

# DISTRICT 8

There are more than 44,000 people living with multiple sclerosis in California. Those numbers do not reflect the devastating impact this disease has on families, employers and our community. Turn this page over for the story of a real person living with multiple sclerosis in the district you serve.

**1,068** PEOPLE IN DISTRICT 8 LIVE WITH MS.

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THERE IS NO CURE FOR MS.

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THE LIFETIME COST OF MS IS NEARLY **\$3 MILLION**.

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**31%** OF PEOPLE WITH MS IN CALIFORNIA DEPEND ON SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE.

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**59%** OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH MS IN OUR REGION ARE UNEMPLOYED.

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EACH DISEASE-MODIFYING THERAPY FOR MS COSTS **MORE THAN \$30,000 PER YEAR**.

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**50%** OF PEOPLE WITH MS WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH DEPRESSION.

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THERE IS OVER **\$11 MILLION** IN ACTIVE RESEARCH GRANTS THAT TAKE PLACE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING STANFORD, UC SAN FRANCISCO, UC DAVIS AND THE GLADSTONE INSTITUTES. RESEARCH IS FOCUSED ON STOPPING DISEASE PROGRESSION, RESTORING LOST FUNCTION AND ENDING MS FOREVER.

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# MELANIE ROWEN



I was diagnosed with MS in 2007, when I was 30. I was two years out of law school and had just started my dream job as a civil rights attorney. I didn't want to worry about how MS would change the course of my life, but I knew that it would, unpredictably. I was struck by how much I had always taken for granted, like being able to see clearly, to handle very long hours and intense pressure at work, to stay healthy without taking medications with serious side effects. I don't take those things for granted anymore, and sometimes I can't do them. After five years at that dream job, I had to accept that MS has forced me to reconsider what a "dream job" is for me. Fortunately, I recently found a new, sustainable job that I love, counseling law students on public interest careers. I hope I'll be able to do this for as long as I want to. But I don't know that, because today's medications can only do so much to slow the progress of my MS. And they can't give me back the vision I've lost, or the feeling in my feet, for example. So when

I read about some of the research coming down the pike, especially therapies with potential to heal the damage MS has caused, I feel a tremendous sense of hope, and urgency. For me, a serious research breakthrough offers hope of an easier medication regime, of not having to account for the likelihood that I will need a wheelchair someday, of feeling more confident that I will continue to be able to perform at work, of knowing that things will be easier for my family. That's why MS research is so important to me – it lets me imagine my future without MS clouding the picture.