

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP OF ASHEVILLE

"You are not alone"

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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

THIS MONTH:

MARCH MEETING

*1st Tuesday of the month

Tuesday, March 5

10:00am

Groce United Methodist Church

Breakout sessions for
People with Parkinson's and
their caregivers

See p. 2 for details



COMING UP THIS MONTH!

Parkinson's Foundation
Carolinas Chapter Symposium
Saturday, March 2nd

See p. 3 for details

HEALTH TIP

TAI CHI BENEFITS FOR PARKINSON'S

Tai Chi, a 6,000-year-old Chinese martial art, is gradually becoming more recognized as a form of beneficial therapy for Parkinson's patients, as well as many others.

Balancing slow rhythmic movement, breath regulation, and meditation, it can alleviate difficulties with balance, posture, and cognitive awareness - all areas which are hallmarks of Parkinson's disease.

Read more on p. 6

BEERS AND CHEERS

(3rd Thursday of each month)

Thursday, March 21, 5:30pm

Highland Brewing
12 Old Charlotte Hwy

Note
new
location!



March meeting to feature break-out sessions

The March 5 meeting of the Asheville Parkinson's Support Group will not include a speaker but instead will feature facilitated breakout sessions, one for people with Parkinson's and one for their caregivers.

"It has been a while since we've had breakout sessions, and we decided it was time to try it again," said Chris Simpson, president of the Asheville Parkinson's Support Group. "In the past, these have been very popular programs."

Once announcements are over, caregivers and people with Parkinson's will meet in separate rooms and discuss how they are dealing with Parkinson's and share advice on overcoming challenges they face.

"These can be wide-ranging discussions and can be really helpful because the people you are talking to likely have experienced the same things you are experiencing," Simpson said. "A lot of sound advice and wisdom comes from these sessions."

Mike Horak, co-chair of the Program Committee, said the committee had received several requests from members to devote a meeting to breakout sessions.

"It will give our members the opportunity to get to know each other better and relate on a human level," Horak said. "I also think it is cathartic to share experiences, fears, and joys with peers that are accepting and understand what you are going through."



A lot of sound advice and wisdom comes from these sessions... the people you are talking to likely have experienced the same things you are experiencing.



**TUESDAY
MARCH 5**

The Asheville Parkinson's Support Group meets at [Groce United Methodist Church](#) at 954 Tunnel Road in east Asheville on the first Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. for refreshments, socializing, and announcements. The programming begins at 10:30a.m. The meeting room is wheelchair accessible.

The group follows the inclement weather policy of Buncombe County Schools. If the schools are closed due to winter weather or icy conditions, then the group will not meet.

Updated Chat & Chew info

North

meets @ North Asheville Library
Next meeting: March 26 @ 10:30am
Contact: Martha Geitner
marthageitner@gmail.com

South

meets @ Fletcher UMC on Library Rd.
Next meeting: March 21 @ 1:00pm
Contact: Dorothy Greenauer
quiltmaven7@gmail.com

East

meets @ East Asheville Library on Avon Rd.
Next meeting: March 28 @ 11:00am
Contact: Mauri Heim
irishrory4@gmail.com

West

meets @ Enka-Candler Library, Candler
Next meetings: March 14 & 28 @ 11:15am
Contact: Laurin Hardy
lhardy1991@gmail.com

Men's Group

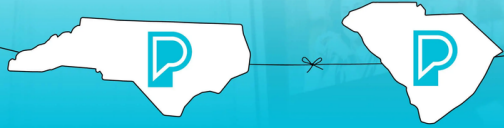
meets @ Village Pub, downtown AVL
Next meeting: March 13 @ 11:30am
Contact: Ridley Hutchinson
ridleyh@msn.com

*General questions

Contact: Mauri at irishrory4@gmail.com

Chat & Chew small groups are for care partners of people with Parkinson's.

Carolinas Chapter Parkinson's Symposium



Saturday, March 2nd
9:00am to 2:00pm
FREE

Bryan Park Conference
and Enrichment Center
Greensboro, NC

Online

Join the Parkinson's Foundation in person or online for the Carolinas Chapter Parkinson's Symposium. Hear about **ongoing research**, **current treatments**, and **resources** available to help you live your best life with Parkinson's.

See our very own
Mike Horak appear
as a PwP panelist!

Register and more info at:
www.parkinson.org/events/2024/Greensboro



4th Annual Knock Out Parkinson's 5K & Field Day

Sunday, May 5th
9am - 12pm
Fletcher Park

**Doors
open at
8am**

This field day event will have activities for all skill and ability levels.

Proceeds will benefit Movement for Life's Knock Out Parkinson's program.

Join us for a day of fitness, fun, and community as we come together to make a difference.



register
with this
QR code

**First 100 registrants
will receive a
commemorative
T-shirt!**

For more info, please contact the South Asheville clinic at (828) 484-4200 or visit 20 Gala Dr., Ste. G-104

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My Dance with Parkinson's

by Vassie Cooke

Sometime around 1998, I noticed that I was starting to drop a lot of things and that for some reason I had a slight tremor in my right hand.

After a canoeing trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northeast Minnesota with my Boy Scout troop I also started having back pain and felt stiff. I contributed this to having strained my back portaging through the Boundary Waters, so I powered through the annoying pain.

In 2003 I saw my wife Cynthia for the first time in almost a year, after she had been deployed to the Middle East. When I came around the corner to meet her, she noticed my gait. She told me that based on her observation, I might have Parkinson's, or I might have had a mild stroke. She insisted that I see a neurologist. I refused, but Cynthia, AKA She who Must Be Obeyed, insisted. So, I scheduled an appointment with a neurologist in November of 2003. Around Thanksgiving I learned that I did have Parkinson's. I shared this news with Cynthia when she arrived home from her deployment.



Vassie and his wife Cynthia in Yosemite National Park



Vassie at Escadaria Selarón in Rio de Janeiro

Attending the next appointment with me, Cynthia listened carefully to what the doctor told me. Upon leaving the office, she told me that life was short, and we were not giving up. We were going to push through this together – and that is what we have done.

My motto:
"I may have Parkinson's, but Parkinson's does not have me!"

Since 2003 I have gone hiking and camping in Idaho with Jasper, my youngest son, several times before he graduated. When Jasper went to Taiwan, as a foreign language student, I flew to visit him, and we hiked and camped as we explored Taiwan.

In 2006 Cynthia and I did a ten-day portage through the Boundary Waters, and in 2009 we returned there for more canoeing. We celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary hiking the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

cont. next page

Vassie's Journey, cont. from previous page



Vassie hugging a tree in Yosemite National Park

I must admit I've hit a few road bumps since 2017. I fell and broke my clavicle in 2017, and with help from my dog I broke my hip in 2021. Due to aging, I had four minor surgeries over the past seven years, a complete hip replacement, and then DBS.

These have slowed me down some, but I am still going strong. Our vacations have been scaled down a little – we take trips to Pawleys Island to kayak, paddle board, and parasail. Our weekends during the summer are spent at the lake house cycling, canoeing, paddle boarding, and swimming.

We want to travel more, so I currently exercise every day of the week. I do PWR!Moves twice a week in class and on my own the other days. I also do physical therapy twice a week, which consists of boxing with Movement For Life.

I try to add in some cycling at least twice a week here and I have a recumbent bike at the lake house so I can bike with my granddaughters (although I have to admit I sometimes ride my scooter so I can keep up with their energy level). In the past month I've decided to add pole walking to my exercise. Maybe I can hike again this summer.

My motto... as I quote Steve Miller, the Support Group exercise chairman: "I may have Parkinson's, but Parkinson's does not have me!"

California was our next adventure in 2016, where we explored San Francisco, kayaked, and bicycled in Napa Valley, Monterey, Carmel, Fresno, and then finished the trip with hiking in Yosemite. There was also some great wine tasting involved in that visit.

Our next fun adventure was going to Brazil in 2018, exploring, hiking, zip lining, snorkeling, and swimming in the rivers with the caiman traveling from the Atlantic Ocean in Rio to Bonito, Humaita, Bodoquena and Jardim.

On our second visit to California in late 2018, we went whale watching and then flew to the San Juan Islands in Washington state to kayak, see some dolphins and more whales, and go hiking.

Cynthia told me that life was short, and we were not giving up. We were going to push through this together – and that is what we have done



Vassie and Cynthia in Rio

Vassie Cooke was born in Hartsville, SC and went to Wofford College. After college he worked for Employment Security, initially working with parolees, helping them secure skills and training and to find jobs. Later he assisted people who were losing their jobs in applying for job skill retaining after factories closed down.

Benefits of Tai Chi

by Jane Rigot

The following two articles describe several ways that the ancient Chinese exercise of Tai Chi can be beneficial to those with Parkinson's. I take Tai Chi every week, and knew of the benefits associated with balance, gait, and cognitive abilities, but did not know lowered blood pressure was one of them.



Photo: Kristoffer Trolle

"Slow Moving Tai Chi is 'More Effective Than Aerobic Exercise' For Reducing High Blood Pressure"
www.goodnewsnetwork.org/slow-moving-tai-chi-is-more-effective-than-aerobic-exercise-for-lowering-blood-pressure/



This second article, highlighting a study just published this year, touts the lessening of Parkinson's symptoms and the possibility of using fewer medications.

"Tai Chi Can Curb Parkinson's Disease Symptoms for Years and Lower Needed Drug Doses – Study"
www.goodnewsnetwork.org/tai-chi-can-curb-parkinsons-disease-symptoms-for-years-and-lower-needed-drug-doses-study/

WANT TO LEARN TAI CHI?
Several facilities in the Asheville/Hendersonville area offer Tai Chi, including the YMCA.

As study author Dr. Gen Li says, "the long-term beneficial effect could prolong the time without disability, leading to a higher quality of life, a lower burden for caregivers, and less drug usage."

Helpful Information from the Mayo Clinic

Steve Miller, our Exercise Chairman, wanted to send out a link to this 2020 article concerning some myths and misconceptions that the Mayo Clinic has found to be attached to the use of the common Parkinson's drug carbidopa/levodopa.

Although this is not a recommendation to either start this pair of drugs – commonly referred to as the "gold standard" for Parkinson's treatment – or delay starting them, the article does provide a lot of information for those looking to do a deeper dive. As always, talk to your medical team about any decision-making surrounding medications.

"Common Myths and Misconceptions That Sidetrack Parkinson Disease Treatment, to the Detriment of Patients" (Ahlskog, 2020)
[www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(20\)30152-X/fulltext](http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(20)30152-X/fulltext)

EXERCISE OF THE MONTH



Warm-up Exercises for Leg Day

Ensure you have something to put a hand on if you need help with your balance.

If any of these are painful, please consult your physical therapist.

- 1 Knee Bumps**
10 sec hold x
6 reps per leg
Kneel with your “up” leg forward about a fist’s width from the wall. Slowly bring your knee to the wall without your heel coming up. If it is too easy, scoot your foot a little bit away from the wall.
- 2 Squat + KB Reaches**
Repeat for 1 min
Hold a weight with both hands. Squat down as far as you can and press the weight straight out. Once you are at the bottom of the squat, bring the weight overhead.
- 3 Reverse Nordics**
Repeat for 1 min
Kneel on both knees with your hips and trunk straight up. Slowly lower yourself back as far as you can, keeping a straight line between your knees, hips, and shoulders. Return to the starting position with the same posture.
- 4 Hip Openers**
Repeat for 1 min
Sit on the ground with your hips and knees flexed at 90 degrees. Start to the right side. Slowly rotate everything to the left, keeping your hips on the ground.

follow along



Use your smart phone camera to scan the QR code & access the free guidance videos and step-by-step instructions (or go to movementforlife.com/articles/4-warm-exercises-leg-day)

movementforlife.com

Support Group Contact Info

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**To contact someone from the group by phone, please call 828-579-7897

HIDDEN TULIPS

The newsletter team has way too much fun hiding little "Easter egg" versions of the lovely red tulip from our group's logo somewhere in the pages of the newsletter each month.

Did you find the hidden tulips in last month's issue? (Hint: there was one on page 2 and one on page 5.)

This month we're back to just one tulip in the whole issue (other than the one on this page). Can you spot it?

