People Power:
Aware in Care Ambassador Program

Each year, one out of every three people living with Parkinson’s visits the hospital — and 75% of them do not receive their Parkinson’s disease (PD) medications on time. As a result, many develop serious complications. In the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, overwhelmed hospitals mean people with Parkinson’s must advocate for themselves more than usual to get the care they need.

Thankfully, our Aware in Care kits provide all the resources caregivers and hospital staff need to adjust the way they provide care to people with PD. We just distributed our 100,000th kit this year, with 8,000 delivered in 2020 alone!

A survey showed that 80% of people who used the kit felt confident that hospital staff would meet their unique, PD-related needs. It also found that the number of people who received medications on time doubled when the kits were used, but even still, **only 50% of people received medications on time!** That is why the Parkinson’s Foundation launched the Aware in Care Ambassador program. This grassroots volunteer group raises awareness of this problem and helps distribute kits in their communities to people with PD and the people who treat them.

Aware in Care Ambassadors educate hospital staff on the unique needs of people with PD, such as when Ambassador Kathy McMurray worked together with nurse administrator Sara Holman, MSN, RN, CMSRN, Director Ortho/Neuro/Stroke Service Lines at Deaconess Health System in Evansville, IN.

Together, Kathy and Sara refined the electronic medical records system at the hospital by implementing changes to facilitate best practices for people with PD. They worked with the pharmacy team to flag Parkinson’s medications for hospital staff, ensuring patients with PD receive their exact medications and dosages. They not only worked collaboratively to educate others in the hospital, but also successfully made a change in the hospital system, improving the lives of people with PD.

Through this outreach initiative, 81 volunteer Ambassadors across 30 states are bringing awareness to the needs of people with PD, changing the culture and policies around Parkinson’s care … and making life better for people with PD.

**If you are interested in becoming a Parkinson’s Foundation Aware in Care Ambassador, please visit Parkinson.org/Ambassadors.**
Breaking New Ground: The Parkinson’s Nurse Fellowship Program

The Parkinson’s Foundation is excited to announce the launch of our Parkinson’s Nurse Fellowship program. Thanks to your generous support, this will be the first fellowship of its kind in the U.S.

We will host this groundbreaking fellowship for experienced nurses who want to pursue a specialized career in the care and research of Parkinson’s disease.

This new program will award funds to two Parkinson’s Centers of Excellence — Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, OR and Struthers Parkinson’s Center in Minneapolis, MN as the host sites that will mentor and train the Fellows. The funding will offer year-long training for two Nurse Fellows at each site starting in 2021.

Why Nurses?

Nearly one million people live with Parkinson’s in the U.S. It is expected that this number will increase in the years ahead as our population grows older. The Parkinson’s Foundation recognizes that nurses play a pivotal role in caring for people living with PD. These dedicated caregivers work in settings that range from clinics to acute care to the emergency room.

Nurses do so much more than ensure people with Parkinson’s get medications on time. They support them during the transition of care and they provide crucial help when symptoms occur that cause additional challenges, such as swallowing problems, depression, fatigue and psychosis.

Providing Both Training and Research

Each of our four Fellows will work with a mentor to learn about PD, train in the clinic and identify a research project. Once they complete their training, they will each receive a $50,000 grant to launch their research project.

“We with this fellowship opportunity, we want to build a community of Parkinson’s nurse experts who not only know how to offer the best treatment possible for people with Parkinson’s, but also contribute to research on Parkinson’s and the roles nurses play,” said Eli Pollard, Vice President, Chief Training and Education Officer of the Parkinson’s Foundation.

The Parkinson’s Foundation recognizes that nurses play a pivotal role in caring for people living with PD and need support for those living with PD.

We have long recognized that nurses are true innovators in care. It is one of the reasons the Parkinson’s Foundation is coupling this fellowship with a research component. We want to help prepare our Nurse Fellows to offer the best possible care — and feel confident about entering the research field. In the process, they will better understand Parkinson’s and the significant contribution they can make as nurses in the world of PD research.

The First Parkinson’s Foundation Nurse Fellows will be announced in January 2021, with fellowships beginning in July 2021.

For more information on the Parkinson’s Nurse Fellowship program, please visit Parkinson.org/NurseFellowship.

An Eye to the Future: Teaching the Next Generation of Nurses

Nurses have always been a vital part of the Parkinson’s community. In this ever-changing world, it is even more critical to ensure the next generation of nurses are well equipped to care for and treat those with PD.

One of the ways we are investing in the future of nurses is through our Nurse Faculty Award. With your help, we will award select nurses who have graduated from the Parkinson’s Foundation Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty Program with seed grant funding.

Each award recipient has completed our 50-hour accredited Nurse Faculty Program where they learn how to educate their nursing students in ways to improve Parkinson’s nursing care. In addition, every nurse creates a project to improve his/her ability to teach more nurses, students or patients about PD. The Nurse Faculty Award then funds the launch of these projects.

Donna Hood, PhD, Chair of Division of Nursing and Tara Haskins, PhD, Associate Professor of Nursing at Louisiana Tech University are two of our Nurse Faculty Award grantees. Through our grant, they started The Parkinson Resource Center at Louisiana Tech University to provide support for those living with PD.

The Parkinson Resource Center serves two purposes. First, it connects people with Parkinson’s and their families with the underserved communities of rural Louisiana and South Arkansas. According to Dr. Haskins, “We know that living in rural areas creates multiple challenges when someone is searching for answers, resources and support for those living with Parkinson’s.”

Second, it provides opportunities for nursing students, as well as other students entering healthcare fields. Dr. Haskins explains, “We are building a coalition of the next generation healthcare professionals that will likely serve rural Louisiana and South Arkansas with enhanced Parkinson’s awareness and a better understanding of the needs and challenges faced by people with PD and their families.”

Dr. Hood adds, “The support from the Parkinson’s Foundation did not end after attending the Nurse Faculty Program. This program served as a springboard to connect us to the Parkinson’s Foundation and the tremendous team working to make a difference in the lives of those with Parkinson’s.”

To learn more about the Parkinson’s Foundation Nurse Faculty Award, please visit Parkinson.org/NurseFacultyAward.
Fighting Back Against Parkinson’s

Jennifer, a working Registered Nurse, was only 30 years old when she noticed her first tremor. Two years later, she was diagnosed with Young-Onset Parkinson’s. Her neurologist told her she’d be in a wheelchair within 10 years — unable to take care of herself or her two young children.

As Jennifer’s symptoms worsened — including muscle rigidity and daily freezing episodes — she could not continue working. She remembers telling herself, “I could allow PD to take control of my life or I could fight back.”

She chose to fight back.

Jennifer began non-contact boxing training and with time, her symptoms became more manageable. “It forced my body to move past my physical limitations,” she said. “It was life changing.”

Eventually, her tremors improved and the freezing episodes became less and less frequent. “The diagnosis put me on the path to a healthier, more active lifestyle,” she said. It also inspired her to help others with PD live a better life.

Jennifer co-founded a local boxing class called PD Fighters, and later a non-profit dedicated to helping people fight back against PD through non-contact boxing and other wellness therapies.

Jennifer also dedicates her time to educating the Parkinson’s community, and she has spoken at Parkinson’s Foundation programs and led exercise classes at several Moving Day events. This year, Jennifer will once again join hundreds of people at Moving Day who share her passion to beat Parkinson’s.

Find your nearest Moving Day at MovingDayWalk.org. Can’t find one? Contact MovingDay@Parkinson.org to learn how you can start a walk in your community.

“There will always be adjustments, challenges and bumps in the road, but when you live with a passionate heart and serious motivation, you just keep fighting. When you find your passion, you never ever want to do anything else. It’s truly a beautiful gift I have been given.”

— Jennifer

CONTRIBUTION FORM

☐ YES! I want to help build the next generation of Parkinson’s caregivers, researchers and advocates! Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift to support the innovative work of the Parkinson’s Foundation so people with Parkinson’s can live the best lives possible:

☐ $35  ☐ $75  ☐ $150  ☐ $500  ☐ Other $_____

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