

**“You are
not alone.”**



**Parkinson Partners’
Mission Statement:**
To encourage,
educate and support
those with
Parkinson’s disease,
their caregivers and
loved ones as they
cope with the
challenges of
disease. Exploring
better resources,
services and
outcomes for people
with PD.

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*Please remember
Parkinson Partners
in your estate
planning. Your gift
can ensure that
local services and
support continue
for the Erie PD
community.*

Letter from the Board President

As we close 2024, I wish to thank all who have supported Parkinson Partners of Northwest PA over 2024 and through the past 32 years! Parkinson Partners is a 501c3 Non-profit organization with a history that started in 1992 in the living room of a few ambitious persons that saw a need to provide education, supportive care and compassion for Persons with Parkinson Disease and their loved ones.

We continue to provide exercise, wellness, support and educational programming, specifically:

- **Information and Referral Phone line:** Providing consultation, information and referrals to local community resources. Our Executive Director responds with consultation, information, supportive guidance and referrals through direct phone conversations and face to face meetings with those newly diagnosed and those experiencing the journey with PD.
- **Purposeful Movement and Wellness Program:** This Fall, Spring and Summer in-person exercise series is conducted in partnership with Gannon University and The Salvation Army. In-person assistance is provided by PT and OT professors and Gannon students.
- **Newly Diagnosed Education Series:** A newly diagnosed seminar is offered in April each year for those new to the challenges of PD. Persons with PD and their caregivers experiencing the challenges over time are welcome to attend for a refresher.
- **Annual Educational Seminar:** Offered to provide current and up to date physician presentations on the newest treatment options as well as wellness, coping and support services information.
- **Persons with PD and Caregiver Support Groups:** Multiple venues and regular sessions are offered in-person and via Zoom for PwPD, caregivers and family members.
- **Social gatherings** are offered to nurture friendships and support connections. Examples include Pot Luck dinners at Springhill Senior Living and a Summer Picnic.
- **Respite Care Program:** Offering financial support for PwPD and caregivers to allow the caregiver respite and self-care opportunity.
- **Transportation Grant Program:** Through a generous financial gift from the Mead Family, funding is provided for transportation to key appointments partnering with Hansen’s Errand Service.

Remarkably, Parkinson Partners of Northwest PA remains as the only local nonprofit serving those with Parkinson’s Disease in the Northwest PA, East Ohio and Western New York region! We need your help to continue in our mission. Please consider an end of the year donation to support LOCAL programming, services and support for the regional PD community. You can donate online at www.parkinsonpartners.org/donate or use the enclosed remittance envelope.

For those of you who have supported us over the many years, **THANK YOU!** We invite all of you to participate in our programming and to offer ideas for new ways for us to support you. We would also appreciate your financial gift supporting our important work for those with PD and their families. We are committed to the challenge and welcome your input and ideas. We are confident that with our combined commitment, Parkinson Partners of Northwest PA will continue for another 30 years and beyond!

With deepest gratitude and regard,
Susan Peters, President, Parkinson Partners of Northwest PA

News and Notes

🎵 **Rock 'n Country Dance:** A huge thank you to everyone who supported the Rock 'n Country Dance in November. Over 200 people attended for a night filled with delicious food and beer, great music, an awesome silent auction and a fun night out for all! Congratulations to the Brace family who received the 2025 Parkinson Champion Award! Thanks to everyone who attended and supported the event with ads and donations. Thanks also to our Gannon and Penn West University student volunteers and our committee members. A very special thank you to our incredible sponsors: **Millennium Sound; Concourse of Union Station; The Brewerie; iHeart Radio; Birkmire Trucking Company; Encompass Health; PSB Industries; First National Bank; North Shore Insurance Agency; St. Francis Ushers Club; Steadman Law Office; Sam Catania Painting.**

🎵 **Caregiver Book:** In honor of National Family Caregiver Month, here is a book recommendation from a PD caregiver. We had special donation from ISM of Erie and would like to use the funds to order books for interested caregivers. Let me know if you are interested. Karen Locke's review: *"A very good friend of mine gave me a book recently, **The Light in the Middle of the Tunnel**, by Susan Gangsei. It's short stories about what caregivers of family members with Parkinson's Disease have to cope with. At first, I wasn't sure I wanted to read it, but I started it anyway. It made me realize that I was not alone in how I was feeling, being relatively new to this. And it gave me some hope. I really enjoyed this book and I hope you will too."*

Five Ways to Keep the Holidays Happy with PD

December 12, 2019— www.MichaelJFox.org/news--For many, the holidays are a joyful time to gather with loved ones and friends, reflect on the past year and think about what's to come. But for some with recently diagnosed or with progressing Parkinson's or with depression or anxiety, it can be a stressful or lonely time. Visiting with others can bring worry or increased symptoms, and not attending social events can bring feelings of isolation. These are natural and common reactions. To help, consider these tips to make the most of the upcoming holidays:

Open up to someone you trust. The holidays might not be a particularly happy time because of common Parkinson's symptoms such as depression or anxiety. Or, walking and balance, speech, or thinking and memory (cognitive) changes might make it difficult to participate in large gatherings. Tell a loved one what you're experiencing and how they can help: by listening, checking in with you periodically, or organizing a low-key get-together instead. And remember to watch for others in your community who may seem sad, worried or withdrawn. "How are you?" or "I've been thinking about you" can go a long way.

Choose your social events thoughtfully. You don't have to go to every celebration, but there may be some events you can't miss. Think about your stressors (an undisclosed diagnosis, family dynamics or difficulties communicating in crowds, for example) and set limits. Leave after one drink, pivot if certain topics arise in conversation, or commit to no more than two engagements each week. But don't avoid socializing altogether. In general, people who are more connected live happier, more fulfilled lives. And in Parkinson's, talking with others may benefit cognition, and positive relationships can boost mood.

Give yourself a break. Parkinson's, like life, will bring good days and bad days. The holidays can be stressful, and Parkinson's can make them even more so. Don't try to do everything. Can a potluck be just as fun as hosting an entire dinner? Will anyone mind if you don't make all your cookies from scratch? It's okay to say, "I can't tonight" or "No, thank you."

Allow extra time. When going out, always plan more time than you think necessary to get ready and get to your destination. Parkinson's, holiday traffic and weather can be unpredictable. Give yourself a cushion to remove any pressure from potentially getting lost or running late that would otherwise create worry and worsen symptoms.

Put yourself first. Exercise, eat and sleep well, and manage stress. It's easier said than done, but even harder when you're busy with a long to-do list. Make yourself and your health a priority. Schedule exercise, alone or with others (a way to get in social activity, too!), to ease mood changes and other Parkinson's symptoms. Enjoy holiday treats in moderation but try to stick to a generally healthy diet. And find ways to reduce stress, such as meditation or talk therapy.

Best Wishes for those with Special Celebrations

Happy Birthday and Happy Anniversary!

To have your birthday or anniversary added to our list call 814-899-3030 or email: info@ParkinsonPartners.org

November

1—Suzanne Scheuer-Leone
19 -- Carolyn Baxter

December

2—Rita Jandt
14—Bob Southard
15 – Pat Weidner



Stress and the Holidays: Coping Strategies to Keep Caregivers Sane

By Helen Hunter, ACSW, LSW: www.caregiver.com--Every year, the media bombards us with advertisements showing the "happy family" gathering for the holidays. People from different generations are together, having a wonderful time, sharing traditions of old and creating new ones as well.

It is not that way, though, for a great number of individuals. For those who don't have families of their own, or for those who live alone and have relatives living far away, holidays often bring heartbreak and depression. Those who have been used to family celebrations in the past and no longer have that to look forward to cannot accept the "change" in the tradition, especially if they keep hearing about others who are getting together with their own families.

There are two things to remember that can help get you through the holidays. The first thing to realize is that it is okay to cry. This can be a tough time for many. It is natural to feel depressed when your friends are having the ideal family gathering. Allow yourself to express your inner feelings.

The second thing to remember is to control the holidays, do not let them control you. This requires planning. If you know that you will be alone on the holiday, start planning ahead for what you will do. Here are some suggestions for things you can do to sidestep the holiday blues:

1. If you cannot be with family, try to spend time with friends or neighbors instead.
2. Get away from the source of the depression. If your home reminds you of past holidays spent with a loved one, go on a cruise, or take a vacation to another part of the country, or go abroad.
3. Get involved with an activity. Volunteer at a local senior center, church or community center that serves meals on the holiday, or give your services to a hospital. If you know that someone will be alone and cannot get out for the holiday, visit. If the person lives far away and you cannot physically visit, make a phone call. In helping those who are less fortunate than yourself, you can forget some of your own troubles.
4. Invite others who are also alone to your home to share the holiday. You can prepare a meal for them, or you can go out to a restaurant. Company always helps ease depression.

Be gentle to yourself, especially if you have recently lost a loved one. If you do not feel like celebrating, don't! If you do wish to celebrate, keep it simple. Remember the TRUE reason that we celebrate the holidays! The important point to remember here is that if the old traditions cause heartbreak and depression, change the tradition - start a new one!

Also, be sure to review your expectations and be realistic. Not everyone is jolly, generous and loving all through the holiday season. As Wayne A. Van Kampen from the *Bethesda PsychHealth Reporter* wrote, "Somehow (during the holidays) persons feel pushed into hiding, covering over, or denying the reality of sadness, fear and tension. Perhaps what is needed most is simply a more honest embracing of ourselves, others, and the realities of life." Not everyone will have a happy family gathering just because it is the holiday season. Old resentments are likely to resurface, no matter how hard we try, when people are thrown together for an extended period.

In addition, there are a number of strategies that can be used in planning the holiday celebration.

These strategies include the following:

- Delegate responsibilities and activities so that one person is not taking on more than can be accomplished without help.
- Do not assume responsibility for the entire household's holiday happiness.
- Work minute by minute on your attitude. Postpone becoming angry and show understanding and calmness. This technique should be used not only during the holiday period, but every day!
- Any task that you have chosen to do, whether it be the cooking, cleaning, gift wrapping, card addressing, organizing, decorating or shopping, is to be viewed as a choice that you made. Try to have fun in tackling these tasks, which will make the holiday easier and keep your spirits positive.
- Start traditions that make the most sense to you in your life now. It doesn't always have to be done the same way every year.
- Do things together as a family that you all truly enjoy.

Make the holiday season a time for you and your loved ones to have fun and to share special memories. When the entire season is over, sit down, relax and count your blessings. Remind yourself as to how lucky you are. When you make an effort to have a joyous, stress-free holiday, you can avoid the stress. The key is to plan ahead, and to ask for and accept help from others.

Parkinson Partners of NW PA, Inc.

PO Box 10547
Erie, PA 16514

PHONE:
814-899-3030

E-MAIL:
info@ParkinsonPartners.org

DONATIONS:
Checks should be made payable to "Parkinson Partners" and mailed to the address above. Donations can also be made via PayPal on our website.



Parkinson Partners of NW PA, Inc.
PO Box 10547
Erie, PA 16514

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.ParkinsonPartners.org

DISCLAIMER: The material presented in this issue is solely for the information of the reader. It is not intended for treatment purposes, but rather as a basis for discussion with the patient's physician.

Support Group Meeting Schedules

Remember: all events are also listed on our Events Calendar on our website including live links to Zoom meetings. **Make sure to sign up for our emails so you are alerted to any last-minute changes.**

ZOOM MEETINGS:

- **Parkinson Partners Support Group Meeting on Wednesday, Dec 11th at 1:00 PM.** Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://zoom.us/j/93010770942?pwd=bzhTYTgxVEIXV0pONnYwbEt5TnZzZz09>
- **Caregiver Only Zoom Meeting on Thursday, Dec. 5th at 1:30 PM.** Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/96391675305>

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

- **Eastside YMCA PD Support Group: Wednesday, Dec. 4th at 1:00 PM** at Eastside YMCA, 2101 Nagle Road. All are welcome!
- **Care Partner Only Lunch: Monday, Dec. 9th at 11:30 AM** at Peach St. Wegman's Café
- **Evening PD Support Group: Tuesday, Dec. 10th at 6:00 PM** at Springhill Retirement Community, 2323 Edinboro Road (Community Room). We will have a potluck Christmas party so RSVP and let us know what dish you'll bring and your own drink. All are welcome!