

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP OF ASHEVILLE

"You are not alone"

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NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2023

THIS MONTH:

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thursday, December 14th,
12:00 - 3:00 PM

Hi-Wire Brewing Events Center
2B Huntsman Place, Asheville

See p. 3 for details

NO MEETING THIS MONTH



See p. 3 for details

HIDDEN EASTER EGG

We're giving you a "cheat sheet" for this month's hidden "Easter egg" graphic... can anyone spot it? It could be anywhere in this newsletter...



HEALTH TIP

EXERCISE AND THE HOLIDAYS

"Make your fitness routine as merry and bright as the decorations."

Exercise is a lot like medicine... if you don't like it, you won't take it. So try out this fun holiday themed routine to help keep you moving through the holidays.

Also realize that exercise routines do not have to take two hours to complete. If you can work out hard enough, sometimes 15-20 minutes is enough!

Get Ready for Some Holiday Music!

BEERS AND CHEERS

(3rd Thursday of each month)

Thursday, December 21,
5:30pm

Village Pub
100 Fairview Rd.
(Biltmore Village area)



LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

With the end of the year approaching, the Board of Directors is both grateful for the progress attained this year and very excited for the opportunities that will present themselves in the coming year.

As it was for most organizations, the COVID pandemic was a destructive force that nearly caused our group to fold. Coming out of the pandemic, our group had less than 50 active members and limited leadership due to COVID and resignation of the group president.

Due to the hard work of a few dedicated members, the group, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, has come back stronger and more focused than ever. As of July 2022, we are now an all-volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit guided by the following mission statement:

*The Parkinson's Support Group of Asheville was established to **educate, assist, and advocate** for people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers, with a goal of improving the quality of life for all its members.*

The group has now grown to 181 active members, and is regularly adding new members. The vitality and skills brought by the new members work well with our senior members, and their existing work on current activities and future planning.

While we are in the beginning stages of what our group can become, we have accomplished a lot in a short period of time. The future is bright and unlimited, and we invite everyone to volunteer their time and talents or otherwise join us as we go forward.

Parkinson's Support Group of Asheville Board of Directors

GROUP LEADERSHIP UPDATES

New Marketing Chair

Ben Elderd has stepped forward to become our new Marketing Chair. He will join Jody Watts in raising awareness, not only of our group, but of Parkinson's in our community.

Ben's experience comes from over 30 years in the college text industry where he was in sales and marketing. He was a caregiver for seven years for his wife, Beth, who passed away in May.

Ben has been active in helping with the YMCA's spinning and PWR!Moves programs. He also helps with the pole walking program that Howard Heim began. An avid cyclist and hiker, he believes that you have to "keep moving."

Jody and Ben can use help in moving our marketing efforts forward. **If you have sales or marketing experience and skills**, or just want to contribute to this very important effort, please **contact Jody, Ben, or Ed**.

Webmaster Search

We want to thank Laura Anderson for all of her work on our group's [website](#), however, she is having to step away from working on the site due to other commitments.

We need a WEBMASTER to take charge of the website, get it up to date, add more information, make the existing pages "pop," and then keep it up to date.

This is a very important position to fill, as a well designed and properly maintained website is critical in getting information about our group out to the public.

If you have even basic website design skills (ours is produced with Wix), please contact [Ed Horton](#) -- or pass the word along!





Annual Christmas Party

Join us for another fun Parkinson's Support Group social event!

11:30 set-up time. Members bring snacks. Cash bar. Water and soft drinks will be provided.

Thursday, December 14th

12:00 - 3:00 PM

Hi-Wire Brewing Events Center

2B Huntsman Place, Asheville

Special Quilt Raffle!

Master quilter Jenell Wright, a group supporter and volunteer, has donated a beautiful quilt - featuring our group's own logo! - for us to raffle off as a fundraiser at the Christmas party.

Tickets are one for \$5 or five for \$20, and can be purchased at the party before the drawing with cash, checks, or credit cards, or online using the following link:



<https://square.link/u/EhEFLos0>

Please RSVP to ParkinsonsAVL@gmail.com

NO MEETING THIS MONTH

Just a reminder that we are **not having our regular meeting this month.**

But, we hope to see everyone at the Christmas party on the 14th!

However, **Beers and Cheers** AND the **Chat and Chew** and **PwP small groups are still meeting.**

Additionally, **January's meeting** will be moved to the **second Tuesday** of that month, on the 9th.

Make sure to mark your calendars!

Gobble Wobble Reminder!

Don't forget the Turkey Trot and Gobble Wobble (1-mile fun run) coming up before the end of November!

"The Wobblers" will gather at the Downtown YMCA on Woodfin St. at 8:00AM for the Gobble Wobble, which starts at 8:30. Woodfin St. will be closed to traffic, so there may be a short walk from where you park to the Y.



Save the Date!

Date: Thurs., Nov. 23

Time: 8:30AM

**Place: Downtown YMCA
30 Woodfin St.**

Wear your Support Group T-shirts!



Register by 3pm November 21 at www.ashevilleturkeytrot.com/.

Mike's Journey with PD: Here and Abroad

by Mike Horak

Mike Horak is careful not to let his diagnosis of early onset Parkinson's at age 48 define who he is. Indeed, the Kansas native defines himself as an avid college basketball fan, outdoor enthusiast, and the father of two "perfect" daughters.

"Parkinson's is part of me and will be a part of me for the rest of my life," Horak said. "But there is so much more to life than this darn disease. That is what I like to focus on."

Mike graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in journalism, but his tenure as a reporter for the Associated Press was cut short when he was recruited by former U.S. Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-KS) to be her environmental aide and eventually serve as her press secretary.

Mike's work on environmental issues on Capitol Hill ignited a fire for conservation that remains to this day. "I could not have had a greater role model than Nancy Kassebaum. As one of the first women elected to the Senate, she taught me that empathy, kindness, and a sense of humor could be more effective tools than brinkmanship, strong-arm tactics and threats," Mike said of his more than a decade of working in the rough-and-tumble Senate.

"Parkinson's is part of me and will be a part of me for the rest of my life. But there is so much more to life than this darn disease."



Mike hiking the famous Glen Coe region of Scotland this July during a two-week trip exploring the country, its culture, and, importantly, its single-malt Scotch.

After leaving the Senate, Mike found his way to The Nature Conservancy, where he served as national media director. The non-profit's headquarters are in Arlington, Virginia, and after September 11, 2001, he and his wife Lisa decided they didn't want to raise their young daughters near Washington, D.C.

"My wife is a Duke graduate, and Asheville kept coming up as the ideal place to live," Mike said. "I convinced The Nature Conservancy to let me open an office in Asheville and made a mid-career change to fundraising. That was 21 years ago, and we haven't looked back."

The Nature Conservancy is a large environmental non-profit that works primarily on land conservation and habitat preservation. Working for the organization, Mike has the opportunity to take TNC members on hikes and paddling trips throughout North Carolina, a state he has grown to love.

Mike's Journey, cont. from previous page

At age 48, Mike began experiencing a slight tremor on his dominant hand. He said he first noticed it while petting his dog. His family practice physician referred him to a neurologist after ruling out other causes.

"I would not wish this disease on anybody, but I am grateful that it has put me in the orbit of some amazing people I would not have known otherwise, including friends with the Asheville Parkinson's Support Group."

Mike was familiar with Parkinson's because his dad, Jerry, was diagnosed with the disease when he was in his 60s. His great-grandmother was never diagnosed, but had what she called "the shakes." Genetic testing has since revealed that he is among the 14 percent of Parkinson's patients with a genetic anomaly making him more likely to inherit the disease.

In 2019, Mike and Lisa hiked more than 500 miles of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in northern Spain. Mike said the trekking poles he used steadied his tremors. It took Mike and Lisa five weeks to hike what is called the Camino Frances route that starts in St. Jean Pied de Port in France all the way to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain.

Mike is active with the Parkinson's Foundation, serving on the board for the [chapter](#) that includes both North and South Carolina. He is the chapter's head of the [Reach Further campaign](#), which is raising \$30 million to support genetic research, boost community grant programs, and expand Parkinson's Centers for Excellence into medically underserved areas.



"I would not wish this disease on anybody," Mike says. "But I am grateful that it has put me in the orbit of some amazing people I would not have known otherwise, including friends with the Asheville Parkinson's Support Group."

Mike and Lisa Horak hiking the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain in 2019.

Mike Horak has served as the chair of PSG-AVL's programming committee. You may have seen his monthly write-ups of our speaker topics for our membership meetings.

Prior to attempting this exercise, please consult with your physical therapist.

Squatting is a fundamental movement that engages multiple muscle groups, primarily the muscles in your lower body (quadriceps, hamstrings, and glutes) and your core.

Here's a step-by-step guide on how to perform a basic body weight squat:

1. **Stand with Your Feet Shoulder-Width Apart:** Position your feet parallel to each other, about shoulder-width apart. You can turn your toes slightly outward if it feels more comfortable.
2. **Engage Your Core:** Tighten your abdominal muscles to stabilize your core. This helps protect your lower back and ensures proper alignment throughout the movement.
3. **Initiate the Movement with Your Hips:** Begin the squat by pushing your hips back as if you were sitting back into a chair. Imagine reaching your hips back and down.
4. **Bend Your Knees:** As your hips move back, start bending your knees. Keep your knees in line with your feet and avoid letting them collapse inward. The goal is to lower your body while maintaining a neutral spine.
5. **Lower Your Body:** Continue lowering your body until your thighs are parallel to the ground or as far as your flexibility allows. If you can go deeper with good form, that's great, but avoid going so low that your lower back rounds or your heels come off the ground.
6. **Keep Your Chest Up:** Throughout the squat, keep your chest lifted and your back straight. Avoid leaning too far forward or rounding your back.
7. **Maintain a Neutral Spine:** Keep your head in a neutral position, looking straight ahead or slightly upward. Avoid craning your neck or looking down.
8. **Control the Descent and Ascent:** Lower yourself down with control, and then push through your heels to return to the starting position. This controlled movement engages your muscles more effectively and reduces the risk of injury.
9. **Push Through Your Heels:** As you rise back up, focus on pushing through your heels. This helps engage your glutes and hamstrings.
10. **Breathe:** Inhale as you lower your body and exhale as you push back up. Maintaining proper breathing can help stabilize your core and provide better support during the movement.

Tips:

- Ensure that your knees track over your toes and do not collapse inward.
- If you have balance issues, you can use a stable surface or hold onto a support to assist you.
- Perform the movement in front of a mirror initially to check and correct your form.
- Remember that everyone's body is different, so it's important to listen to your body and avoid pushing yourself too hard, especially if you're a beginner or if you have any pre-existing health concerns. If in doubt, seek guidance from a fitness professional or healthcare provider.

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