

# MSCONNECTION

MOVING TOWARD A WORLD FREE OF MS

WINTER 2011

## MS Shouldn't Stand In The Way Of Education

By BJ McBride

Every year, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society provides scholarships for a college education that high school seniors affected by MS are able to apply for. The key eligibility

requirement is that the student is personally living with MS or has a parent that does. The application process is open every year from October 1 to the middle of January. The award recipients are then notified around late April or early May. In Oklahoma, the youth programs coordinator is responsible for putting together a scholarship luncheon in June; where the recipients and their families all come together for the official presentation.

In 2009, the Oklahoma Chapter awarded 14 scholarships totaling \$15,000. In 2010, there were 13 scholarships awarded (including 1 top scholar) totaling \$14,000 to students in both Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Another responsibility of the youth programs coordinator is to keep in touch with the recipients after they have gone on to college. When asking previous recipients to provide a

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**Scholarship recipients at the 2010 Scholarship Luncheon**



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**National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society**

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statement on **“how the scholarship program has helped / is helping you with continuing your education”** this is what we received...

“I wouldn’t be able to attend college without it. It is a life changing opportunity to attend college without the burden of getting student loans over and over again.

It has made my college experience less stressful.”

### - **Ashlie Walker, 2010 Scholarship & National Top Scholar Recipient**

“Since my parents already sacrifice so much for my health, from the cost of medication and doctor visits, this scholarship actually gives my family a bit of relief from the cost of college. This scholarship has made my college life less stressful. I know that my parents already work so hard so this scholarship from the Society gives us one less thing to worry about. It also gives me the opportunity to give back to the Society. Without it, I would have to work to pay for college and I would be more likely to relapse because of the stress.

My last four years of college would have been completely different without this scholarship. And here I am, only a handful of hours short of graduation.”

### - **Channing Barker, 2007 Scholarship Recipient**

# On your tax return...

NEWS

make your mark to help create a world free of MS.

This year, people in Oklahoma can make a mark to create a world free of MS.

While doing your 2010 income taxes, please simply **check a box on line 12 of Schedule 511 G** to make a charitable contribution to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Each contribution will go directly toward MS research, programs and services that support the over 24,000 people in Oklahoma affected by MS. A small mark will make a big difference, in the movement toward a world free of MS.



Contact the National MS Society — Oklahoma or your tax preparer for information.

[nationalMSsociety.org](http://nationalMSsociety.org) | 1.800.344.4867

## Walk MS – Save the Date!

Walk to create a world free of MS! Walk MS is the rallying point of the MS movement, a community coming together to raise funds and celebrate hope for the future. Join the Movement! Register at a Walk MS event near you. Go to [walkMSok.org](http://walkMSok.org) for more details!

April 9, 2011 – Walk MS Lawton at Elmer Thomas Park

April 16, 2011 – Walk MS Tulsa at Temple Israel

April 30, 2011 – Walk MS Oklahoma City at Oklahoma City Zoo

May 21, 2011 – Walk MS Ardmore at Ardmore Regional Park



**Oklahoma City Top Fundraiser,  
Debbie Christensen &  
Dr. Gabriel Pardo**

# 10 Ways You Can Raise MS Awareness

Raising MS awareness can be easy and fun. Here are a few suggestions to get you started, just in time for National MS Awareness Week March 14 – 20:

1. Write a letter to your local newspaper about the importance of MS awareness.
2. Orange is the color of the National MS Society and the MS movement. During MS Awareness Week, wear something orange. Get your friends and family to join you; nothing stands out quite like a group of people clad in bright orange.
3. Call or e-mail your local, state and national legislators about issues important to persons with MS.
4. Volunteer at your local Society office.
5. Sign up for an upcoming Walk MS event.
6. Sign up for a 2011 Bike MS fundraising ride.
7. Make a donation to the Society to support research and programs for persons with MS.
8. Call five friends to remind them about MS Awareness Week.
9. Visit the Society at [nationalMSSociety.org](http://nationalMSSociety.org) to learn about new MS advances.
10. Share this issue of MSConnection with someone.



## MS Ambassadors Training March 5

By Clayton Miller

Want to volunteer but don't know where to start? On **March 5th** in Oklahoma City let the National MS Society give you the training, information and professional tools to be an MS Ambassador.

MS Ambassadors assist in increasing public awareness of multiple sclerosis in our community. These volunteers serve as spokespersons to represent our organization and educate the public about MS through presentations and to the media. MS Ambassadors provide the following services to the Society:

- Present to community groups
- Present to potential funders
- Serve as spokespersons to the media
- Participate in health fairs
- Serve as self-help group speakers

If you are interested in attending the MS Ambassador training on **March 5th** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or if you are interested in having an MS Ambassador speak at your civic organization or event, please contact Cristy Racy at 800-344-4867, option 1, extension 35122.

**Location: Walker Center for Arts and Sciences (Room 168) at Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma City.**

## MS Advocacy Training March 5

Advocates are non-partisan grassroots volunteers who champion the rights of people living with MS at the local, state and federal levels.

There are several bills which seek to replace language and may limit a person's rights in the workplace in regard to disabilities. Join us immediately following MS Ambassador training from 2 to 3 p.m.

# Family/Caregiver Self-Help Group Offered at The Center for Physical Challenges in Tulsa

If you are a caregiver looking for a support network, here is some information on a group that meets in Tulsa, Okla.

- When: Last Friday of each month at 3:00p.m.
- Where: The Center for Physical Challenges, 815 S. Utica, Tulsa, OK
- What: This self-help group is an opportunity for participants to discuss a range of issues related to caregiving. The group is facilitated by a licensed counselor.

If you have questions about the group, please feel free to contact The Center at 918-794-4508 or visit them online at [www.tulsacenter.org](http://www.tulsacenter.org)



## Volunteers Helping for the Holidays



**Volunteers and staff members pull together holiday visitation bags for Oklahomans with MS who are homebound, in nursing home facilities or in an assisted living center. Volunteers deliver the bags and also meet with the directors of nursing at facilities.**



## LEARN ABOUT MS— ANYTIME



Dr. Aaron Miller discusses Gilenya, the first FDA-approved oral therapy for MS.

For 10 years, MS Learn Online has provided educational webcasts, featuring health professionals from all over North America, accessible at [nationalMSSociety.org/mslearnonline](https://nationalMSSociety.org/mslearnonline) any time, day or night.

A recent feature presentation is “Getting a Good Night’s Sleep with MS,” in which Rock Heyman, MD, chief of the division of Neuroimmunology and director of the MS Center, the University of Pittsburgh, explains why people with MS seem to be more prone to sleep disorders. He has some tips for dealing with the problem.

Another new presentation is on Gilenya, the first oral disease-modifying therapy to be FDA-approved. Aaron Miller, MD, professor of neurology at Mount Sinai and medical director at the Corinne Goldsmith Dickinson Center for Multiple Sclerosis in New York City, discusses Gilenya in two sessions covering how it works,

who might benefit, pros, cons and potential side effects. There are more than 50 other Learn Online videos available. Transcripts (.pdf format) and podcasts (.mp3 audio format) are available for most programs

Correspondents who interview the MS experts not only have a professional background in broadcasting, they have MS themselves. “So what they want to know is often what other people with MS want to know,” said Julie Gibson, special projects consultant for the Society.

Sign up at [nationalmssociety.org/mslearnonline](https://nationalmssociety.org/mslearnonline) to receive an e-mail whenever a new webcast debuts.

### Explore Learn Online videos online:

**Basic Facts of MS, Treatments, Symptom Management, Healthy Living, Progressive MS, Research, Family Life and Relationships, Employment and Insurance, and En Español.**

On the first and third Thursdays of each month, two new videos are added. An update on disease-modifying therapy is generally added once a year.

### In a hurry?

Visit **Daily Minutes**. In 60 seconds you’ll get some basics on Who Gets MS, What is Myelin, What is Relapsing-Remitting MS—and more. Click on the Daily Minute link in the blue box at [nationalMSSociety.org/mslearnonline](https://nationalMSSociety.org/mslearnonline).

## THE WORLD OF MS RESEARCH

In October, more than 5,500 neurologists and other investigators from around the world covered almost every aspect of current MS research in some 900 scientific presentations and posters at the annualECTRIMS (European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis) conference in Gothenberg, Sweden.

### Some research highlights

A newly completed two-year, phase III trial of **teriflunomide**, an oral compound that inhibits specific immune cells, in 1,088 people with relapsing MS, found positive results. Dr. Paul O'Connor of the University of Toronto reported that two different doses of teriflunomide significantly reduced the rate of MS relapses by up to 31.5% compared to placebo, and that the higher dose reduced the risk of disability progression by 29.8%. It also reduced the risk of new MS lesions and reduced disease activity. Additional clinical trials are under way.

Other medications also show promise at various trial stages. An oral compound called **firategrast** caused a significant decrease in the rate of new MRI-detected lesions in a six-month trial in relapsing-remitting MS. **Ocrelizumab**, which targets and kills immune B cells, reduced new lesions by at least 89% over placebo in a 24-week trial.

**Two different doses of teriflunomide significantly reduced the rate of MS relapses by up to 31.5% compared to placebo, and the higher dose reduced the risk of disability progression by 29.8%.**

In a separate session, Dr. Antonio Uccelli of the University of Genoa described attempts to stop MS progression using infusions of an individual's own **bone marrow or blood stem cells** (mesenchymal cells). Dr. Uccelli is now collaborating on a study that he hopes will show that these cells are beneficial.

### Restoring function

Several research teams reported progress in improving quality of life and specific symptoms, including **fatigue and mobility issues**, through group physical therapy, and supervised aerobics, yoga and resistance training classes. Another study suggested that memory training can improve **brain function**. Many

reports focused on **CCSVI** (chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency), with mixed or conflicting results. Lab studies identified additional molecules that may block the ability of myelin-making cells to repair damage caused by MS; selectively turning them off could be useful for **encouraging myelin repair** in people with MS.

### Risk factors

Dr. Trond Riise of the University of Bergen reviewed the growing list of factors that may contribute to an individual's **susceptibility to developing MS**, and pointed to current studies that may lead to a better understanding of the interactions and variations of these multiple risk factors.

For a more complete report on the conference, search "ECTRIMS" at **[nationalmssociety.org](http://nationalmssociety.org)**.

## THE FIRST STEPS TO SMART MONEY MANAGEMENT

BY REBECCA A. CLAY

Financial planning is crucial for people with MS and their families: As the disease continues, expenses tend to grow which may bring difficult financial choices. Early planning can help.

### Get started: Call us

Begin by calling 1-800-344-4867 to connect with an MS Navigator™. This highly trained professional can refer you to service providers who can help you address issues like health insurance, employment and taxes.

### Next: Read up

One key resource the Navigator will recommend is a brochure called **Adapting: Financial Planning for a Life with Multiple Sclerosis**.

Full of worksheets, tips, and references, the 72-page publication is an overview of your financial options. The Navigator can mail you a free copy, or you can download it at [nationalmssociety.org/financialplanning](http://nationalmssociety.org/financialplanning).

### Finally: Talk to a professional

You may need more specific information, which means consulting one-on-one with a financial planning professional.

Through the Society's partnership with the Society of Financial Service Professionals (SFSP), the Financial Education Partners

Program provides free personal counseling.

In this program, you receive advice during a telephone session with a volunteer from SFSP's membership. These volunteers are certified public accountants, attorneys, or other professionals.

The more honest and open you are the more your advisor can help. Sessions are completely confidential, and the volunteers are not there to sell you anything but to share their financial knowledge.

### Forge a workable plan to prevent crises like foreclosure from occurring.

Be aware that the program cannot help with crisis needs, such as foreclosure assistance. It is not a funding source and offers no programs for indigent care. The idea is to help you forge a workable plan to prevent crises

from occurring in the future.

While the advisor can't serve as a long-term advisor, he or she can get you started toward whatever your financial goals might be.

*Rebecca A. Clay is an award-winning writer in Washington, DC. She specializes in health issues.*

## FREE TAX PREPARATION SERVICES

The IRS will help you prepare tax returns. The online Interactive Tax Assistant answers questions about deductions, eligibility for credit and more. For those who qualify, the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program offers **free** tax help by certified volunteers. Call 1-800-906-9887. For general information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or the IRS general number, 1-800-829-1040.