Dacy Reimer, MSN, APRN-NP**
President & CEO

**Jill Compton, RYT-500**
Director of Mission Impact

**Chris Sheridan, BSN, RN**
Parkinson's Education Specialist

**Beverly Nelson**
Marketing Communications Manager

**Jennifer Armbruster**
Community Engagement and Events Coordinator

**Raven Hamilton**
Operations Manager

To contact a member of the team, email: info@wiparkinson.org

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### Medical Advisory Committee

The Medical Advisory Committee provides medical oversight for WPA. The members advise our board and staff on the content of medically related programs, and on topics related to clinical care of people with Parkinson's disease. The Committee is made up of clinicians from various healthcare locations around the state of Wisconsin.

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