

John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center



Fall 2024 Newsletter, Volume 10 Issue 2

Direct from the Director

The John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center (MSAC) continues to be a key component in all of our lives, providing a safe and secure place to gather together, share stories, manage challenges, and feel understood. Because of the MSAC, we have all learned ways to build and strengthen social connections and the health benefits of staying connected. We have gathered in times of celebration and togetherness, such as at our annual picnic. We expanded our program offerings, as we introduced our virtual resource series and are excited about the *Relationships & MS* series that is taking place this Fall. We have shared the results of outcomes from the MSAC with professionals, colleagues, and industry supporters. In addition to welcoming new members, we have strengthened our relationship with a local college and have welcomed a student intern to our team!

With so many uncertainties in life, especially when living with a diagnosis such as multiple sclerosis, having a place like the MSAC offers a sense of purpose, collaboration, commitment, and connection. Throughout this edition of our newsletter, we will share stories about how we, as the MSAC, have connected with a variety of organizations and colleagues for education and support. We will share tips on how you can stay connected within your community and through exploration of different adaptive activities. Our colleagues at Mercy Foundation will share how they support the MSAC and the collaborative efforts being made to expand our endowment fund. Lastly, we will celebrate the life of two members who have passed away, remembering their time with us and reflecting on their place in our MSAC community.

What a fantastic year it has been building our endowment fund, welcoming new members into the program, strengthening our community partnerships, and celebrating our 10 year anniversary! We have so much to be grateful for this year!

On behalf of the entire MSAC staff thank you for making it a very special place to be!



Since the world is round, there is no way to walk away from each other, for even then we are coming back together.

~Amanda Gorman

10 Year Anniversary Picnic

Like a rite of spring, our annual picnic was held on April 29th at a new location, Tempo Park in Fair Oaks. On a beautiful day, we gathered as a community to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the MSAC. Members, who were present on the first day of our program in 2014, joined with newer program members, staff and MSAC supporters for good food, conversation and celebration of all we share in common. It was also an opportunity to reminisce about the journey we have taken individually and as a group over the past ten years. A common theme was how the MSAC has provided a support system and some consistency in uncertain times with an uncertain condition like MS. The strength of our community will continue to be a cornerstone of what we offer weekly, monthly and yearly.



Presenting at CMSC 2024



Enjoying picnic day with MSAC pals

Consortium of MS Centers Conference

Earlier this year, some of the MSAC staff had the opportunity to attend the Consortium of MS Centers annual conference in Nashville, TN. We were joined by over 2,000 colleagues and MS professionals from across the country, and beyond. In addition to meeting with industry supporters and attending educational sessions, Brian and Tiffany had the opportunity to present on "Advocating for Day Programs as Part of a Comprehensive Care for MS". The information included the history of MS Achievement Centers, how adult day programs can help minimize risk for isolation and loneliness, and the benefits of social connection. We hope to continue sharing this essential information to advocate for programs such as the MSAC.

John A. Schafer, MD

Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center



Launching our Resource Series

Over the years, the MSAC has worked to be responsive to the needs of the MS community. Our MSAC group includes members, staff, volunteers and supporters. Since opening, in 2014, we have worked to grow the community in all areas, beyond our weekly *Empowered to Achieve* and *Achieving Wellness* programs, including education for the broader MS community. In response, we launched a monthly virtual education series to bring experts in MS care to speak on a variety of topics. The feedback has been extremely positive and we have many upcoming programs scheduled during the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.

Another need that has been identified is the ability to access resources. As such, we have initiated a Resource Series that we will be providing virtually. Initially, this will be offered on a quarterly basis. The series was launched in August, 2024 with 2-1-1 Sacramento and will continue with other local and national organizations in the coming months that provide resources to our MS community including Resources for Independent Living, Access Leisure, MS Focus: MS Foundation, and Elder Care Management. Please keep an eye on your email or visit our website at www.dignityhealth.org/msachievementcenter for up to date information and announcements regarding these programs. As always, we welcome your feedback and ideas for upcoming programs.



Featured App

Word Brain: Connect and transform letter tiles into words. If done in the correct order, you advance to the next level!



Recreation on the Horizon

Over the years, the recreation program at the MSAC has undergone a remarkable evolution. When COVID forced us to briefly pause our outings and programs, we didn't sit idly by.

Instead, we innovated by bringing specialists into your homes via Zoom, offering a unique and engaging experience. As we emerged from the pandemic, we added many of our annual events to the calendar, such as Halloween Bowling, Holiday Extravaganza and Annual Picnic. Over the past year, we have expanded our outings to include movies, museums, and ballet for fall prevention. We've forged valuable partnerships with the SacBallet, California State University Sacramento, and other amazing community organizations.

As of August this year, the interactive games group is back at the MSAC, providing members a chance to connect socially and engage in friendly competition. We're committed to reviving our aquatics program and enhancing our overall members' wellness. In a historic first for MSAC, we welcome Evan Cruz, our Sac State Recreational Therapy Intern, who will complete his 560-hour internship with us. Evan will be assisting the team and members with day to day activities. We look forward to his fresh ideas and fun activities.

Join us as we continue to grow, innovate, and provide exceptional experiences for our community over the next year.



SacBallet Fall Prevention class 2024

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Live Mindfully

Community - "a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals". As we have been discussing at the MSAC, feeling socially connected is vital to our overall health and well-being. Isolation puts a person at a significantly increased risk of heart disease and stroke, hypertension, diabetes, dementia and premature death. Additionally, it increases the susceptibility for infections and weaker immune responses, accelerates cognitive decline, and worsens the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Building, strengthening, and participating in communities is how we manage our risk for isolation and feel the positive impact of social connection. We are fortunate that we all share one very special community together - the MSAC! I hope you are able to identify a variety of other communities that you feel part of - support your health by staying connected!



Members represented from every program day at the 2023 Marathon

Program Offerings

For upcoming events please visit our website at dignityhealth.org/msachievementcenter

Mercy Foundation

Mercy Foundation is proud to serve as the philanthropic partner of the *John A. Schafer MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center* and provide vital support for the MSAC's life-affirming care for its members, and their loved ones.

Earlier this year, Mercy Foundation launched an MSAC Endowment Campaign to help assure that the Center can continue to provide programs and services for those in our region with MS. So far, over 100 members and staff have made generous contributions, a testament to their commitment and appreciation to the MSAC's strong community and programs!

To join these members and make a tax-deductible gift to support the MSAC, or to learn more about Mercy Foundation, please visit <https://supportmercyfoundation.org/msac-anniversary> or contact Mercy Foundation Senior Philanthropy Officer, Kathy Lopez, at (916) 851-2011 or kathy.lopez@dignityhealth.org. One hundred percent of your gift to Mercy Foundation will support the work of the MSAC and improve lives for years to come.



MERCY FOUNDATION

Inspiring philanthropy. Changing lives.

Thank You For Your Generous Support

Brian and Jennifer Hutchinson
Kaiser Permanente
Kramer Family Foundation
Todd and Amy Hoddick

Don Jarrell and Jona Milo
Kathleen L. Asay
Rebecca Kleiner and Ed O'Connell

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Kevin and Tiffany Malone
TG Therapeutics

***Contributions reflect donations of \$2,000 or greater, received January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024. A full list of donors is acknowledged through Mercy Foundation.*

If you would like to make a gift to support the John A. Schafer MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center, please visit <https://supportmercyfoundation.org>

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Maria Ramirez, 8/11/1953 - 4/24/2024

Maria was a part of our Friday program at the MSAC. She participated regularly over the course of seven years. Maria was a spitfire, to say the least, and she kept us all on our toes here at the MSAC. She cared deeply about her family, was a significant part of our week and will be deeply missed.



Paul Urvinitka, 8/11/1953 - 5/16/2024



Paul was part of our Thursday program at the MSAC and attended weekly over the course of a year. Although his time at the MSAC was limited, his impact will last. Paul was so kind and would light up when he spoke about his family. He was a true gem and he will be missed immensely.