

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month

By Jennifer Rose, CELA
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Did you know that there are 8,000 to 10,000 people in Western PA currently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease? Did you also know that there is a local foundation with the sole purpose of supporting research efforts to find a cure and provide compassionate support for those with Parkinson's disease (PD) and their families?

For over twenty years, the Parkinson Foundation Western Pennsylvania has worked to be the leading community resource for Parkinson's disease in Western Pennsylvania and to serve as an informed voice that will talk with you on the phone or meet one-on-one to give guidance, direction and concrete, practical tips on disease management. PD is also a cause that is near and dear to the heart of **Jennifer Rose, Certified Elder Law Attorney**, who sits on the Board of Directors for the Foundation and serves as the Co-Chair of the Development and Events Committees.

April is Parkinson's disease awareness month and we at Julian Gray Associates want to spread the word about the cutting edge programming currently being offered through the Parkinson Foundation Western PA. The Foundation is committed to serving the Parkinson community with complimentary services, information, education and support including:

- ✓ **Exercise and Lifestyle.** Programs provided by the Foundation facilitate physical exercise, cognitive stimulation, and socialization, all tailored to the needs of people with PD. These programs are offered at five sites in Western Pennsylvania along with a high-functioning exercise group through UPMC. Classes include GZ Sobol Parkinson's Network Foundations Class, Delay the Disease, Dance for Parkinson's with the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Rock Steady Boxing, and the Parkinson's Wellness Group.
- ✓ **Support Groups.** Program coordination and leadership assistance is now provided for 23 regional support groups serving 850 families in 12 Pennsylvania counties and eastern Ohio. Each Parkinson's disease support group is unique. They have many different meeting formats and focuses, determined by the individuals who belong to each group. All, however, share a strong sense of community and fellowship. Members are free to come just as they are and to participate without fear of being incongruous. Much encouragement is offered, along with a sincere understanding that the range of membership is as broad as the range of symptoms throughout the disease's progression.
- ✓ **The Parkinson Primer.** The Foundation regularly holds a four session Parkinson's disease overview for those who are newly diagnosed and others that wish to learn more about Parkinson's disease and its management. The weekly sessions are two hours and cover: Parkinson's Overview, Medications and Managing Parkinson's Symptoms, Non-motor Symptoms or Features and Parkinson's Disease Self-Care.

- ✓ **Community Awareness and Health Care Provider In-Services.** The Foundation is active in raising awareness and understanding of not only the disease, but more importantly, the special needs of those intimate with PD. The Foundation is available to speak to home care providers, allied health professionals, assisted and skilled living administrators and staff and also community and service organizations about any aspect of living with Parkinson's disease or caring for those with Parkinson's disease.
- ✓ **Lending Library.** The Foundation maintains extensive information on all topics pertinent to people with Parkinson's disease. The lending library contains several hundred books, videotapes, and DVDs for loan.
- ✓ **Newsletters.** The Foundation writes, publishes, and distributes an e-newsletter 6 times a year. Each issue contains information on current research, opportunities for advocacy, tips on nutrition and exercise, and new sources of support and hope for people with Parkinson's disease. Soon the Foundation will also begin mailing a periodic newsletter to those on the subscriber list.
- ✓ **Living Well with Parkinson's Disease Conference.** This conference focuses on self-management strategies such as exercise, nutrition, stress and motor and non-motor symptom management. The annual Living Well with Parkinson's disease Conference is the only program of its kind in our area.
- ✓ **Research.** The Foundation has played a vital role in encouraging the growth of regional PD research programs, facilities, and scientists through its interface with research institutions and support of research through research grants. Since its founding, the organization has paid directly or committed \$750,000 to PD research.
- ✓ **Activities and Events.** The Foundation sponsors a number of fun and exciting activities and events through out the year to raise awareness about PD including the annual "Step Forward" Walk to be held in Highland Park on September 24, 2016.

We encourage our clients who are impacted by Parkinson's disease to contact the Foundation for additional information and details on program offerings and events, to join the Foundation mailing/emailing list, to volunteer in honor of a loved one, or even to join Jennifer's walk team. Please call the Parkinson Foundation Western Pennsylvania at 412-837-2542, visit the website at www.pfwpa.org or email for more information at info@pfwpa.org or Jennifer@grayelderlaw.com.