

CENTRAL COAST PARKINSON SUPPORT GROUP NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER, 2011

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San Luis Obispo Support Group: Will meet this month on the regular third Friday, December 16th. Lunch will be served at noon, followed at 1:00 p.m. by a musical entertainment entitled '**Let's Celebrate the Holiday Spirit**'. Our celebration and participation will be guided by the performances of a group of dancers and singers who recently performed in the Central Coast Follies show entitled 'America the Beautiful'. The December program is being coordinated by our very own Dixie Parker. Please get lunch reservations to Gloria Rossini, 541-8633 by Wednesday the 14th. so she can let the lodge know the number of lunches to prepare. The meeting is held at the Moose Lodge, 1130 Orcutt Rd., in SLO.

South County Caregiver Meeting: South County Caregivers meet the second Thursday of the month, December 8th, in Arroyo Grande from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please call Hazel at 489-8796 for the location.

North County Parkinson Support Group: The North County Parkinson Support Group will meet on Tuesday, Dec. 20th at the Presbyterian Church in Templeton which is on the corner of Main and 6th St. We will be having our annual Christmas Party which features the Class Act Broadway Jazz and Tap Dancers. There will be refreshments and a sing-along portion of the program as well! So come one, come all!! You will enjoy meeting your new and old Parkinson friends. Call Barbara Stewart at 237-2205 or Rosemary at 466-7226 for more information.

North County Caregiver Meeting: The regular meeting of the North County Parkinson Caregivers Support Group will be held on the second Friday, Dec. 9th at Coco's Restaurant in Atascadero. Come for a relaxing time with your friends; and you will always go home with something new about caregiving! See you there! Call Rosemary at 466-7226 for more information.

Medical Equipment and Supply Exchange:

Jack Brill has organized a Medical Equipment and Supply Exchange for the members of the CCPSG. If you have medical equipment that is no longer meeting your needs, consider contacting Jack. He will do his best to find someone in the group who can use it. There is no cost involved, and I believe that you can consider it a 'donation' for tax purposes, but talk to Jack if you have question on that score. If you need a particular item, call Jack and let him know. He may have a source!

2011 CENTRAL COAST FOLLIES: Our ninth annual Follies fundraiser was a huge success! The theme was "America the Beautiful", and we had enthusiastic audience support, standing ovations, and a great feeling of pride in our military and our country. The volunteer cast of 110 performers kept the show moving with high energy and outstanding talent. Due to our growing audiences, the show ran for six performances this year. Attendees included those touched by Parkinson's, local music lovers, and people

who were bussed in from Santa Barbara, Atascadero, Ventura and Bakersfield! We had a number of active military/military retirees in the audience, some sitting in the front row seats we reserved just for them, and when their branch of the service song was played, they all stood in the audience, and it was very inspiring! There were Follies ladieselegant in feathers, dancing in red, white and blue costumes, with sparkles and spangles. The cast included three aerialist's dancing on silk ribbons hung from the ceiling of the stage, singers and dancers performed to the music of "Take me Out to the Ball Game", "New York, New York", "It's a Grand Ole Flag", and a chorus of twenty-four sang "God Bless the USA". We even had hula dancers, guest dancers and our Follies children as well. There was, as always, an opportunity to donate to Parkinson's research. The total amount of money we raised for Parkinson's research will be in the next newsletter. **If you missed the show this year and would still like to be a part of fighting Parkinson's by making a donation to the Follies to be sent to The Parkinson Alliance and matched by the Tuchman Fund, it's not too late! Remember, 100% of our donation goes to research. Please make out a check to CCPSG -Follies, (that stands for Central Coast Parkinson Support Group - Follies) and mail to 271 Tally Ho Rd, Arroyo Grande, CA. 93420. Large or small--all donations help. If you have any questions feel free to call Dixie at 474-1525.**

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL FAMILY CARE GIVERS MONTH: A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION *Barack Obama*

White House Press Secretary - Across our country, millions of family members, neighbors, and friends provide care and support for their loved ones during times of need.

With profound compassion and selflessness, these caregivers sustain American men, women, and children at their most vulnerable moments, and through their devoted acts, they exemplify the best of the American spirit. During National Family Caregivers Month, we pay tribute to the individuals throughout America who ensure the health and well-being of their relatives and loved ones.

Many of our Nation's family caregivers assist seniors and people with disabilities to help improve their quality of life. Their efforts help deliver short-term comfort and security, facilitate social engagement, and help individuals stay in their homes and communities as long as possible. This heroic work is often done while caregivers balance other commitments to their families, jobs, and communities. As these remarkable individuals put their own lives on hold to tend to their family members, it is our responsibility to ensure they do not have to do it alone.

To ease the emotional and financial burdens that can accompany caregiving, my Administration has striven to support family caregivers for the crucial role they perform. Vice President Joe Biden's Middle Class Task Force has focused on the importance of investing in respite care, counseling, and training for individuals who serve aging Americans. These initiatives would give family caregivers a leg up as they continue to support their aging loved ones.

One of our Nation's greatest responsibilities is to ensure our veterans, their families, and

their caregivers receive lasting and comprehensive support. Last year, I signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, which helps fulfill this obligation by extending additional assistance to family members who care for severely wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Our military caregivers exemplify the heroism found not only on the fields of battle, but also in the hearts of those who tend to our wounded warriors when they come home. As we observe National Family Caregivers Month, we honor the tireless compassion of Americans who heal, comfort, and support our injured, our elders, and people with disabilities. This month and throughout the year, let the quiet perseverance of our family caregivers remind us of the decency and kindness to which we can all aspire.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States do hereby proclaim November 2011 as the National Family Caregivers Month. I encourage all American to pay tribute to those who provide for the health and well-being of their family members, friends, and neighbors.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America.

EFFECTS OF INTENSE “FORCED” WORKOUTS:

Scientific discoveries can be serendipitous, and so it was when Jay L. Alberts, then a Parkinson’s disease researcher at Emory University in Atlanta, mounted a tandem bike with Cathy Frazier, a Parkinson’s patient. The two were riding the 2003 RAGBRAI bicycle tour across Iowa, hoping to raise awareness of the neurodegenerative disease and “show people with Parkinson’s that you don’t have to sit back and let the disease take over your life,” Dr. Alberts said.

But something unexpected happened after the first day’s riding. One of Ms. Frazier’s symptoms was micrographia, a condition in which her handwriting, legible at first, would quickly become smaller, more spidery and unreadable as she continued to write. After a day of pedaling, though, she signed a birthday card with no difficulty, her signature “beautifully written,” Dr. Alberts said. She also told him that she felt as if she didn’t have Parkinson’s.

Impressed, Dr. Alberts, who now holds an endowed research chair at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, embarked on a series of experiments in which he had people with Parkinson’s disease ride tandem bicycles. The preliminary results raise fascinating questions not only about whether exercise can help to combat the disease but also — and of broader import — whether intense, essentially forced workouts affect brains differently than gentler activity does, even in those of us who are healthy.

Scientists have known for some time that in lab animals, forced and voluntary exercise can lead to different outcomes.

Interestingly in animals, the effects, especially on the brain, typically are more beneficial after forced exercise. In one study in 2008, rats forced to run, had significantly more new brain cells after eight weeks than those who ran when they chose, even though the latter animals ran faster.

Before Dr. Alberts's work, there had been few comparable experiments in humans, primarily because no one had known how, ethically, to "force" people to exercise. Dr. Alberts solved that problem by placing volunteers with Parkinson's on the back seat of a tandem, which had been modified to ensure that the back rider would have to actively pedal; he or she could not just passively let the pedals turn. First, though, he had each volunteer ride a solo stationary bicycle at his or her own pace. Most chose a pedaling cadence of around 60 revolutions per minute, an unstraining level of exertion.

But on the tandem, the rider in front had been instructed to pedal at a cadence of about 90 r.p.m. and with higher force output or wattage than the patients had produced on their own. The result was that the riders in back had to pedal harder and faster than was comfortable for them.

After eight weeks of hourlong sessions of forced riding, most of the patients in Dr. Alberts's study showed significant lessening of tremors and better body control, improvements that lingered for up to four weeks after they stopped riding.

This prompted Dr. Alberts to conclude that the exercise must be affecting the riders' brains, as well as their muscles, a theory that was substantiated when he used functional M.R.I. machines to see inside his volunteers' skulls. The scans showed that, compared with Parkinson's patients who hadn't ridden, the tandem cyclists' brains were more active.

Why forced exercise would have a greater effect on brain functioning than gentler regimens isn't clear. Dr. Alberts suspects that in Parkinson's patients, the answer may be simple mathematics. More pedal strokes per minute cause more muscle contractions than fewer pedal strokes, which, in consequence, generate more nervous-system messages to the brain. There, he thinks, biochemical reactions occur in response to the messages, and the more messages, the greater the response.

"It seems likely," he continues, that intense exercise of any kind should produce comparable brain reactions. "There is data showing that people who exercise intensely have less risk" of developing Parkinson's and other neurological diseases, he says. So perhaps, if you have no access to a tandem (or no stomach for being harangued to pedal harder by the rider in front), try cranking up the speed on your next treadmill session, until you are outside your normal running comfort zone.

Dr. Alberts remains most enthused, though, about the implications of his findings for people with Parkinson's and other brain-related conditions. He has partnered with Y.M.C.A.'s in several cities to offer special tandem cycling programs for Parkinson's patients and is hoping to expand the program nationwide. He's also planning studies with patients who've suffered strokes, in hopes that the brain changes following forced exercise could ease the relearning of physical skills.

"This is not a cure" for Parkinson's or other brain conditions, he cautions. "But it seems to help significantly" with tremors and other symptoms, "and it gives people a chance to be active participants in their own treatment."

He plans to return to the Iowa bike event next summer, as a representative of a program he founded, Pedaling for Parkinson's, and expects he says, to be joined by Ms. Frazier, who still frequently rides a tandem and signs her name legibly.