GET INVOLVED
Participate in a Walk MS®, Bike MS®, Challenge Walk MS®, MuckFest® MS, or Do It Yourself Fundraising MS event.

nationalMSsociety.org/getinvolved

DONATE
In cash, by check or online at nationalMSsociety.org/donate

EMAIL NEWSLETTER
Breaking news, including research developments, and available resources and services: nationalMSsociety.org/signup

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (“Society”) is proud to be a source of information on topics related to MS. The information provided is based on professional advice, published experience, and expert opinion, but does not constitute medical or legal advice. For specific medical advice, consult a qualified physician. For specific legal advice, consult a qualified attorney.

The Society does not endorse products, services or manufacturers. Such names appear here solely because they are considered helpful information. The Society assumes no liability for the recipient’s use of any product or service mentioned. The Society undertakes no responsibility to verify whether the information provided by each service provider is accurate. The Society undertakes no responsibility to verify whether the service provider is appropriately licensed and certified and has applicable insurance coverage.

Early and ongoing treatment with an FDA-approved therapy can make a difference for people with multiple sclerosis. Learn about your options by talking to your healthcare professional and contacting the National MS Society at 1-800-344-4867 or nationalMSsociety.org.

Greetings!

You may have noticed this newsletter feels a little different. It’s a new look in a new year! MS Connection is an important connection to the vital local information and resources you need to live your best life, no matter where you live.

As we welcome spring, we also welcome the Walk MS® and Bike MS® seasons! Walk MS helps us team up with friends, loved ones and coworkers to change the world for everyone affected by MS. Together, we become a powerful force. If you have not already registered, find your location and sign up at walkMS.org.

For the first time in the Society’s history, we have a bold campaign that provides an inspiring rallying point for every person in the MS movement. It’s called Breakthrough MS; read more on page 6.

Speak up for MS Awareness Week (March 5-11) and all year long; learn how on page 5. And join fellow MS activists in supporting MS-movement advocacy priorities at nationalMSsociety.org/MSactivist.

Please enjoy the newsletter and take advantage of the myriad ways to get and stay connected. You’ll find wellness and other program opportunities on page 7.

We have so much progress to make together — connecting, giving, raising funds, speaking out and more!
COMBINING PASSIONS TO CREATE A CURE

Bike MS fundraiser uses family business to make a difference

Rita Joubran has turned her centuries-old family business into a way to make a difference in the MS movement.

“I’m always trying to find ways to give back,” Rita said. “And people feel good about buying something that makes a difference. It’s a win-win.”

Rita’s father, George Abdallah, immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, bringing a few gallons of olive oil made from olives hand-picked from the family’s ancient groves in Tanbouret, a tiny village in the South of Lebanon. Word of the family’s delicious oil quickly spread among friends and Old Country Olive Oil was created.

Today, the National MS Society receives $5 for every bottle sold, and Rita is committed to ending MS forever — not only for her, but also for her children.

“It’s an unpredictable disease. It affects every day things we take for granted — not being able to tend to your children because you’re so tired, not being able to blow dry your hair because the blow dryer feels like it weighs 1,000 pounds, not being able to button your shirt.”

In addition to her fundraising through Old Country Olive Oil, Rita and her husband, Nabil, participate in BP MS 150 and have raised more than $335,000 in the past six years.

“I’m grateful to be living in a day and age where we have options. Look at how many more disease-modifying therapies we have just since 2009. It’s neat to be a small part of it,” Rita said.

To participate with Rita in BP MS 150, April 29–30, visit bikeMS.org.

To learn more about her company, visit oldcountry-oliveoil.com.
By the spring of 2016, Alec Phillips had come to terms with his early retirement from the police force due to his MS symptoms. He and his wife Carson were expecting a child, and the couple had worked hard to recruit close friends and family to their team to raise funds for Walk MS.

The team was enjoying the morning at their team tent, when Alec turned around to find the entire police force approaching. He soon found out they’d registered for the walk months before and fundraised — significantly — in secret in order to surprise Alec with their support that morning.

“I was speechless. I mean I knew they had my back, but it meant a lot [to have their support],” says Alec, “Especially for my friends and family to see it.”

The group included “the entire department — everyone from the Chief down. They even did a convoy to the event [in police vehicles].” The morning culminated with an on-stage presentation of Alec’s retirement badge.

Now Alec is embarking on a photography business, and he, son Mack (born November 2016), Carson and their friends, family and colleagues — old and new — are moving life forward. Walk MS and other fundraising for the MS movement are surely in their plans for years to come.

To register for Walk MS, make a donation or to start your team, visit walkMS.org.
MS AWARENESS WEEK
MARCH 5–11

You can help ensure that more people understand what life with MS can be like, and engage more people in the MS movement to do something about it.

When we connect with one another, we become stronger than MS — we make breakthroughs that we could not do alone. Please share your breakthroughs on any social media with the hashtag #WeAreStrongerThanMS. We’ll bring your post together with those shared by others across the nation — in a single location where all can find solutions, strength and inspiration through collective experiences during MS Awareness Week and throughout the year.

Together we are stronger.
Together we will Breakthrough MS.

Visit WeAreStrongerThanMS.org

Top: Amy, diagnosed in 1997, doesn’t let MS stop her from dancing. She dances from her chair and is also a choreographer.
Bottom: Steve, diagnosed in 2006, still keeps surfing central in his life in spite of his MS.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK — APRIL 23–29

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

The Society has celebrated National Volunteer Week annually since the 1970s by honoring YOU!

Thank you for all you’ve done so far, and all that you will do and give in the years to come as part of the MS movement. Volunteers are changing lives every day!

Find your next opportunity at nationalMSsociety.org/volunteer

Volunteers at Walk MS®
The National MS Society has embarked on a

$1 BILLION DOLLAR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

to fuel breakthroughs that will change the world for people with MS.

People affected by MS are relying on us to do whatever it takes to accelerate breakthroughs — life-changing breakthroughs that enable people to live their best lives today and research breakthroughs that will end MS forever.

Every breakthrough matters.
Every dollar counts.
Give your best gift today.

TOGETHER WE WILL BREAKTHROUGH MS.

Learn more and watch the video at BREAKTHROUGHMS.ORG

MS ACTIVISM

The Society’s top policy priorities include:

• Continuous, quality health insurance coverage
• Affordability and accessibility of MS medications

Advocacy news can change rapidly — stay up to date and take action by visiting: nationalMSsociety.org/advocacypriorities
RESILIENCE AND MS
People with MS and their families may find that the physical, emotional, spiritual or other challenges of living with the disease can feel overwhelming. But practicing behaviors that promote resilience can help not just to cope, but to thrive. Resilience helps create a mindset of growth and opportunities, of seeing obstacles as challenges rather than threats.

Some people have a natural tendency to be optimistic and to look for solutions. Even if that’s not the case for you, strategies to build resilience can be learned and practiced.

A new program is available 24/7 online and in-person at locations across the country — find your program at nationalMSsociety.org/resilience or call 1-800-344-4867.

MS AND WELLNESS
Webinar & Telelearning Series:
A Collaboration with Can Do MS

View the full list and descriptions, and register to join (online or by phone) at nationalMSsociety.org/telelearning or 1-800-344-4867.

EVERYDAY MATTERS
The practice of positive psychology is centered on helping people thrive and become happier. Increase your knowledge of positive psychology principles and receive support to develop a personalized, concrete plan for implementing these principles and for achieving greater life satisfaction.

As one participant reported, “Everyday Matters provided me with real-life strategies I can use to handle problems, not only dealing with MS, but in life.”

Start now at nationalMSsociety.org/everydaymatters or 1-800-344-4867.
SUPPORT, CONNECTION & SELF-HELP GROUPS

Come together with people who share common life experiences or goals for support, education and mutual aid. The benefits of participation include:

- Learn new information and strategies for preventing or confronting problems
- Find support from others — and the opportunity to help others
- Build confidence in your ability to cope and address issues

There are hundreds of support and self-help groups for people living with MS and their loved ones. The groups meet at various times and locations, often monthly, and are wonderful sources of friendship, understanding, compassion and information. The groups are diverse — some broad in their focus, and others rallying around activities, life stages or specific experiences. They may discuss wellness or research topics — or just provide a great chance to socialize; participants can range from young adults to care partners. If you are not currently a member of a group, please consider joining one.

For an up-to-date list of groups and meetings — including group-leader contact information and group location — visit nationalMSsociety.org/SHG, call 1-800-344-4867 or email contactusNMSS@nmss.org

DO IT YOURSELF (DIY) FUNDRAISING MS

With DIY Fundraising MS, your talents and hobbies can become a fundraising event of your own! Whether you like to host parties, put on concerts, organize bake sales, or dance, the only limit is your imagination.

Rally your friends, family and coworkers to do something about MS today! For details on how to kick-start your DIY fundraiser, visit diyMS.org

These friends got creative and threw a masquerade party for their DIY fundraiser.
Over the years, this particular MS support group has gone through a lot of changes, but one thing has stayed the same: the spirit of the people who are a part of it. The group doesn’t have an official name, nor does it have an official leader; instead, each person gives what they are good at, offering different activities or events each week.

“We try to keep a structure so people feel like there’s a good reason to go to the meeting,” says Chapman.

Chapman, a former social worker, helps devise what she terms “mental-health activities” that the whole group does together. “We do brain-stimulation games — just fun things to stimulate our synapses and keep ourselves mentally alert.”

A different week, someone else may lead craft activities, or the group may hold a potluck dinner or watch a movie. Deena Lisak, a certified MS nurse, often discusses medical issues and new MS research.

However, most important, Chapman feels, is the opportunity for people to interact. “I look forward to seeing people,” Sue says. “It’s a good social connection.” Even if they don’t meet because of weather or other reasons, they still connect by phone or email.

The group is open to anyone living with MS. “It’s diverse,” says Chapman. “Not everyone has the same symptoms or limitations.” Instead, some members manage cognitive issues, while others may have mobility challenges. “We welcome new people,” she adds. “Come see what we’re all about.”

To search groups nationwide, visit nationalMSsociety.org/groups, connect online at MSconnection.org or call 1-800-344-4867. No group near you? Talk with an MS Navigator about establishing one at 1-800-344-4867.
Bike MS® is more than a ride. It’s an experience grounded in camaraderie and marked by passion, inspiration, determination and pure enjoyment. It will be an experience you’ll never forget, shared with new friends and old.

Much more than the ride of a lifetime, with each pedal stroke you’ll be helping us reach our goal — a world free of MS.