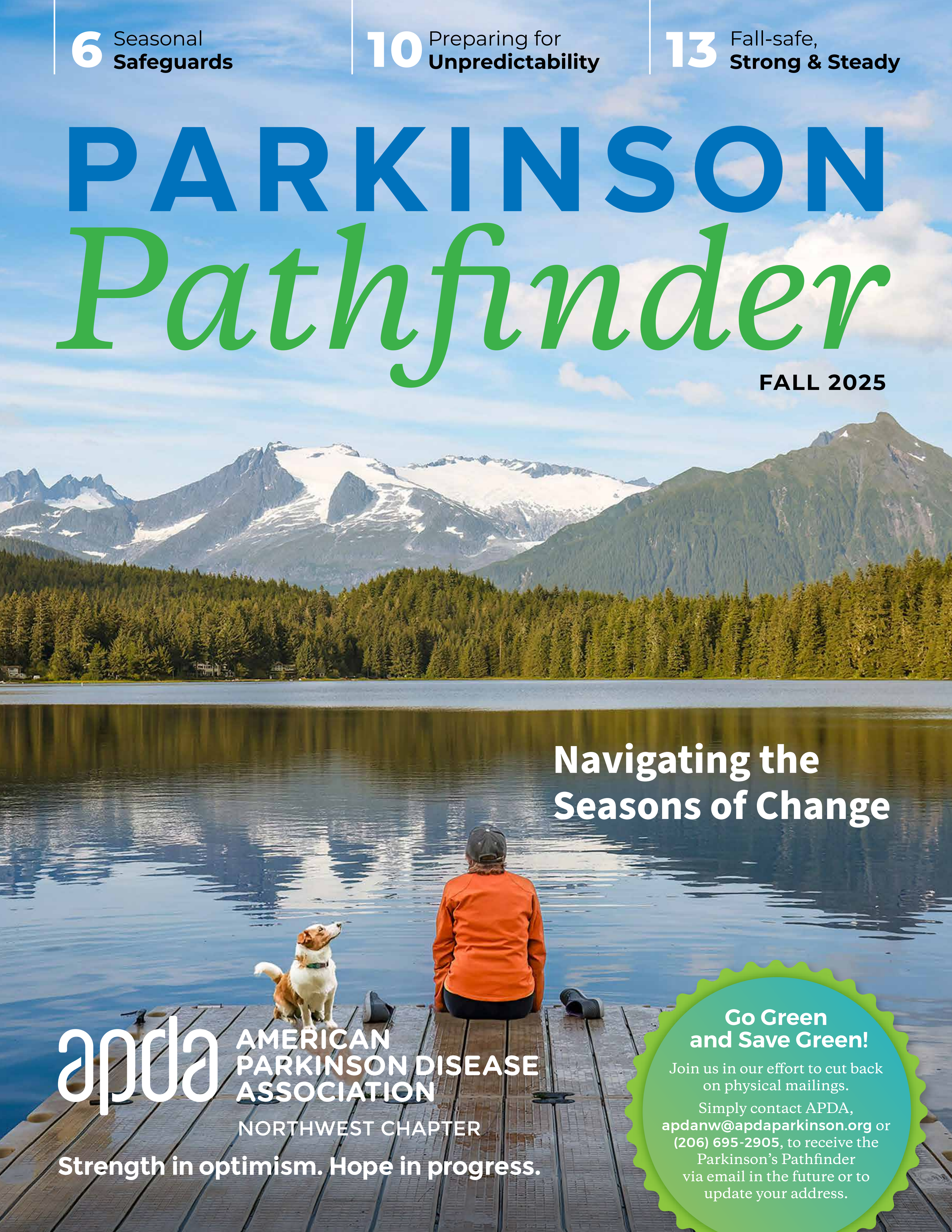
PARKINSON *Pathfinder*

FALL 2025



Navigating the Seasons of Change

AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.

Go Green and Save Green!

Join us in our effort to cut back on physical mailings.

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.

FALL 2025

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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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COVER
Kerry Howard. Read Kerry's story on page 2.

As you consider your year-end giving, I invite you to have a real and immediate impact.

As we move into a new season, I'm reminded that life with Parkinson's—much like the changing landscape—brings shifts both expected and unexpected. Through these changes, resilience shines in the ways you adapt, persevere, and continue moving forward. And while the seasons may shift, one thing stays constant: you are not alone. Your PD community is here with you.

This issue explores what it means to navigate change. You'll find personal reflections on embracing resilience and finding humor in the unpredictable. You'll read about promising research that is opening new pathways for understanding and treating Parkinson's. You'll see the power of people coming together by sharing experiences, lifting each other up, and finding ways to live well today.

As we look ahead, our commitment is strong: to be here for every person and every family navigating Parkinson's—today, tomorrow, and in all the seasons to come. But we can't do it alone. The need is growing, and the demand for connection, information, and support is greater than ever.

As you consider your year-end giving, I invite you to have a **real and immediate** impact. A gift to APDA is a gift to the PD community and helps ensure that no one has to face Parkinson's alone.

Your generosity fuels:

- **Support and connection** for those newly diagnosed and wondering where to turn.
- **Education and empowerment** to help people make informed decisions about their care.
- **Wellness programs** that enhance daily quality of life.
- **Innovative research** that accelerates progress toward better treatments and ultimately a cure.

These programs are often threads that help hold people steady in a time of change, with renewed strength, enriched connection, and enduring hope. APDA is here to remind you that even as everything shifts, support and community remain.

With gratitude through every season,

Kirsten Richards

Kirsten Richards
Executive Director

Navigating the Seasons of Change: **Embracing Resilience with Parkinson's**

An interview with **Kerry Howard**

When were you diagnosed, and what 'season changes' have defined your Parkinson's journey so far?

I was officially diagnosed in 2016, although symptoms showed up earlier. At first, I had a long honeymoon with few symptoms that bothered me. But, when tremors became constant, medication was ineffective, and doing what I loved became hard, my doctor recommended deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery.

Getting DBS was definitely a season change. Unfortunately, unlike most people, DBS made my symptoms worse. Ultimately, it was determined that I needed a second DBS surgery a year later. That was another season change. Thankfully that second surgery was successful. Through it all, I discovered strength I didn't know I had, made possible by the love and support of my husband, family and friends.

> **I've learned that support looks different for everyone. Sometimes it's not dinner out, but just a visit or a short walk together.**

What has been the most significant challenge you've faced recently, and how has it impacted your daily life, identity, or relationships?

My most significant recent challenge is undergoing a third surgery to implant a pulse generator into my spinal cord, in hopes of finally addressing the intractable back pain that I've lived with for some time. It isn't related to Parkinson's, but it's a reminder that my Parkinson's continues to progress alongside other health issues that come with age. Having Parkinson's doesn't mean it's the only health issue I may face. It takes courage, hope and strength to continue to keep trying new treatments and, most importantly, to keep showing up for life.

Who or what connections have sustained you—care partner, family, friends, clinicians, peer groups—and how have they helped?

I'm lucky to have friends who understood how tough these last years have been—and they stayed. My family of fellow Parkinson's patients and Rock Steady Boxers have kept me encouraged. I've also learned that support looks different for everyone. Sometimes it's not dinner out, but just a visit or a short walk together.

Which strategies, therapies, or habits have made the biggest difference, and what didn't help as much as people might think?

For me, nothing has lifted my spirits quite like regular, consistent exercise—from Rock Steady Boxing to a walk or hike—consistent exercise has lifted my spirits more than anything. Walking has the added benefit of getting me outside to enjoy something I love—taking photos and immersing myself nature. Since my second DBS surgery, I've faced new challenges with speech and balance, and I'm grateful for the local resources that help me manage those. I've become more mindful of nutrition, though no single diet has made a dramatic difference, I know fueling my body well matters. And when it comes to back pain, bodywork has been one of the most effective forms of temporary relief that I've found.

When life shifts, how do you replenish resilience?

For me, resilience has been less about bouncing back and more about learning to bend. Living with Parkinson's for the past ten years has humbled me, stretched me, and often exhausted me. I replenish resilience by giving myself grace, leaning on the people who love me, and finding moments of beauty and meaning, even on the darkest days.

As you look ahead, what goal are you moving toward, and who's on your 'resilience team' to help you get there?

As I look ahead, I've learned not to set grand, unreachable goals. Honestly, what I would love more than anything is simply the gift of a normal day or week or year—one that feels steady and ordinary. Living with Parkinson's has changed what "normal" means for me, but that longing remains. My team is the circle of people who help me keep moving forward—family, friends, and the medical professionals who support me—but those quiet moments of grace and patience that remind me that even in the midst of struggle, life still holds meaning.

Kerry Howard, born in Colorado, built a pioneering career in natural resource management, earning degrees from the University of Colorado and Oregon State. She served as a forester, researcher, and later Director of Alaska's Habitat Division. Now retired, she enjoys photography, writing, and volunteering with the Humane Society.

Making Hope Possible

APDA Supports Innovative Scientists and Breakthrough Discoveries

This past September, APDA proudly announced $4.04 million in new funding for cutting-edge Parkinson's disease (PD) research – representing a 55% increase in research funding from the previous year. These new awards support a remarkable group of scientists, each dedicated to advancing our understanding of PD and finding innovative ways to diagnose, treat, and ultimately prevent the disease.

This impressive amount does not include a new, specially designated allocation of grant funding for recent APDA researchers who lost funding from other sources this year. These researchers applied for APDA bridge funding to help them continue their critical work, and the final decisions on these grants will be announced by early October.

Committed to funding the next generation of Parkinson's researchers

These grants — including Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Research Grants, and the prestigious George C. Cotzias Fellowship — reflect APDA's ongoing commitment to funding bold ideas and nurturing the next generation of PD researchers. The research spans basic laboratory discoveries, new therapeutic strategies, and studies designed to improve quality of life for people living with PD.

With nearly one million people living with PD in the U.S. and approximately 90,000 new diagnoses each year (one every six minutes), the need for innovative research has never been greater. APDA focuses on supporting early-career scientists and those new to PD research, providing them with the crucial early funding to generate pilot data and compete for major grants from agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

For the sixth consecutive year, APDA has funded a dedicated Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Grant to better understand how PD affects underrepresented groups and to improve care for people from all communities.

Announcing Grants to Support Social Science

This year also marks the first year of APDA's Social Science Research Grants, a new funding category designed to support innovative projects that address the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of Parkinson's disease. These grants expand APDA's long-standing research portfolio by investing not only in biomedical discoveries but also in the social science approaches that help us better understand patient and caregiver experiences, reduce stigma, and improve quality of life.

All funding decisions are made through APDA's rigorous, competitive application process overseen by the Scientific Advisory Board – a panel of distinguished experts from across the PD research spectrum. Each grant is evaluated and selected with extreme care, with awards going to only the most meritorious projects.

2025 Funded Researchers

The George C. Cotzias Fellowship

APDA's most prestigious grant is awarded to a young physician-scientist with exceptional promise who is establishing a career in research, teaching, and clinical care relevant to Parkinson's. The award spans three years and is designed to support career development and fund a long-range project focused on PD. This year's awardee is:

Gaurav Chattree, MD
The Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University
Project: *Developing Novel Therapeutic Strategies for Pathologic Circuits in Parkinson's Disease*

By pinpointing the specific brain cells that malfunction in PD, Dr. Chattree aims to create targeted therapies that restore function and reduce side effects, addressing both movement and cognitive problems.

Post-Doctoral Fellowships

These fellowships are awarded to support postdoctoral scientists who have recently completed their PhD work and whose research holds promise for providing new insights into the pathophysiology, etiology, and treatment of PD. This year's awardees are:

Sammy Alhassen, PhD
The Regents of the University of California, Los Angeles; Project: *Circuit Mechanisms of Prefrontal Cognitive Impairments in Parkinson's Disease Mouse Models*

Michael Almeida, PhD
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Project: *The Role of CHIP Dysfunction in a-Synuclein Pathology: Mechanisms and Therapeutic Strategies for Parkinson's Disease*

Julita Chlebowicz, PhD
Weill Medical College of Cornell University; Project: *Synaptic Vvesicle Lipid Dyshomeostasis in Synucleinopathies*

Matthew Keeney, PhD
Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc.; Project: *Dissecting the Impact of PD-relevant Stressors on RNA-binding Protein Biology in Tractable iPSC Synucleinopathy Models*

Nirmal Kumar, PhD
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; Project: *Synaptojanin-1 and VPS35 Interaction in Presynaptic Vulnerability*

Maria Olivero-Acosta, PhD
Yale University; Project: *Antisense Oligonucleotide Downregulation of Pathologic circRNA Profiles in SNCA Triplication Midbrain Organoid Models*

Letizia Zanetti, PhD
The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York; Project: *Investigating Neuroinflammation in a Novel PrknR275W Mouse Model of PD*

Aryeh Zolin, PhD
Weill Medical College of Cornell University; Project: *Trans-synaptic Propagation of Alpha-synuclein Aggregates in Vivo From Genetically Select Neural Populations*

Research Grants

These grants are awarded to investigators performing innovative PD research at major academic institutions across the United States. This year's awardees are:

Jessica Butts, PhD
William Marsh Rice University; Project: *Characterizing the Cellular Heterogeneity of the PPtg Using a Novel Marker – Spx*

Peter Chung, PhD
University of Southern California (USC); Project: *Exploring the Role of Lipid Droplets in a-Synuclein Binding and Multimerization*

Benjamin Clayton, PhD
Case Western Reserve University – School of Medicine; Project: *Modulating Pathological Astrocytes to Promote Neuroprotection in PD*

Laura Cox, PhD
Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc. Project: *Investigating Immunologic Mechanisms by Which Alistipes Contributes to PD Pathogenesis*

Robert Heuermann, PhD
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis; Project: *Pain as a Nonmotor Symptom in Parkinson Disease: Exploring the Role of the Amygdala*

Gary Ho, PhD
Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc. Project: *Palmitoylation of the Glucocerebrosidase Receptor LIMP2 and Regulation of Alpha-synuclein Homeostasis*

Valery Krizhanovsky, PhD
Weizmann Institute of Science Project: *The Role of Senescent Microglia in Parkinson Disease*

Zechuan Lin, PhD
Yale University; Project: *Translating GWAS Into Target Genes for Parkinson's*

Jonathan Lovell, PhD
The Research Foundation for The SUNY on behalf of University at Buffalo Project: a-Synuclein Active Immunotherapy With pS129 Nanoliposomes

Mariana Monje, MD, PhD
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine; Project: *Elucidating GPNMB Endolysosomal Localization and Implications for Parkinson's Disease*

Abby Olsen, PhD
University of Pittsburgh; Project: *Validating Ak1 as a Therapeutic Target in a Mammalian PD Model*

Abid Oueslati, PhD
Laval University (Université Laval, Québec); Project: *Targeting Early-Stage a-Synuclein Aggregation for Parkinson's Disease Therapeutics*

Darci Trader, PhD
The Regents of the University of California, Irvine; Project: *Degradation of alpha-Synuclein Oligomers via ByeTACs*

John Vaughen, PhD
The Regents of the University of California, San Francisco; Project: *Tracking GBA-dependent Lipids in Neurons and Glia Across Circadian Time*

Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Grant

This year's awardee is:

Michelle Fullard, PhD
University of Colorado Denver, AMC and DC; Project: *Improving Shared Decision Making for Women with Parkinson's Disease*

Inaugural Social Sciences in PD Research Grant:

The very first awardee of our Social Sciences in Parkinson's Research grant is:

Tim Passmore, PhD
Oklahoma State University; Project: *Advanced Recreational Therapy Balance/Fall-Prevention Program for Individuals with Parkinson's Disease in Small Cities*

Investing in Innovation: APDA Supports Next-Generation Parkinson's Research

With $4.04 million invested in this diverse portfolio of projects, APDA continues to push the boundaries of Parkinson's research. Each of these scientists brings fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, moving us closer to more effective treatment, diagnosis, and prevention options.

Tips & Takeaways

APDA's commitment to advancing scientific discovery has never been stronger, with a 55% increase in research funding this year.

New this year, the Social Sciences in PD Research Grants category has been created to support innovative projects that address the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of Parkinson's disease

Learn more about APDA's new grantees and the exciting work they are doing, and browse all APDA-funded research by visiting **www.apdaparkinson.org/research**.

Researchers and physicians who are interested in applying for APDA funding can visit **www.apdaparkinson.org/research** for more information. Letters of Intent for the next grant cycle can be submitted beginning November 2025, with a deadline of January 30, 2026.

Those who want to support APDA's critical research efforts with a donation can do so by visiting **https://www.apdaparkinson.org/community/northwest/donate**

Seasonal Safeguards: Tips for Getting Ready for Winter

By the **Anchorage Support Group**


Kim and Gary Busse from Anchorage

Stay Connected & Support Your Mood

- **Keep moving, socially:** Schedule weekly "make-a-date" moments—coffee or lunch with friends/family, phone check-ins, game/card nights, faith gatherings, PD support events. Give each other permission to call and set up "play dates."
- **Light + nature boosts:** Aim for 15 minutes of daylight most days (porch time counts). Explore year-round nurseries, indoor Saturday markets, and winter light shows for a lift.
- **Indoor movement communities:** Join PD boxing, yoga, tai chi, or other classes at community centers, YMCAs, or local activity centers. Swimming is great if accessible.
- **Bonus tip:** Ask your care team about vitamin D if you're indoors more in winter.

Light Your Way (Home Lighting)

- **Brighten without the bill:** LED bulbs (soft or bright white) increase visibility and are energy-efficient—available at most hardware stores.
- **Night-path lighting:** Outlet cover lights (e.g., SnapPower-style) or plug-in LED **rope/strip lights** along the baseboard from bedroom to bathroom provide a gentle, always-on guide for night trips.
- **Hall/stair safety:** Add motion-sensing LEDs in hallways, stairs, and entryways to reduce fall risk.

Keep Moving Indoors (When It's Slick Outside)

- **Indoor walking loops:** Many community centers have rubberized indoor tracks. You can also walk laps in malls or large stores when sidewalks are icy.
- **At-home options:** Short movement "snacks" (5–10 minutes) throughout the day—stretching, a quick balance routine, or stationary cycling—help maintain mobility.

Getting Around (Transportation & Errands)

- **Prep the car early:** Winterize before the first storm. Use tires suited to your local conditions and regulations (e.g., all-weather with the three-peak mountain snowflake, or other winter-appropriate options). A trusted local shop can advise.
- **Emergency stash:** Keep gloves, hat, warm socks/boots, blanket, a small flashlight, and chargers in the car.
- **Safer in/out technique:** When entering/exiting, sit first, then pivot legs in/out; or take the first couple of steps sideways to clear the door frame and stabilize.
- **Use delivery & ride options:** When roads are bad or you're not up to driving, consider taxis, ride-share, grocery/meal/pharmacy delivery, or carpooling.
- **Warm-sole warning:** If your boots warmed up in the car, their outsoles may be slick when you step onto ice. Step carefully at first.

Home & Yard Prep

- **Before the freeze:** Bring in garden hoses and protect outdoor spigots to avoid pipe damage.
- **Snow services:** If you live where snowfall is heavy, consider a plowing/shoveling service—it's often worth it for safety and peace of mind.
- **Seasonal migration (if feasible):** Some people opt to spend part of winter in a warmer climate. If that's you, plan medication supplies, refills, and local support in advance.

Walking, Balance & Stability on Snow/Ice

- **Footwear first:** Choose winter boots with excellent traction (e.g., models with rubber compounds for ice). Add removable traction devices (e.g., Yaktrax-style) when conditions warrant; remove them indoors to protect floors and prevent tripping.
- **Hands free = safer:** Use a cross-body bag so both hands are available for balance. Carry indoor shoes/slippers to change into when you arrive.
- **Supportive devices:** Consider a cane with an ice-tip attachment or a heavy-duty outdoor walker with larger tires (e.g., Trionic-style). Retract or remove ice tips indoors.
- **Tech for safety:** Keep your phone on you. A wearable with fall detection (e.g., Apple Watch) can alert an emergency contact if you take a hard fall.

SAVE THE DATE

MAGIC OF HOPE

GALA & AUCTION BENEFITING APDA

OPTIMISM

Saturday, March 14, 2026 | 5:30 p.m.

Sheraton Grand Seattle — Washington

The Magic of Hope Gala & Auction is the American Parkinson Disease Association, Northwest Chapter's largest fundraising event of the year. In 2026, we're proudly celebrating 24 years of connection, generosity and impact.

This joyful celebration brings together a vibrant community of partners, supporters, and friends whom are all united by a shared commitment to improve the lives of those affected by Parkinson's disease. The evening features cocktails, raffles, dinner and an exciting silent and live auction.

At APDA, our tagline says it all: Strength in optimism. Hope in progress. For 2026, we are spotlighting OPTIMISM as our theme. We will be celebrating the extraordinary power of OPTIMISM which is more than a mindset, it's a force that drives progress, inspires hope, and brings us together.

Funds raised support APDA's mission to provide essential services, education, wellness programs, and groundbreaking research that help people with Parkinson's live life to the fullest.

Join us as we shine a spotlight on OPTIMISM and the persistence, possibility, and the belief that together, we can create meaningful change.

The Optimism Awards

Honoring Those Making a Difference in the Parkinson's Community

Every year, the American Parkinson Disease Association Northwest Chapter honors individuals who embody our tagline: "Strength in optimism. Hope in progress."

The Optimism Awards celebrate community members and service providers who make a meaningful impact on the lives of those affected by Parkinson's through support, education, wellness, or research. These awards spotlight extraordinary individuals who uplift the Parkinson's community and inspire hope for what's possible. Whether they are uplifting spirits, advancing understanding, or helping individuals live well with Parkinson's, these honorees inspire hope and demonstrate what's possible through compassion and dedication.

We are proud to present **two distinct awards each year** at our **Magic of Hope Gala & Auction**, honoring:

- **A Community Member** (a person with PD, caregiver, volunteer, donor, or advocate)
- **A Service Provider** (a healthcare professional or researcher in the Parkinson's space)

Nominations are now open! You can find more information at **apdaparkinson.org/NWOptimismAwards**. Nominations are due January 7.

Top: Heidi Bowen, Cheryl Remington, and Kirsten Richards; Bottom: Jake Whittenberg and Diane Hutchins

Please help us recognize and celebrate the extraordinary individuals who are demonstrating optimism through their important contributions to our Parkinson's community and providing inspiration and hope for all that can be achieved throughout our service area (Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho).

Winners will be contacted and invited to attend the Magic of Hope Gala and Auction where they will be awarded the 2026 Optimism Award.

2025 BUILDING COMMUNITY

Community is at the heart of everything we do at APDA. This year we made it official by adding it to our mission:

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

In 2025, we built community by delivering more programs than ever before, expanding our reach with new staff, and deepening the support and connections available to everyone.

Providing Support

- Care Partner Connection
- **Social Worker office hours**
- PRESS groups for newly diagnosed
- **PRESS ON groups for people facing advancing Parkinson's**
- Information & Referrals

PRESS™
Parkinson's Roadmap for Education and Support Services™

Strengthening Connections

- **Professionally-facilitated support groups**
- Quarterly Support Group Leader Forums and Trainings
- DBS Connect events
- **YOPD-CON for the Young-Onset Parkinson's community**

YOPD CON
CONNECTION OPPORTUNITY KNOWLEDGE

Empowering with Education

Parkinson Pathfinder magazine

Live Well conferences in North Seattle, South King County, Boise

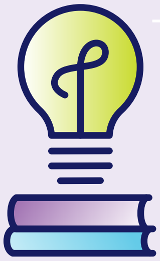
PD Essentials delivered virtually and in person

Beyond Medication Wellness Series

Power Up Your Voice

Caregiving Considerations – Positioning & Transfers

Cognitive Fitness



Parkinson's education days
Juneau (AK), Kitsap Peninsula (WA), Whatcom County (WA), Helena (MT), Bozeman (MT), Port Angeles (WA)

Driving Research

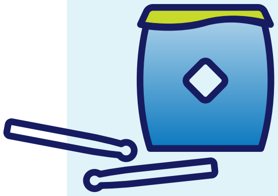
Invested $4M nationally for promising research

Fully funded the local Parkinson's Disease Research Registry — connecting potential study participants to local researchers, helping research happen faster

Informed our community of research studies with open enrollment

Encouraging Wellness

Connecting through Art



- Painting
- Improv
- Mosaics
- Taiko Drumming

Free exercise classes, in person and virtual

Healthy Aging & Senior Health Fairs

Amplifying Outreach

Community presentations

Corporate Lunch & Learns

Parkinson's 101 for medical professionals and senior living communities

Optimism Walks

OPTIMISM WALK
AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION

Preparing for the Unpredictability of Parkinson's

An Interview with **John and Suzie Schofield**


John and Suzie on their wedding anniversary

Can you each share a recent 'curveball' Parkinson's threw at you—and how you handled it together?

JOHN: It turns out, airports are a difficult place to walk for a Parkinson's patient – in any circumstance. There is a lot of stopping and starting – and lots of people are changing their stride, and direction. If you have gait issues, this is a nightmare situation.

SUZIE: It was Spring Break of 2024, and John had just begun having some gait issues. He was still walking fine in open spaces, or with a cane as needed for balance. What we didn't realize was how difficult it would be in a busy airport now that he was freezing before he could take his first step.

JOHN: I would shuffle, shuffle, then run, run, run. I was bowling for tourists.

SUZIE: It was scary to watch. We were carrying on, so we both had luggage. And John would get going so fast, I was worried he could not stop. He nearly ran over a child in the concourse, and later an elderly couple. We drew lots of stares, and several people offered to get us a wheelchair.

JOHN: It's hard to accept that you can't walk to your gate. But the crowds, especially on Spring Break, were too much for my brain to scramble.

SUZIE: In the end, I pushed John in a wheelchair and had both of our wheelie luggage. We made it work. We had an adjustment to John's DBS when we returned – and it made a big difference. John also practiced walking techniques. We have traveled out of the country since then, and John did great with his cane.

What fluctuations (motor and non-motor) do you see most, and how do you track early warning signs?

JOHN: I've had Parkinson's for 30 years and didn't have trouble with freezing until two years ago. I can't feel it coming. But I'm reminded every time I want to take a step or stand to leave the room. It doesn't matter if my meds are on or off – I consistently struggle to take the first few steps.

SUZIE: In physical therapy, they suggest you use an audio or visual cue to trigger a step. For example, you can click your tongue, and take steps to the sound, like a metronome. Or focus on a spot on the floor, where you want to step, and your body may respond more naturally. They even have walkers that shine a light on the floor, so you can step on the light.

JOHN: When my meds are wearing off, I have trouble keeping my eyes open due to blepharospasm (a neurological condition that can cause the eyelid muscles to spasm, forcing your eyes shut). To combat this, I get Botox injections around both eyes, four times a year. This helps relax the muscles, so my eyes don't shut as tight. Even so, I have spent time holding my eyelids open to watch the end of a movie. It looks pretty silly.

SUZIE: It's frustrating for John because he wants to be "up" on his meds, but inevitably, he will come down off his meds toward the end of the day. That is normal. It's also when we tend to watch some television. To keep his eyes open, he needs to take more medicine or allow himself to roll completely off-med – so his eyes will stay open.

TIP: We always ensure John has Botox around his eyes before we go on vacation – so he can see all the sights.

What plans do you have for common 'what-ifs,' and how did you build them?

JOHN: In the last three years, I've had trouble with dysphagia, or difficulty swallowing.


Universal Choking Sign

SUZIE: There have been many episodes of John seriously choking. It can happen quickly and is very scary. Fortunately, there are a number of things you can do to help. Most importantly, everyone in the household should know the universal sign for choking. And everyone should learn to perform the Heimlich maneuver. We have used it multiple times.

JOHN: When I eat, I concentrate on nothing else but chewing and swallowing. My wife makes sure I don't eat alone very often. And sadly, you have to give up some of the foods that give you trouble. I love peanut butter but just can't move it around my mouth without choking.

SUZIE: Our son is 16, and all three of us know what to do if John is choking. We have additional precautions we have not had to use – thankfully. For example, John knows how to dislodge food if he is choking and is alone. We also have a device that fits over the nose and mouth – and helps suction food out of the airway. We keep it in the same place so we can get it quickly, if needed.


Anti-choking device. *There are several manufacturers and travel kits.*

TIPS:

- Get a referral to an Ear, Nose & Throat doctor who can do a swallowing study. Tests determine how efficiently you swallow and can help determine the best position for your head and neck in order to swallow safely. (For example, John swallows best when his chin is down, and facing toward the right side of his body.)
- Always use a straw with fluids. Yes, even with beer and hot coffee. We have several travel straws we take on vacation. And we keep straws in every car – just in case we hit a drive-through or need one in a pinch.
- Avoid sticky foods or items that make your mouth dry, like peanut butter, a bagel, or a stack of crackers.
- Take smaller bites! If you struggle to cut your food due to stiffness or tremor, you can order your food to be cut in advance. Or ask someone to assist you.
- If you live alone and are at risk of choking, keep an air horn or other loud device you can sound for help. Note: it cannot be a whistle if you are choking.
- If you have a muscular delay in swallowing due to Parkinson's, you will have trouble with low-viscosity, or thin fluids.
- The most basic thin liquid is water. Higher viscosity would be fruit juice with pulp, or a milkshake – as they are thicker.
- If you have trouble with chicken noodle soup because the broth is thin, switch to hearty tomato soup or a creamy soup that is thicker.
- At cocktail hour, note that wine has very low viscosity. It would be better to have a blended margarita.

When symptoms shift suddenly, how do you decide who does what—and how do you repair after tough moments?

SUZIE: I have a take-charge personality, and my motherly instinct kicks in if John ever needs anything. In addition, John is endlessly patient, and he never complains. I'm not kidding – he honestly never complains. Even when I know he is very frustrated.

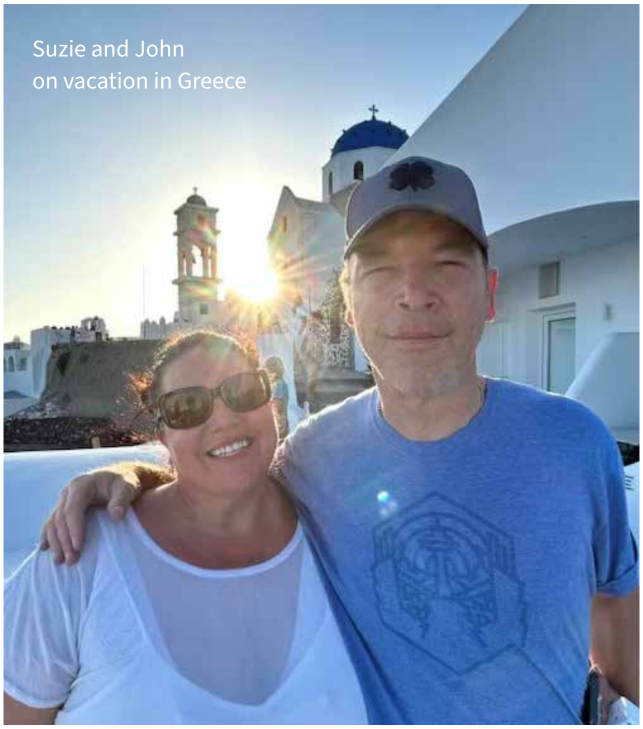
That said, I take control if John is having a hard time or needs extra support. He takes his meds daily, but we have alarms set on his computer and phone. I also pre-load his meds into daily doses to make it easier for him.

At medical appointments, the Dr. will ask how John is doing, and he always says: "fine" or "pretty good." So, I am always there to speak to concerns. I bring questions about his meds or his DBS system. We talk about gait, swallowing, his speech, etc. Doctors are such a valuable resource, you really must keep a list of things to discuss when you have their attention.

JOHN: It makes me uncomfortable sometimes, but Suzie is always right to bring things up. In many cases, there is something new to try.

SUZIE: John is the strongest man I know. He helps a ton around the house, doing as much as his body will allow – despite living with Parkinson's for 30 years. We just focus on being really open and transparent about what is happening. We talk about it as it comes, and address things as needed. We have a deep love and respect for each other – and that gets us through. And our son Buckley is a huge source of joy in our lives. He is a junior in high school, and we'll miss him terribly when he goes off to college.

JOHN: I still drive. I walk the dogs and listen to lots of podcasts. We love TV shows and movies. I keep in touch with friends – mostly by text because my speech is challenging.


Suzie and John on vacation in Greece

SUZIE: We make a point to stay active and engaged. We love to travel, and I'll spend tons of time to ensure the trip works well for all of us.

How do you protect your identity as a couple—connection, intimacy, joy—when PD keeps changing the plan?

SUZIE: We had just started dating when John was diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson's – 30 years ago. It's always been there, in the background – but it hasn't changed how we feel about each other.

Michael isn't the only Fox with Parkinson's.

JOHN: Good one, honey. As you can see, we are a happy couple.

SUZIE: John is really funny. I miss just being able to visit because Parkinson's has a hold of his voice. Now I do most of the talking, and he responds in a few words and lots of "thumbs up." Even so, we still laugh a lot. We text each other and share Instagram videos. We eat together as a family every night and relax by the TV with too many pets.

JOHN: There's a lot of love in this house. And a lot of dog hair.

What advice would you give to couples just starting this journey?

JOHN: It happens slowly, but it happens. Live in "the now" as much as you can.

SUZIE: There are so many resources available now that did not exist when John was diagnosed 30 years ago. It takes time to absorb a diagnosis, but information is power – and there's a lot of it available. APDA is an incredible organization comprising chapters across the country, where you can participate in support groups, educational sessions, fundraising activities, research updates, and learn to "Live Well" with Parkinson's through fitness, diet, and exercise. Don't hesitate to engage. Building a community of people , including doctors, physical therapists, and others including doctors, physical therapists, etc., will provide the support you need to move forward.

MEET THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE APDA NORTHWEST TEAM!

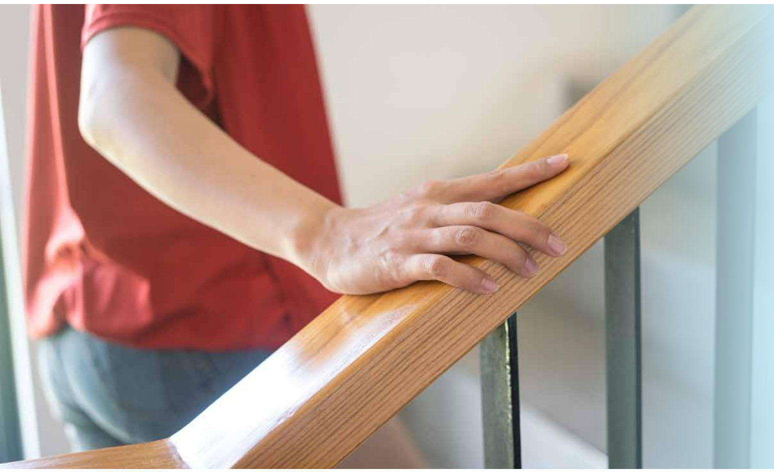
Please join us in welcoming **Kristin Corcoran** as **Director of Development for APDA Northwest**.

Kristin comes to us from the YMCA of Greater Seattle, where she has served as District Director and Senior Director of Operations over the past five years. A seasoned nonprofit leader with over a decade of experience in mission-driven organizations, she brings deep expertise in team leadership, budgeting, fundraising strategy, donor engagement, and event management.

In this role, Kristin will drive revenue growth to ensure APDA can expand its reach, strengthen programs, and better serve the Parkinson's community. She will support chapter events, elevate APDA's visibility across the region, manage event staff, and collaborate with Board committees, while representing APDA to community partners and stakeholders.

Her work has advanced initiatives in health, human services, and accessibility—including launching accessible recreational opportunities for older adults. She also dedicates time as a volunteer to numerous community efforts.

A Pacific Northwest native, Kristin lives in Bellevue with her husband. With their children now in college, their beloved Labrador happily enjoys center stage at home.



Strong and Steady Indoors:

Fall-Safe Fitness for Every Season

By **Dr. Ann Phillips, PT, DPT, NCS**

Ahhh...the dreaded "F" word... Falls. Any time you're on your feet, there's a risk of falling.

The good news? You have the power to lower that risk!

Many people think the safest approach to fall prevention is to stop moving, but the opposite is true. Limiting activity actually makes us weaker, more anxious, and less responsive to the world around us. Movement is the primary way we interact with our environment and the people most important to us.

There are factors that make movement critical for healthy living:

1. **Brain-Body Connection –** your nervous system learns and adapts every time you move
2. **Independence –** moving and doing things on your own terms gives you a sense of autonomy
3. **Engagement –** connecting with family, friends, and activities you love supports mental health

While researchers may not always agree on everything, one message is loud and clear across nearly every field of study: "Movement is Medicine." Our bodies are designed to move, and we function at our best—physically, mentally, and emotionally—when we stay active and engaged in movement.

Balance is a Skill

Just like playing golf or learning a new language, balance improves when you practice it in different ways, and the context in which you practice is instrumental in learning. For example, hitting a golf ball in your backyard isn't going to be as effective as playing on an actual course when it comes to mastering the skill. In therapy, balance is trained with variability, intensity, and real-world application.

Your brain pays more attention when things are new, challenging, and meaningful to you.

- **Variability:** Standing on different surfaces, changing speeds, or taking the "long way" around
- **Intensity:** Balance needs to be challenged; that's how your body learns
- **Real-Life Application:** Speeding up every time you cross a driveway when walking your neighborhood (skill: *variable walking speed*) or scanning the parking lot for interesting out-of-state license plates when walking to your car (skill: *thinking task + movement task at the same time*) adds different dynamics to simply walking and sharpen your balance skills for real-world demands

Tips for Turns

If you are turning Left, lead with your Left foot

If you are turning Right, lead with your Right foot

If you are making a U-turn, follow the back legs of the walker as you turn

***This prevents your feet from getting tangled**

Rules for Reaching

Step towards your target
BIG step for BIG reach

Get wide
The lower the reach, the wider the feet

Lead with your hips, NOT your head
Hips move towards target + heels down

Try to create a tripod
Wide feet + hand stabilized in center

You want to practice tasks and movements that mimic some of the most challenging things you do in real life. Challenging your balance is not something you want to pursue on your own when exploring your limits. Parkinson's symptoms tend to fluctuate, which makes your responses unpredictable. Always have someone available on stand-by when trying new or challenging things.

"Rock to Unlock"

Stay TALL + STRONG + IN YOUR LANE as you shift your hips Right<-->Left

***This is like starting your motor and gets you ready to make your first move**

If your heel comes up, that means you got top heavy!

Risky Moves

Falls often happen in everyday moments. Here are the Big 4 to watch for:

1. **Reaching** – awkward spaces or reacting to catch something you knocked over
2. **Turning** – be careful not to lean into your turn or to let your feet get tangled
3. **Backing up** – towards a seat or to get out of the way; don't assume you have a clear path
4. **Interrupted movement plans** – cat darts out in front of you, or someone calls your name mid-step

There is a constant dance between Stability and Mobility. Stability is easy if you don't move, but that is not how we live our lives. Below are some foundational concepts to help you stay stable as you are moving!

The "Dashboard" and "Feel it & Fix it" concepts can be utilized whether sitting on the edge of a seat or standing unsupported. You'll be tempted to use the back of your seat or a piece of furniture to support yourself.

Start by actively stabilizing yourself through a meal or commercial with small "doses" throughout your day. If you can't maintain your "Dashboard" when you are sitting/standing still, you won't be able to when you are brushing your teeth or pulling up your pants. Start simple and build on it.

Final Takeaway

Falls are often predictable and preventable. Staying active, practicing real-world balance, and using simple strategies can help you stay strong, steady, and confident in every season of life. And remember, you don't have to do it alone. Partner with a therapist who specializes in Parkinson's for personalized skill training or join a Delay the Disease class for the motivation and support of a group. If Movement is Medicine, then the "medicine" and "dosage" should always be tailored to fit YOU—your goals, your abilities, and your needs. Let's go!

Meet the author

Dr. Ann Phillips, PT, DPT, NCS, is a board-certified neurologic clinical specialist and founder of Grit Mobility, a mobile PT/OT practice in Eagle, Idaho. With more than 20 years of experience, she is dedicated to delivering Rehab in Real Life that restores mobility, fosters resilience, and empowers independence.

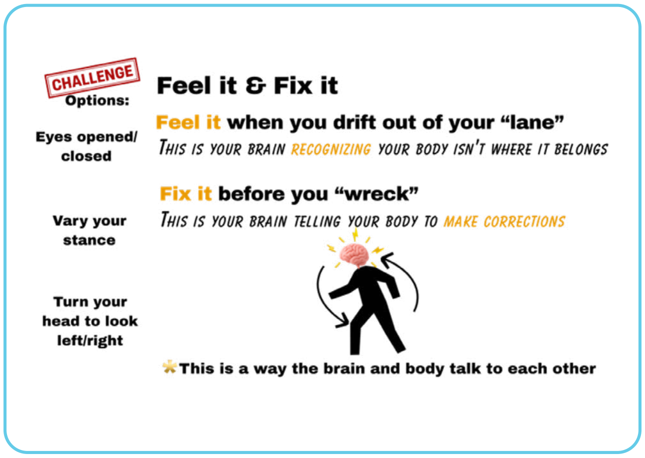
Check your "Dashboard"

Don't just take off!

Check in with yourself to see if you are:

- **TALL: heels down + chest up**
- **STRONG: heels pressed down + legs ready**
- **IN YOUR LANE: Centered as if in a "lane" or picture frame**

*** A mirror helps keep you in check when you are learning your dashboard**



Feel it & Fix it

Feel it when you drift out of your "lane"

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN RECOGNIZING YOUR BODY ISN'T WHERE IT BELONGS

Fix it before you "wreck"

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN TELLING YOUR BODY TO MAKE CORRECTIONS

CHALLENGE Options:

Eyes opened/ closed

Vary your stance

Turn your head to look left/right

***This is a way the brain and body talk to each other**

CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS: Art from the APDA NW Community

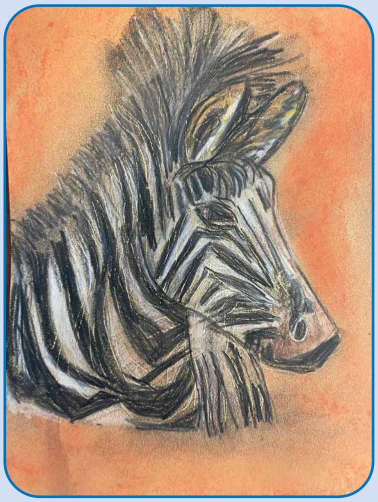
Do you like to draw, paint, or take photographs? Are you a cartoonist or poetry master? If so, we'd love to share your work here!

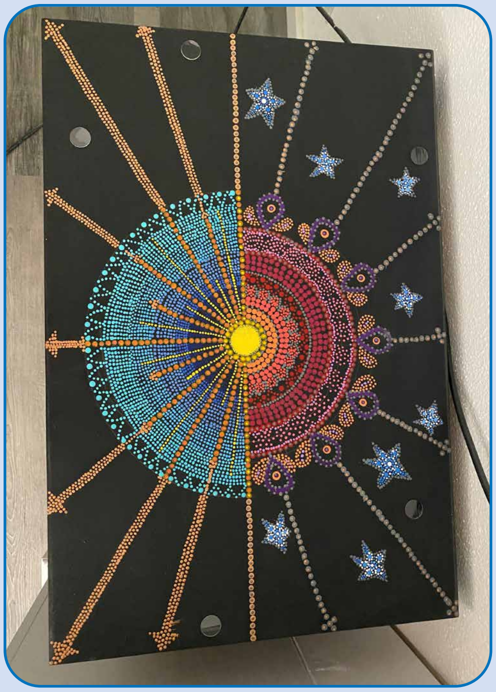
Email apdanw@apdaparkinson.org with your creative submission today!

Above: Wooden Spoons by **Dustin Werner** Medium: Cherry, Maple, Bubinga, Waterfall Bubinga, Lacewood, and Black & White Ebony wood.

Left: *Klickitat Canyon at Stinson Flats,* Photograph by **Bill Clugston** Klickitat Canyon is a remote canyon located in southern Washington state, within the Cascade Mountains. Photograph was shot from a DJI Mavic 3 Classic drone.

Right: *Savanah* by **Debby Parsons** Made with colored pencils, Faber Castille, artist pens, and oil pastel chalk.





Sunrise, Sunset by **Julie Armstrong** Painted on a dresser top using craft paint, mandala dotting tools, and household items, such as skewers, to create circles of different sizes.

Stained Glass, Quilt by **Beth Hoekstra**

Knock it Out of the Parkie:

Stepping Up to the Plate for Parkinson’s

Turn any activity into a fundraiser and support Parkinson’s care, research, and community. YOU have the power to make a difference.

Share your fundraiser idea with APDA’s Heidi Murdock **(hmurdock@apdaparkinson.org** or **206.798.3205)** to learn how easy it is to make an impact!

When Ashlei McCormick dreamed up *Knock It Out of the Parkie*, she and her sisters wanted to honor their father, Fred MacKenzie, who is living with Parkinson’s disease (PD), in a way that would give back to the PD community. Together with APDA Northwest, her idea blossomed into a joyful community celebration that brought families together for an afternoon of softball, sunshine, and shared purpose.

Softball runs deep in the MacKenzie family. Fred, affectionately known as “Coach,” is the proud father of seven daughters and once led two of them and their team to a Kirkland Little League championship, ultimately reaching the Little League World Series. His wife (and high school sweetheart) has always been the family’s loudest cheerleader. When the family decided to take to the field for Parkinson’s, Fred’s youngest daughter, Ashlei, captained the Blue Team and infused the event with the creativity and passion of the entire MacKenzie family.

Green Team captain Gerry Smith proved that he isn’t letting his Parkinson’s diagnose slow him down much when he showed off his baserunning speed! Gerry continues to make movement and exercise a daily priority through walking, Rock Steady Boxing, and playing in senior softball leagues. His story and energy perfectly embodied the spirit of the day. The day was a tremendous success in every way. The sun was shining, smiles were everywhere, and base hits were plentiful.

Knock It Out of the Parkie raised more than $20,000 to support APDA Northwest’s mission to help every person with Parkinson’s live life to the fullest.

One game. Two teams. One mission. Ashlei and her family proved that when you bring creativity, community, and heart to an idea, you can make a real difference.

Above left: Captain Gerry Smith (Green Team); Above right: Captain Ashlei McCormick (Blue Team) with Parents Fred and Gayle MacKenzie

Team CHS for Coach Miller & PD Friends - South Sound

Team Neurofit - Seattle

OPTIMISM WALK AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION

2025 OPTIMISM WALKS

WHAT A YEAR!

Seattle walk had the Largest Fundraising Team of ALL TIME – Team NeuroFit who raised $56,655

TOP Two Fundraising Teams in the Nation • TOP Individual Fundraiser in the Nation

Most Circle of Optimism Award winners EVER!

Recognized two individuals as Outstanding First Year Fundraiser’s (credited to those who raised over $5,000 in their first year walking)!

16 participants who each raised over $2,500

10 straight years with Sunshine & Optimism

Outstanding First Year Fundraisers

Optimism Walk Gold Sponsors

peak Credit Union

Cameron CATERING where food celebrates life

Optimism Walk Silver Sponsors

Medtronic

GENCARE LIFESTYLE

amneal

Optimism Walk Bronze Sponsors

AbbVie
Numotion Foundation
Foushée and Associates
Highline PT and Summit Rehabilitation
Boston Scientific
Fedelta Home Care
Acadia Pharmaceuticals
Olympia Orthopaedic & Associates
Oyster Bay Public Affairs
Thrive Community Fitness Lacey
First Citizens Bank

Optimism Walk EMS Sponsor

The Agtarap Family Foundation

South Sound Circle of Optimism Award Winners

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

130 Nickerson Street, Suite 300
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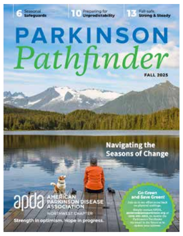

Your *Parkinson Pathfinder* is locally produced by the Northwest Chapter!

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

Sign up for our newsletter by visiting our website **apdaparkinson.org/nw** or emailing **apdanw@apdaparkinson.org**

Every 6 minutes, someone is diagnosed with Parkinson's disease (PD).

60,000 live with PD right here in the Northwest

YOUR GIFT WILL:

PROVIDE SUPPORT through

- ✓ Programs like PRESS (newly diagnosed), PRESS ON (advancing PD), and Care Partner Connection
- ✓ Trusted resources, referrals, and information

EDUCATE & EMPOWER via

- ✓ Events like Live Well Conferences, Parkinson's Education Days, and PD Essentials
- ✓ Tools such as the *Parkinson Pathfinder* and downloadable brochures

ADVANCE RESEARCH by

- ✓ Funding promising scientific projects and innovative clinicians

BUILD COMMUNITY through

- ✓ Support groups, free exercise and wellness classes, DBS Connect, and Connecting Through Art classes

Skip the check!
Scan to give online:

WAYS TO GIVE

☐ Check enclosed (made payable to APDA)
☐ I gave online (scan QR code below)
☐ I made a gift through my DAF, IRA, or Stock

Visit **apdaparkinson.org/donor**-advised-funds to find our simple DAFpay tool where you can initiate a DAF payment with just a few clicks!

If you gave via your DAF, IRA, or Stock, please return this card or reach out to **kcorcoran@apdaparkinson.org** so we can properly acknowledge your gift!

Donor's name

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Thank you for your generosity!