



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society
Georgia Chapter

MS AWARENESS WEEK 2008

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

I was first diagnosed with MS in 1999 and stayed silent about my disease for nearly 4 years. During that time, I felt alone and scared. But in 2003, I attended my first MS event and realized that I wasn't alone. Being involved with the National MS Society has empowered me to share my voice with others. As a singer/songwriter I have been given the opportunity to share my music and message of hope with others at many MS fundraising events and client programs hosted by the NMSS including MS Walks, MS 150 Bike Events and The Women Against MS programs in several cities across the country. As one of the 5 finalists chosen for the NMSS Moving Forward Film Festival, I was able to direct a short film featured at the Society's Annual meeting. My goals for the film were to help others to FEEL some of the invisible symptoms of MS, to bring more awareness and increase understanding of the often misunderstood disease. This year I accepted one of my most important roles as an MS activist by joining the Government Relations Committee with the GA Chapter. On May 6-8 I will be serving as a volunteer advocate for the Society at the Public Policy Conference in Washington, DC. I hope to represent the voices of the more than 400,000 people in the US who live with MS and I hope to fight for changes that can help make life with MS a little easier. I think everyone should join in the MS Movement. If you have a central nervous system (i.e. a brain and a spine) then you or someone you love could be at risk of being diagnosed. MS affects women, men, and even children of all races. With no known cause and no cure, I will continue to fight to support the National MS Society's mission.

I BELIEVE the day will come when no one has to suffer from the devastating effects of multiple sclerosis.

Film Website Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oraM8IF2Gc>

Music Website Link: <http://www.kristiesalernokent.com/>





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Hi, my name is Tom Forkner. I am a caregiver to my wife, Vera, who was diagnosed with MS in 1998. I have always been involved in volunteer and community work and her diagnoses caused me to shift direction in my volunteer activities. I have been involved with the MS Society over the years in fundraising, special events and served on the Georgia Chapter Board for 7 years. But what I have enjoyed most is advocacy. Advocacy can be defined in many ways, but in my mind it is simply educating other people about what MS is and what it means to live with it. It is that knowledge that will lead to meaningful change.

People need to know that little things faced everyday by those with MS do cause big problems. A handicap space next to a 2" high curb with no ramp is worthless. Doors on public restrooms that are a little heavy to open for me might as well be locked for those in a wheelchair or using a walker. The local high school stadium with no ramps is totally inaccessible if you can't climb stairs. These things seem small, but they can cause a person to miss out on a dining experience in a unique restaurant, a social gathering at a friend's home or a chance to watch a child perform at a Friday night football game. These small things accumulate day after day, week after week, month after month add up to a big chunk of someone's quality of life and enjoyment diminished or eliminated. These small things soon begin to redefine who you are as a person. Then there are the big things, the non-existence of suitable housing for young adults with disabilities, the lack of insurance, the unavailability of proper medical equipment for basic mobility and living. Most, if not all of the small things and a lot of the big ones can be fixed by enough people simply knowing they exist. I have seen it happen! I have caused it to happen! I work to make sure that others know, especially the ones in a position to impact change. Advocacy is a great way to get involved and only requires time, an understanding of some of the things a person with a disability face and a desire to make a difference.





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Four years ago I started cycling. That same year, a cycling friend told me about the Bike MS Atlanta Challenge – 150 miles of riding over two days to raise money for the MS Society. The brother of a very close friend of mine has MS, so I decided to join the Challenge. I was blown away by how well the event was organized and handled, and even more impressed by the enthusiasm and positive energy of the MS staff, the participants and volunteers. This year will be my 4th year of participating in the Bike MS and I can't wait!!!!

Being a part of Bike MS and raising money for the MS Society has been such a wonderful experience for me that I decided to help out by volunteering in the MS office. I come in and do anything from stuffing envelopes for mailings to putting together binders for seminars to creating an inventory of the books, DVDs and Videos in the Lending Library (did you know that the MS Society has a Lending Library?) I've also helped create a spreadsheet to tally seminar evaluations and everything in-between. I love working with the MS staff. They are always smiling and always make me feel like what I am doing (no matter how insignificant it may be) is helpful and important.

Spend a little time volunteering at the MS office. Take it from me; you will receive more than you give.

- Charlotte Marks, Volunteer and Cyclist





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Jack and Erin Hawkins became active supporters of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society upon Erin's diagnosis of MS in November 2003 at the age of 27. On that day, the lives of Jack, a CPA, and Erin, a real estate agent, were changed forever when those words that are all too often spoken were said to them, "I'm sorry, but you have MS."

Since then, Jack and Erin have formed *Erin's Fight*, a para-charity support conduit for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Erin's Fight encourages participation in several of the Georgia Chapter's fundraising events, including the Bike MS in Atlanta and Savannah and the Walk MS. In just a few years, with the help of friends and family, Erin's Fight has raised close to \$90,000 for the National MS Society.

Jack and Erin wholeheartedly believe the work of the National MS Society is not in vain and they are truly grateful for the programs, education, and research that the MS Society provides to those living with the disease. To give back a portion of which has been provided to them, they are committed to organizing support and educating others in an effort to end the devastating effects of MS. Jack and Erin realize there is not an easy answer to MS and they are in the fight for the long-haul.

On October 6, 2007 Jack and Erin were awarded the 2007 Volunteer of the Year Award at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society – Georgia Chapter's Annual Meeting for their outstanding fundraising efforts.





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Dorothy Franzoni first became interested in volunteering for the National MS Society because her uncle lived with MS. Dorothy also had a colleague who was living with MS, who was actively involved with the National MS Society. Through both her personal and professional connections Dorothy was introduced to the Georgia Chapter Board and has remained an active volunteer and supporter ever since.

Dorothy has been on the Georgia Chapter Board for nearly two years now. An attorney with Sutherland, Asbill and Brennan in Atlanta she wanted to play an active role on the Board and within the Chapter by making her connection to the MS community relevant. In doing so Dorothy helped develop the Volunteer Legal Advocacy Program (VLAP), a pro-bono partnership between the National MS Society, Georgia Chapter and the legal community of Georgia that provides consultation and representation for Georgia's MS population in the following concentrations; Employment Law and Wills/Advanced Directives.

When asked what volunteering for the National MS Society meant to her personally, Dorothy responded "it has been a truly rewarding experience working with such a great organization and local Chapter. As an organization we do so many valuable things for our clients, its fun to be a part of it."

In July 2008 the Georgia Chapter will unveil its Volunteer Legal Advocacy Program to Georgian's living with MS. Without the assistance and guidance of volunteers such as Dorothy to help facilitate legal services to clients such programs could not be possible.

Dorothy Franzoni
Georgia Chapter Board Member

