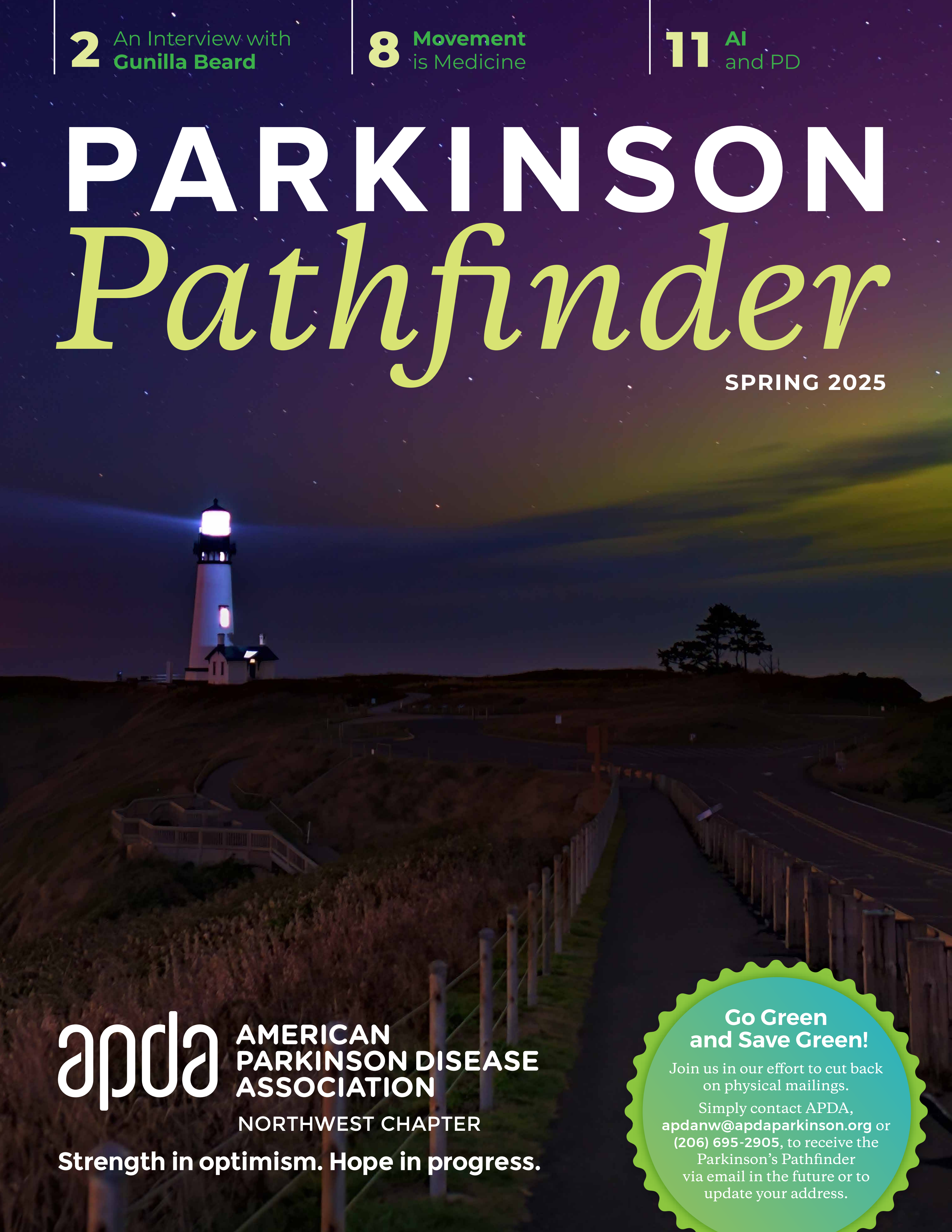
PARKINSON *Pathfinder*

SPRING 2025



AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION
NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.

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Simply contact APDA, **apdanw@apdaparkinson.org** or **(206) 695-2905**, to receive the Parkinson's Pathfinder via email in the future or to update your address.

SPRING 2025

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COVER

Jeremy Likness. Read Jeremy's story on page 14

OUR MISSION

Every day, we provide the support, education, research, and community that will help everyone impacted by Parkinson's disease live life to the fullest.

AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION
NORTHWEST CHAPTER
Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.

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Strength comes in many forms. During this Parkinson's Awareness Month, let's celebrate strength in knowledge by asking questions, learning more, and staying engaged.

Last month at our annual *Magic of Hope Gala*, we celebrated strength—strength in optimism, strength in knowledge, strength in community, and so much more.

Strength isn't just about muscle. It's about heart. It's about perseverance. And it's about empowering ourselves with knowledge. Living with Parkinson's is not easy, and learning, adapting, and staying informed can make a world of difference.

As we continue celebrating strength during Parkinson's Awareness Month this April and in this issue of the Pathfinder, we're highlighting its many forms — especially strength in knowledge — by exploring some *Did You Know* questions. Because we know that whether you're someone living with PD, a care partner, a doctor, or another member of the PD community, there's always more to learn, new questions to explore, and fresh insights that may surprise you. Such as:

- We all know that movement is medicine. But *Did You Know* that regular physical activity can actually preserve dopamine-producing neurons, improving motor function and boosting mental well-being? Read more about the power of exercise on page 8.
- You may have heard that Parkinson's has a distinctive smell. But *Did You Know* that a dog can be trained to detect Parkinson's through smell, with 90% accuracy? Learn more on page 4.
- AI is making headlines, but *Did You Know* that in Parkinson's research, AI is being used to analyze subtle changes in gait and speech, potentially leading to earlier diagnosis? Read more about AI and PD on page 11.

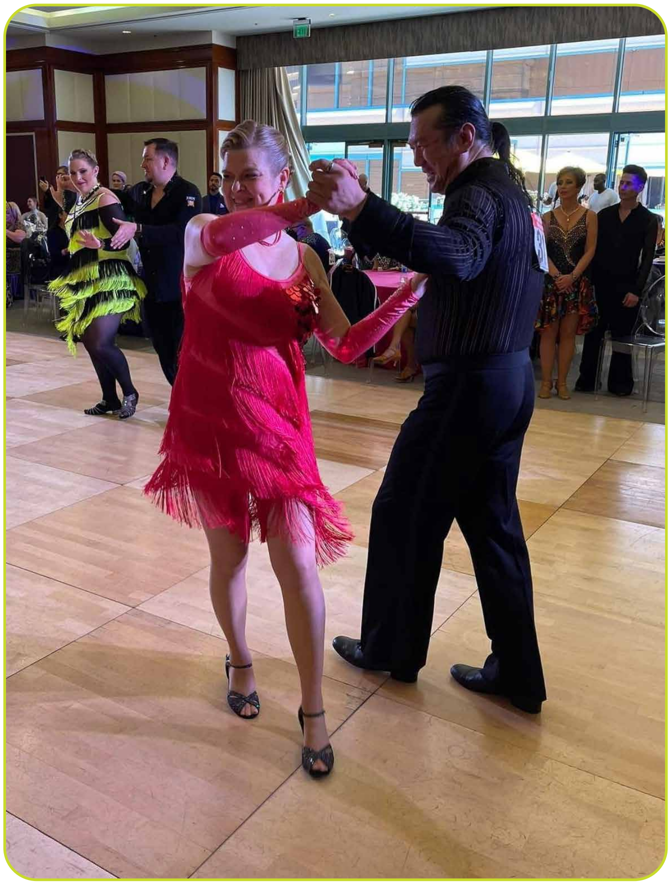
Strength takes many forms. This Parkinson's Awareness Month, let's embrace *strength in knowledge* by asking questions and seeking answers. Let's find *strength in optimism* by building the skills to live well with Parkinson's. And let's draw *strength from community* by sharing our story and staying connected. Remember, APDA is here for you. Not just this month, but every step of the way, with the education, resources, and support you need all year long.

KRichards

Kirsten Richards, Executive Director

STRENGTH IN OPTIMISM

An Interview with **Gunilla Beard** by **Lianna Marie**, APDA Regional Director of Marketing and Communications.



Gunilla Beard dancing with partner Josh Chow

I recently had the opportunity of meeting Gunilla at an APDA Northwest Chapter event. I was delighted she agreed to answer some of my questions about how she stays optimistic while living with Parkinson's. Here's what she had to say:

Lianna Marie: Can you share a little about yourself, your background, and when you were first diagnosed with Parkinson's disease?

Gunilla Beard: I grew up in Sweden and moved to the US during my career in IT. I'm a single mom with a son who is in high school. I was diagnosed in 2024 at the age of 56. I now realize I had symptoms several years before, and my symptoms are triggered by stress.

LM: How has Parkinson's changed your daily life, and what strategies have you developed to adapt and thrive?

GB: I've changed my exercise routines, tweaked my diet a bit, and improved my sleep habits. Mainly, I've added new types of exercise and exercise more hours. I've also added activities for cognitive health. My strategy is that I consider fighting Parkinson's my new job, and my daily schedule is arranged so I can best do that.

LM: What helps you stay optimistic and maintain a positive outlook, even on challenging days?

GB: I thrive the more information I have, so my first step was to learn about Parkinson's, and I'm grateful for all the resources available. Starting carbidopa/levodopa was positive for me because it melted away the pain and stiffness I had suffered in my shoulders for years. It also improved my balance, coordination, and sleep and allowed me to do more activities, including more intense exercise.

The Parkinson's support groups online and in real life are inspiring. I must say I've never been as motivated to stick to healthy habits as now — nothing like an incurable disease diagnosis to give you that clear prioritization to live your best life now! On challenging days, I'm now kinder to myself and allow myself to rest, while I would have just pushed through in the past. Tomorrow is a new day.

"Don't be afraid to try medication; our bodies need dopamine to function. Exercise every day. Get out of your house. Spend time in nature. Spend time with other people. Laugh!"

LM: Who or what in your life has been your greatest source of support, and how have they impacted your journey?

GB: My son is amazing and supportive of everything I do! All my exercising and other activities take time, but he is understanding and cheers me on. I try to surround myself with friends who lift me up, not those who suggest I limit myself prematurely. I had one such friend, upon hearing my diagnosis, ask if I would stop traveling now. Of course not! Traveling the world is my passion; I will keep doing that for as long as possible. I have a very long bucket list and a new sense of urgency to check things off that list. Dreaming of and planning those trips or events keeps me motivated.

LM: Are there any personal goals or achievements that you've been especially proud of since your diagnosis?

GB: I'm proud that I started taking Improv classes. It is so far out of my comfort zone, but that's precisely why I'm doing it! For cognitive health, we need to learn new and challenging things. Improv trains my brain to come up with things to say fast and speak loud enough for the audience to hear. It's also social, and we laugh a lot, so the dopamine is flowing.

Gunilla with her son, Janus, at a Ninja Café in Japan shortly after diagnosis

LM: What advice would you give to someone who has recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease?

GB: Allow yourself to feel sad, but don't dwell on "why me?" Join support groups and learn about Parkinson's from them, as well as credible resources like the APDA and the Parkinson's Foundation. Know that there are many different types of support groups, so don't worry if the first doesn't feel right, and find one that fits you.

Our local Rock Steady Boxing group in Seattle and The Parkinson's Fight Club on Facebook are my favorites. Don't be afraid to try medication; our bodies need dopamine to function. Exercise every day. Get out of your house. Spend time in nature. Spend time with other people. Laugh! I watch a lot of comedy shows. If you have issues with sleep, talk to your care team to find a solution because quality of sleep is critical.

LM: Why do you think it's important for people to learn more about Parkinson's disease, and how do you contribute to raising awareness?

GB: Before my diagnosis, I didn't know anything about Parkinson's other than it makes you shake, and I had heard about Michael J. Fox and Muhammad Ali. I don't have any relatives or friends with Parkinson's.

When freshly diagnosed, I was initially devastated until I took a deep dive into all the information available online. After a few weeks, I re-emerged, empowered with a toolkit for impacting my personal journey, slowing down the progress, and maximizing my quality of life.

I am very grateful for all the information that's out there. My responsibility is to share what I know and encourage others in our community. If there is an opportunity, I will participate in research studies, but so far, I haven't found a match that fits my specific demographic.

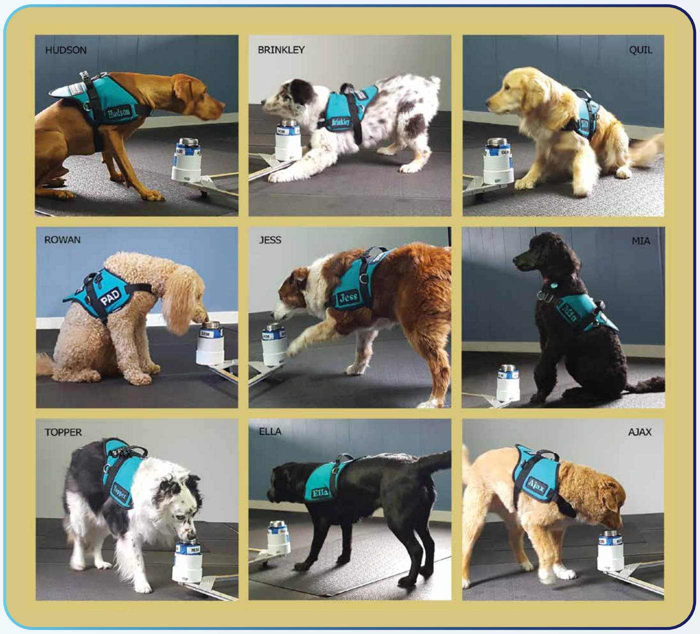
I try to attend events and donate to APDA and other organizations. In my sphere, I have opted to tell friends in person on a need-to-know basis rather than make an announcement on social media. I prefer to let them see that I'm still the same person and be able to explain a bit about how it's affecting me if they are interested.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fun Facts About Parkinson's and APDA Northwest

By **Katie Freeman, MSW**

Parkinson's Alert Dogs: A dog can be trained to detect Parkinson's through smell, with a 90% accuracy rate. PADs For Parkinson's, an organization originally based in Friday Harbor, WA, was the first program to train Parkinson's Alert Dogs (PADs). Now based in Maison-Alfort, France, the program hopes that their PADs can assist with early detection and diagnosis of PD.

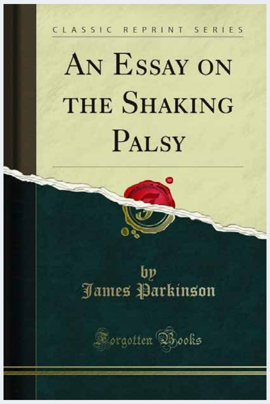


The Nose Knows: Anosmia, or loss of smell can be one of the earliest signs of Parkinson's. Another early sign? Micrographia, or small handwriting.

The Doctor is in: There are more than 30 established movement disorder specialists in the Northwest. These neurologists are fellowship trained to treat Parkinson's and other movement disorders. The Northwest is also training the movement disorder specialists of the future through fellowship programs at University of Washington and Oregon Health & Sciences University

Clinical Trials: In the United States, there are currently 136 active clinical research studies on Parkinson's. Approximately 56% of these studies are investigating symptomatic treatments for PD, while 44% are trying to find disease-modifying treatments.

Ancient History: Scholars believe that one of the very first descriptions of Parkinson's Disease comes from a 3,000 year old Ayurvedic medical text. This text identifies a disease marked by tremor, slow movement and drooling. Remarkably, the recommended treatment for this condition contained velvet beans (*mucuna pruriens)*, which are rich in L-Dopa. 2800 years later, the disease was renamed to recognize the work of Dr. James Parkinson's, physician and author of *Essay on the Shaking Palsy*.



CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

AN ESSAY ON THE SHAKING PALSY

by
James Parkinson

Forgotten Books

The APDA Northwest Chapter:

APDA Northwest was founded in Seattle in 1984. Originally our chapter just covered the state of Washington, but we've been able to greatly expand our reach in the last 40 years. Now we serve the Parkinson's community in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho and Montana.

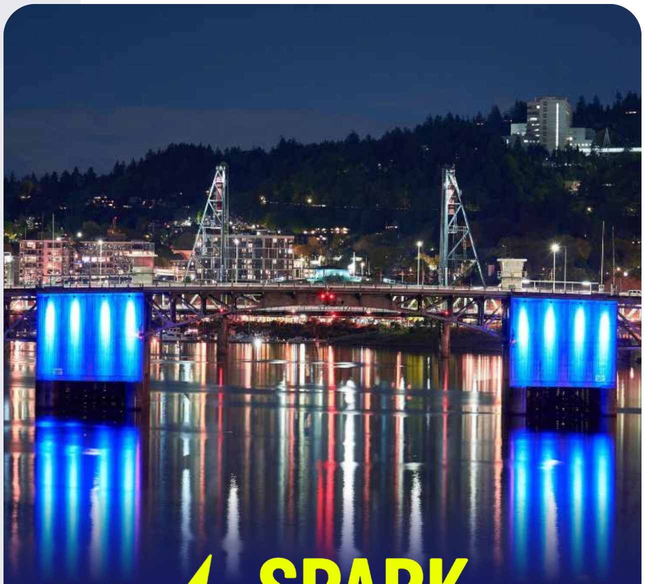
For most of our history, APDA Northwest has been run by volunteers. Thanks to the support of the local community, we now have five fulltime staff members and are hoping to hire two more by the end of 2025.

The Northwest has some of the best and most generous volunteers in the country. Our Optimism Walk teams are consistently some of the highest fundraisers across all APDA chapters. In 2024, our walkers raised over $250,000 for Parkinson's research, support and education programming.

APDA Northwest funds the Washington State Parkinson Disease registry, which helps clinical researchers connect with the local PD community to recruit participants for their research trials.

In 2023, APDA Northwest held YOPD-CON, the country's first in-person education and support conference for people with Young-Onset Parkinson's Disease. This conference was so successful that we're going to offer it again on October 25th and 26th in downtown Seattle.

Katie Freeman, MSW, is a social worker and APDA Northwest's Manager of Programs and Community Engagement. They support Parkinson's caregivers by facilitating support groups, offering one-on-one consultations, leading educational programs, and providing information and referral services.



SPARK THE NIGHT

April 11 each year marks World Parkinson's Day. Though this day remains crucial, focusing on the night draws attention to the hidden struggles of Parkinson's—when isolation, anxiety, and loneliness often feel most overwhelming. But within this darkness, we find a guiding light: the enduring hope that promises a brighter tomorrow.

"Spark the Night" represents a mission to illuminate cities worldwide in unity and support for the 11.8 million people living with Parkinson's. On April 11, each blue light shines as a symbol of a story, a voice, and an unwavering commitment to a better future for those affected by the disease.

For more information about Spark the Night, visit www.worldparkinsonsnight.com

MAGIC OF HOPE

GALA & AUCTION BENEFITING APDA

The Magic of Hope Gala and Auction was held on Saturday, March 8th. This year's theme was STRENGTH – because strength is what unites us. There is strength in numbers, in compassion, and in the power of community. Strength isn't just about the fight against Parkinson's Disease, it's about the people who stand beside each other through every step of the journey.

Over 300 guests mingled, celebrated, and gave generously!
The event raised over $580,000, paying for vital support, education, resources, and research.

CELEBRATING OUR OPTIMISM AWARD WINNERS

The annual Optimism Awards recognize individuals who embody APDA's tagline, "Strength in optimism. Hope in progress." These honorees were nominated by their PD community for their meaningful contributions and making an impact through support, education, wellness, and/or research. At the Magic of Hope Gala we celebrated these extraordinary people who are demonstrating hope and optimism while inspiring others through their every day actions.

Diane Hutchins

Optimism Award –
Community Member

Living with Parkinson's since 2005, Diane is passionate about raising awareness about PD. She has been a devoted community advocate for Parkinson's, always willing to tell her story – speaking with legislators, the press, and others living with this disease. Diane has also de dicated herself to participating in research studies to support scientists in learning more about the mysteries of PD.

Diane has been instrumental in building and fostering the PD community in the greater Olympia, WA, area by bringing people together and making herself available to those seeking local resources and support. She is known for her sense of humor, genuinely optimistic outlook, and passion for helping others.

Diane has facilitated a local support group for many years, creating a warm and welcoming space with her positivity, gentle presence, and inspirational energy.

As one member of her support group recounts on his first time meeting Diane, "I didn't know a person in the room until she approached and greeted me. She proudly wore a t-shirt with the statement, 'I have Parkinson's Disease. What's YOUR excuse?' across the front. I knew at that moment that this was the support group for me."

Thank you, Diane, for your hope and optimism and your commitment to making a positive impact on our Parkinson's community. APDA Northwest is honored to recognize you as this year's Community Member Optimism Award recipient.

Heidi Bowen & Cheryl Remington

Optimism Award –
Service Provider

Heidi and Cheryl are the heart of NeuroFit in Auburn, Washington. Designed for people with Parkinson's, this thriving, growing program provides a well-rounded exercise and maintenance program. They specialize in helping PwPs address the unique challenges faced by individuals with Parkinson's, including essential body movement, balance, strength, and cognitive tasks.

Participants love Heidi and Cheryl because they understand Parkinson's and tailor their program to each individual's needs. Their warmth and compassion provide the foundation for PWPs to learn and grow in their skills.

Heidi and Cheryl go beyond the textbook definition of strength in optimism and hope in progress. They both have a special way of showing their unwavering support and understanding of each person while being able to push and hold participants accountable at the same time. Their dedication and commitment to participants' progress and well-being are exceptional and unmatched. Many PwPs in their class talk about their infectious optimism; "They cheer us on, so we cheer each other on."

As one of their participants said, "Heidi and Cheryl have shown me that I can do things that I didn't think I could do. They have supported me in my weaknesses and helped make them into strengths. They have restored my hope in myself and my health. Honestly, I don't know where I would be today without them."

On behalf of APDA Northwest, we'd like to thank Heidi and Cheryl for all they have done to help our Parkinson's community stay active and optimistic. We are honored to recognize you both as this year's Service Provider Optimism Award recipients

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Exercise and Parkinson's: Movement is Medicine

Exercise plays a crucial role in managing Parkinson's disease (PD), offering benefits that extend far beyond general health improvements. While staying physically active is important for everyone, it is especially vital for people with PD because it can potentially slow disease progression (debatable in humans), improve mobility, and enhance overall quality of life.

Exercise and Brain Chemistry: A Dopamine Boost

Parkinson's disease is characterized by a loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain, which leads to motor symptoms such as tremors, stiffness, and difficulty with movement. Research has shown that high-intensity aerobic exercise can help preserve these neurons and even enhance dopamine signaling.

A **study** (1) conducted at Yale University found that participants who engaged in six months of consistent, high-intensity exercise exhibited stronger dopamine signals. This suggests that physical activity promotes neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to adapt and reorganize itself. Neuroplasticity is particularly important for people with PD, as it can help compensate for lost neurons and maintain better movement control.

Exercise and Levodopa Absorption

Levodopa is the most commonly prescribed medication for Parkinson's, as it replenishes dopamine levels and helps manage motor symptoms. The relationship between exercise and levodopa absorption is complex and varies from person to person. Some studies indicate that exercise may slow levodopa absorption in certain individuals, while others suggest it could enhance its effects by improving circulation and overall brain function.

This variability underscores the importance of tailoring exercise routines to each individual. People with PD should work with their doctors and physical therapists to find the right balance of exercise and medication to optimize symptom management.

Exercise Benefits Everyone—But Especially Those with Parkinson's

Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining good health, reducing the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, and improving mental well-being. For people with Parkinson's, exercise serves as a non-pharmaceutical tool that can mitigate symptoms, enhance mobility, and boost independence.

1. Improved Motor Function and Balance

One of the most significant challenges people with Parkinson's face is maintaining coordination, balance, and strength. Exercise—particularly activities that emphasize flexibility, strength training, and coordination—can help counteract the effects of muscle stiffness and tremors.

Studies have shown that specific types of exercise, such as tai chi, yoga, and dance, are particularly effective at improving motor function in people with PD. These activities enhance flexibility and proprioception (the body's ability to sense its position in space), which reduces the risk of falls and increases overall stability.

2. Cognitive Function and Brain Health

Parkinson's not only affects movement but also has cognitive effects, including difficulty with problem-solving, memory loss, and slower mental processing. Exercise has been shown to support brain health by promoting neurogenesis (the growth of new brain cells) and strengthening neural connections.

Aerobic exercise, in particular, increases blood flow to the brain, which can help potentially slow cognitive decline. Additionally, engaging in mentally stimulating exercises—such as learning new dance steps or following complex movement patterns—further supports cognitive function.

3. Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

Depression and anxiety are common among people with PD, often as a result of both the disease itself and the emotional toll of coping with a chronic condition. Exercise has been proven to be an effective mood booster by increasing the production of endorphins and serotonin—chemicals that promote feelings of happiness and reduce stress.

In addition to the physiological benefits, group exercise programs offer social interaction, which can combat feelings of isolation and provide emotional support. Many people with Parkinson's find that participating in community-based exercise programs helps them stay motivated and maintain a sense of purpose.

Conclusion

Exercise is more than just a way to stay fit—it is a critical tool in managing Parkinson's disease. From preserving dopamine-producing neurons to improving motor function and boosting mental well-being, regular physical activity offers countless benefits.

For those living with Parkinson's, movement is medicine. By incorporating consistent exercise into daily life, individuals can improve their quality of life, maintain their independence, and support their overall well-being.

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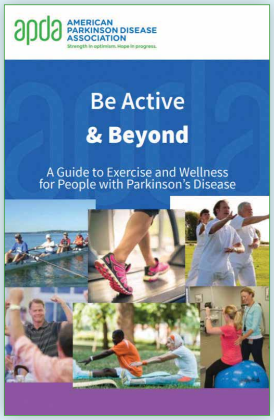
Source:
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10858031/

APDA NW Exercise Programs



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Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.

Be Active
& Beyond

A Guide to Exercise and Wellness for People with Parkinson's Disease

◂ Get the Booklet

The APDA Be Active and Beyond Booklet has some great ideas, photos, and explanations of exercises you can do at home. Email or call us and we can send you the booklet or download it at **apdaparkinson.org**.

Get Expert Advice

Contact the APDA Exercise Helpline: 888-606-1688 or rehab@bu.edu The licensed physical therapists at the APDA National Rehabilitation Center at Boston University can answer your questions about PD-specific exercises.

Community Exercise Programs

PD-specific community exercise classes like yoga, Rock Steady Boxing, and Pedaling for Parkinson's exist throughout APDA Northwest's 5-state region. We can help get you connected to a class in your area. Our website lists all known classes or you can give us a call and we can point you in the right direction.

Virtual Exercise Programs

APDA proudly funds FREE exercise and wellness classes via the Zoom platform. Find them at: **apdaparkinson.org/events**

Let's Keep Moving Series

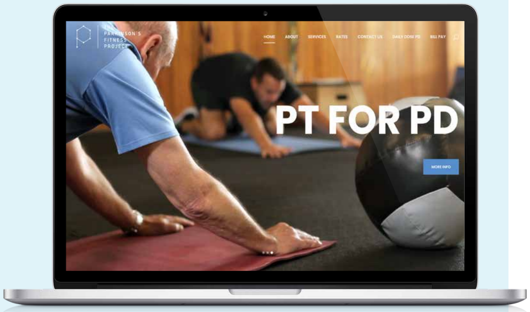
The APDA National Rehabilitation Center hosts an on-going series of short (20 minutes) fitness-focused sessions on a variety of topics. You can find the on the APDA YouTube channel

Parkinson's Training for Fitness Professionals

Exercise is a standard part of the treatment of PD, but not all fitness professionals are equipped with the information they need to safely and effectively work with people with PD. APDA has recognized this and developed an online training program to teach fitness professionals how to best meet the unique needs of those with PD

Other Exercise Programs in the Pacific Northwest

An online neurofitness training program that provides Parkinson's patients with structured exercise routines. This program features guided workouts from specialists who understand the unique challenges of Parkinson's. New videos are released weekly, ensuring that participants have fresh and engaging content to keep them motivated. By combining exercise science with Parkinson's-specific movements, the Daily Dose program helps individuals improve balance, coordination, and overall mobility. It also serves as a convenient option for those who may have difficulty attending in-person classes. The Parkinson's Fitness Project — **https://theparkinsonsfitnessproject.com**



The Exercise Prescription for Parkinson's Disease (PD)

Incorporating a well-rounded exercise regimen is essential for managing PD. The following exercise prescription encompasses four key components: aerobic exercise, resistance training, flexibility exercises, and neuromotor activities. This balanced approach aims to improve motor and non-motor symptoms, enhance overall function, and potentially slow disease progression.

	FITT (Fitness, Intensity, Time, Type) Recommendations			
	Aerobic	**Resistance**	**Flexibility**	**Neuromotor**
Frequency	3–4 days/week	2–3 days/week	2–3 days/week with daily being most effective	2–3 days/week
Intensity	High-intensity (80–85% HRmax) for mild – to – moderate PD; Moderate intensity (60–65% HRmax) for deconditioned individuals or those with more advanced PD; attempt to progress to 80%–85% HRmax	30%–60% of 1RM for beginners; 60–80% 1RM for advanced	Full extension, rotation, or stretch to the point of slight discomfort	N/A
Time	≥30 minutes accumulated high-intensity exercise (not including warm-up/cool down or rest intervals) Progress to total of 150 min/week	1–3 sets of 8–12 repetitions Progress to 2–3 hours/week	Hold static stretch for 10–30 s; 2–4 repetitions of each exercise	30–60 min
Type	Prolonged, rhythmic activities using large muscle groups (e.g., walking, running, cycling, swimming, rowing, elliptical)	Major muscle groups of upper and lower body – challenging all major muscle groups on nonconsecutive days. Avoid free weights for those in advanced disease stage, use weight machines, body weight, and resistance bands instead	Slow static stretches for all major muscle groups working on increasing range of motion.	Exercises involving motor skills (e.g., balance, agility, coordination, gait, dual tasks), multidirectional step training, and instability training

*HRmax = maximum heart rate; 1RM = one repetition maximum

Source = **pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11091645/table/jpd-14-jpd230277-t001**

HOPE IN PROGRESS

How AI Is Revolutionizing Parkinson's Research

By **Lianna Marie** & **Dr. Rebecca Gilbert**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is significantly impacting Parkinson's disease research by enabling earlier detection through analysis of patient data like neuroimaging scans, movement patterns from video recordings, and even subtle changes in speech. This allows for potential earlier interventions and better disease monitoring while also helping researchers identify novel biomarkers and develop more targeted treatment strategies.

Key ways AI is impacting Parkinson's research:

Early Diagnosis: AI algorithms can analyze MRI scans or other neuroimaging data to identify subtle brain abnormalities associated with Parkinson's disease, potentially leading to earlier diagnosis than traditional methods.

Severity Assessment: By analyzing video recordings of patients' movements, AI can objectively assess the severity of Parkinson's symptoms, providing a more accurate and consistent way to track disease progression.

Biomarker Identification: AI can analyze large datasets of patient information to identify potential new biomarkers that could be used to predict disease onset or monitor treatment efficacy.

Personalized Treatment Plans: AI can analyze individual patient data to develop personalized treatment plans, tailoring medication dosages or therapies based on their specific needs.

Remote Monitoring: AI-powered wearable devices can monitor movement patterns and other symptoms in real-time, allowing for remote patient monitoring and timely adjustments to treatment plans.

Drug Discovery: AI can be used to analyze vast amounts of molecular data to identify potential drug targets for Parkinson's disease.

AI-powered gait analysis: Analyzing video footage of a patient's gait to detect subtle changes in movement patterns indicative of Parkinson's.

Speech analysis: Using AI to identify changes in speech patterns that could be early indicators of Parkinson's.

Deep brain stimulation optimization: AI algorithms can optimize the settings of deep brain stimulation devices based on individual patient data.

Overall, AI holds great promise for advancing research in Parkinson's disease by providing more accurate diagnosis, better disease monitoring, and potential for developing new treatment strategies, ultimately improving the quality of life for patients.

Sources:
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articlesPMC11502371
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articlesPMC11224934

How APDA is using AI in Research

Dr. Mata from the Cleveland Clinic Foundation uses machine learning to predict who will develop dyskinesias. Learn more about his research here: *https://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/investigators/ignacio-mata-phd*

Dr. Ning from The Regents of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, uses machine learning to analyze brain networks in PD and understand why disruption of movement and cognition occurs in PD. Learn more about her research here: *https://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/investigators/yuxiao-ning-phd*

Dr. Roemmich, from the Hugo W. Moser Research Institute at Kennedy Krieger, Baltimore, Maryland, uses pose estimation, which is an AI tool that models where joints are in space. The goal is to create a method of monitoring motor symptoms of PD via video visits.

Learn more about his research here:

- *https://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/investigators/ryan-roemmich-phd*
- *Article published from this work: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10965062/pdf/pdig.0000467.pdf*

Dr. Guan, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, uses machine learning to predict PD based on voice recordings.

Learn more about her research here:

- *https://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/investigators/yuanfang-guan*
- *Article published from this work: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8763910/pdf/42003_2022_Article_3002.pdf*

Rebecca Gilbert, MD, PhD joined APDA in 2018, bringing a wealth of practical experience in diagnosing and treating Parkinson's disease, a strong background in the science behind PD, and a fundamental understanding of the challenges of living with PD. Rebecca plays a key role in developing APDA's long term mission strategy, oversees APDA's research portfolio and provides medical and clinical expertise to support APDA programming and educational content.

Lianna Marie served as her mother's caregiver and advocate for over 20 years through the many stages of Parkinson's disease. She currently serves as APDA's Regional Director of Marketing and Communications and spends her free time writing books to help the Parkinson's community worldwide.

Cover Art Featured Artist: Jeremy Likness

By Jeremy Likness

In 2020, the cosmos decided to throw me a curveball. Not only did we go into lockdown (thanks to COVID-19), but the same week I started a new job, I was also diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease (PD). Quite the plot twist, right? However, the joke is on PD and the pandemic because I'm still in that job five years later and snapping shots of jaw-dropping deep space objects in the distant universe. Coincidence? I think not.

Astrophotography is not just about pointing your camera at the sky and hoping for the best. It's more like planning a mission to Mars. First, you must pick your celestial target – the moon, a distant galaxy, or my all-time favorite, a nebula. Once that's sorted, it's time to align my telescope with a precision that would make NASA proud. We're talking due north, star tracking, and the works. When it works.

Then comes the fun part - guiding. Picture a secondary telescope and camera duo, keeping a hawk-eyed watch on the stars and nudging the mount to adjust for Earth's rotation. With this trusty setup, I take long five-minute exposures through special filters that only let in a sliver of the light spectrum – the elite club known as "narrowband." Hours of exposures accumulate, and thanks to a nifty algorithm, I align and stack these images to boost the signal-to-noise ratio. Finally, after some additional processing magic, these cosmic masterpieces are ready to share on social media. For the ones that turn out nicely, I go the extra mile to make a fine art print.

> **Life is like going up the down escalator: if you stand still, you fall behind. So when people ask me what I do, I don't respond, "I live with Parkinson's every day." Instead, I share this: "I create."**
>
> JEREMY LIKNESS

The most amazing compliment I received was when someone said, "That should be in National Geographic." It is rewarding to get such a strong response for something I do on the roof of my garage. My goal with my art is simple: I want to capture those magic moments many people don't get to experience and share how uniquely wonderful the creation we live in truly is.

I do everything I can to evoke the "WOW" I feel when I stare at the heavens. But let's not forget the curveball. Parkinson's disease has been my unwelcome sidekick, making many days feel like running a marathon in quicksand. Tremors and freezing in my left hand, arm, and foot make typing or having fine motor control a Herculean task some days. Enter speech-to-text and AI – my trusty allies in this battle. Stress? It's like fueling the fire, so I find solace in planning my astro-adventures. Just sitting down to plot my next photograph feels like reclaiming my power.

Setting up my gear in stunning locations – atop a bluff, by the ocean, or beneath a total solar eclipse – gives me light exercise and a sense of serenity under the night sky. Whether I capture a stellar shot or not, the experience is its own reward. Processing these images is a labor of love, spending countless nights fine-tuning them. With multiple telescopes and adapters, it often feels like solving a cosmic jigsaw puzzle, but finding the right pieces is incredibly satisfying. And on the good days, when my hands obey, the joy of making those micro-adjustments to the telescope is unparalleled.

Apathy is the real nemesis, described as a car with a dead ignition – no push, no go. But the glow of the moon can light up even the darkest corners of my mind, inspiring me to tackle the tasks I often neglect. Art does more than soothe the soul; it empowers.

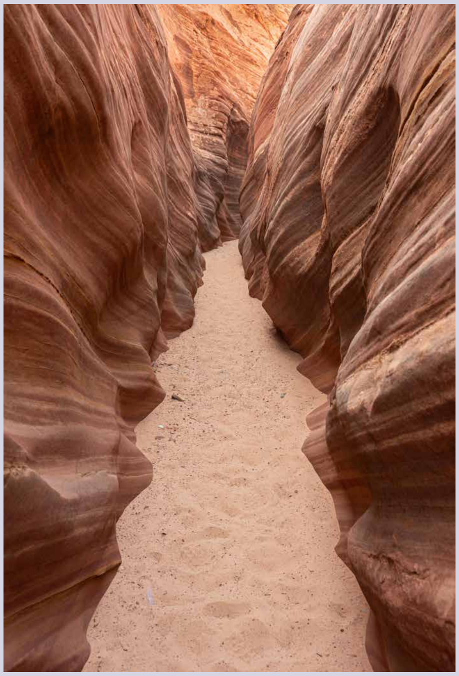
For those of us with Parkinson's, it's easy to dwell on what the disease takes away – our cells, expressions, control, freedom, and dignity. But art gives us a creative outlet, a reminder that despite the odds, we are still creators. And in that, Parkinson's loses some of its power over us.

CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS: Art from the APDA NW Community

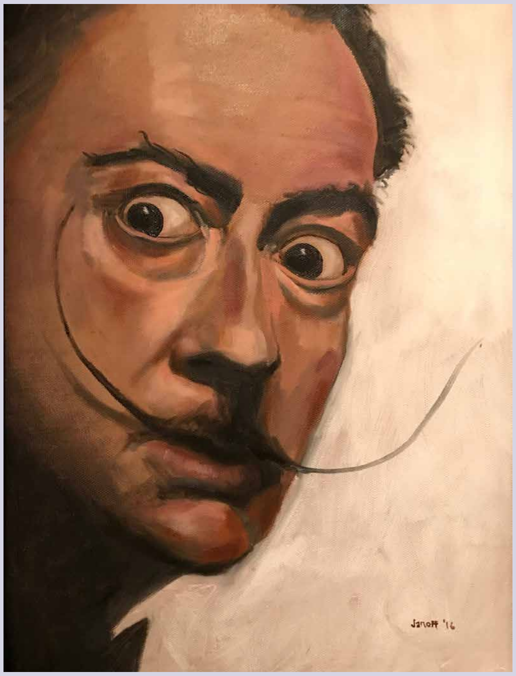
Do you like to draw, paint, or take photographs? Are you a cartoonist or poetry master? If so, we'd love to share your work here!

Email apdanw@apdaparkinson.org with your creative submission today!

Mountain in New Zealand, Oil painting by **Michael Willingham**



Big Canyon Escalante Utah, Photo by **Jim Streeter**



Dalí, Painting by **Jeffrey Janoff**

Felt art by **Michael St. John**

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