



## **Rhode Island - Greater New England Chapter Realignment Frequently Asked Questions**

The National MS Society is working to create a world free of MS. We mobilize people and resources to drive research for a cure and to address the challenges of everyone affected by multiple sclerosis. To do this, we must be bold and imaginative.

With this in mind and after careful consideration, the Rhode Island and Greater New England chapters are joining together on October 1, 2014, to serve more than 21,000 people living with MS in Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Moving forward as Greater New England, our goals are simple: to maintain programs and services, improve operating efficiencies, raise more money, and increase our commitment to MS research.

The National MS Society is extremely excited about this opportunity to better serve you, and will continue to provide the outstanding level of service and helpful resources that you have come to expect from us as we move forward to achieve a world free of MS.

Below are some answers to questions you might have. If you would like to speak with someone directly, please call **1-800-344-4867, option 2**, and ask for Kathy Mechnig.

### **1. Why are the Rhode Island and Greater New England chapters joining forces?**

By joining together, people affected by MS in Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont will benefit from the depth, experience, and stability of a larger staff. Programs and services will be maintained at a steady level. Fundraising expertise will be strengthened to generate increased revenue, and administrative and overhead costs will be streamlined to allow a greater percentage of money raised to be spent on our mission.

### **2. Could Rhode Island have remained a separate chapter?**

After careful consideration, the Rhode Island Board of Trustees decided it was in the best interest of people living with MS to join forces with Greater New England. The Trustees determined this was the best option to continue providing a high level of programs and services for people with MS, to connect everyone who seeks to JOIN THE MOVEMENT<sup>®</sup>, and to fund cutting-edge research to STOP disease progression, RESTORE lost function, and END MS forever.

### **3. How will this change affect MS programs and services in Rhode Island?**

Joining forces will ensure the continued delivery of quality programs and services to people affected by MS, including MS Navigator<sup>®</sup> services and connections, plus teleconferences, MS scholarships, and public policy advocacy. A new case management program, called Home LINKS, will provide hands-on assistance to Ocean State residents with MS to help them live independently and safely. Financial assistance will still be offered; however, some changes to the policy will occur and it will be managed centrally at the chapter headquarters in Massachusetts. If you currently receive financial assistance, you will be contacted directly with details about the changes. Educational programs and self-help groups in neighboring Massachusetts communities will also be open to Rhode Islanders.

### **4. How will self-help groups be affected?**

There are six volunteer-led self-help groups in Rhode Island. They are critical to furthering the mission of the Society and will continue to receive strong support and training from the Society.

**5. How will this change affect Society fundraising events in Rhode Island?**

All National MS Society fundraising events in Rhode Island will remain in place. Over time, the benefits of being part of a larger chapter should help these events contribute even more to the MS community. For example, up until now, Rhode Island has not been able to market Bike MS, Walk MS, or MS Jet Pull outside the state. All fundraising events can now be promoted more broadly across the region, which should result in increased participation and growth. Existing online fundraising accounts for participants remain intact, including usernames and passwords.

**6. Will there be a new web site or phone number?**

Regardless of where you live or what chapter serves your area, you can find all things MS at [www.nationalMSSociety.org](http://www.nationalMSSociety.org). Enter your zip code to find local activities in programs, fundraising, and volunteering. Or, call 1-800-344-4867 to speak with a National MS Society professional, who can help with information and resources; to reach local staff, select option No. 2.

**7. What about the publications I receive?**

We are committed to providing important information on research, programs, volunteering, and fundraising. Anyone with MS will continue to receive the chapter newsletter, *MSConnection*. The newsletter will transition to an electronic format on the Society website, but in the spring and fall a list of community programs, including information and resources will be mailed in hard copy.

Do we have your email address? Email has become a very cost-effective way for the Society to deliver information to people with MS. The money we save in printing and postage helps us give more money to research and programs. Please make sure that your current email address is on file with the Society by calling 1-800-344-4867.

**8. Will there still be an office and staff in Rhode Island?**

Yes. The office in Warwick, RI, will remain open to support programs, services, and advocacy for families affected by MS, as the staff continue to partner with local companies, volunteers, and organizations to ensure that Society fundraising activities succeed and grow.

**9. What will happen to the Rhode Island Board of Trustees?**

All RI Trustees have been invited to join the Greater New England Board. Trustees may also join the Leadership Council, which actively supports local awareness, fundraising, and outreach efforts.

**10. Who will be the Chapter President and where will they be located?**

After a successful career as RI Chapter President spanning 29 years, Kathy Mechnig is leaving the Society as of Sept. 30. Lori Espino is the Greater New England Chapter President, and has been with the Society for 12 years. She works out of the Waltham, Mass., office but is only a phone call, 1-781-890-6097, or email away, [lori.espino@nmss.org](mailto:lori.espino@nmss.org). She welcomes your thoughts and ideas on ways to maximize our new partnership to achieve our unified vision of a world free of MS.

**11. How can I get to know the new Chapter President?**

An open house will be planned at the Society office in Warwick, plus additional opportunities will be planned for Rhode Islanders to meet Lori.