

Eric Hovde brings investment thinking to the MS research effort

by Martha King

When Dr. Tim Coetzee approached Eric Hovde about supporting the Society's Fast Forward initiative, the private investment manager felt he'd been brought a marvelous gift. "Fast Forward is right down the lines I'd long envisioned," he said. He and his wife Sharon signed on with an inspiring leadership gift of \$500,000.

Fast Forward is a strategic middleman. It is designed to accelerate the commercial development of innovative MS treatments. It seeks to bridge the gaping disconnect between key discoveries made in non-profit research centers, the large clinical trials needed to prove their benefits, and the scaled-up manufacturing and distribution system that delivers a successful innovation to people. The phrase "from the bench to the bedside," vastly simplifies what has to be in place so a brilliant laboratory finding becomes a prescription that can be filled.

Eric and Sharon know more clearly than many why acceleration is so important. Eric is one of those waiting. He was diagnosed in 1991.

"We've made some progress, slowly. But today scientists are

A very personal reason for supporting MS research.

closing in on ways to radically change what MS means. If we leverage MS dollars with biotech investment and if we leverage the growing knowledge base by collaborating with biotech companies, we have a great combination: capital and knowledge."

Eric Hovde believes Fast Forward has already shown what a good model this is for forging collaborative agreements. For details see: **FastForward.org**.

While the work goes on, Eric and Sharon and their two children share the challenges of all families living with MS. He has

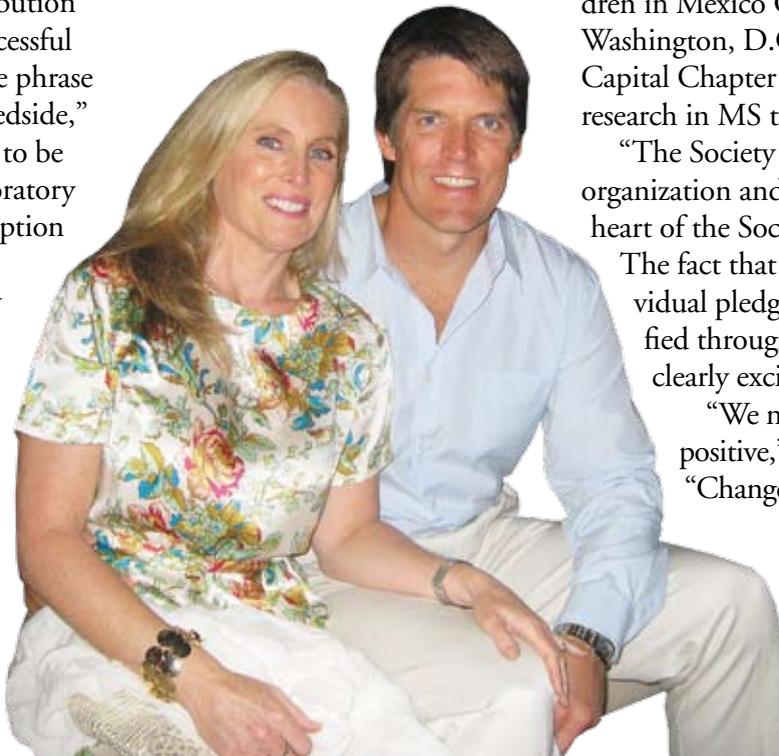
been, he says, luckier than many. His worst problem is MS pain. To combat his symptoms he's become a self-described exercise-aholic.

"When I was diagnosed, I was told not to do too much. It would heat me up. I didn't listen," he laughed. He also cleaned up his diet and, of great personal importance, MS deepened his faith.

"My faith helps me live without anxiety. I can focus on life and its richness, not the MS." Paradoxically he feels that MS has made him more compassionate and taught him to make more balanced decisions. Among the many global projects he supports are Hovde House for street children in Mexico City. At home in Washington, D.C., the National Capital Chapter and clinical research in MS top his list.

"The Society is a grassroots organization and Walk MS is the heart of the Society," he said. The fact that modest individual pledges can be magnified through Fast Forward clearly excites him.

"We need to stay positive," he summed up. "Changes are coming." ■



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