A HELPING PAW

Venus the service dog helps Mike and Ann Bunting with many things, and one of them is participating on their Walk MS team, The Fighting Shamrocks, while wearing her special shamrock-patterned collar.

“We’re always accepting people to be part of the team,” say the Trenton, Michigan, residents.

Thirty-six years ago, Mike Bunting was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. And, 10 years ago, the Buntings’ children decided it was time for some extra help. “While my daughter was at college,” remembers Ann, “she filled out an application for Mike to get a service dog.” After an interview to see what services Mike needed, the couple settled in for a two-year wait while Venus was trained to perform those services.

“She opens the sliding door to the back yard, she gets things that I drop and she gets the phone for me. But her primary purpose is to help me if I fall or stumble,” says Mike, who now has secondary progressive MS. “She will seek out help,” adds Ann. “She comes to me and her tail will be going a mile a minute. She’ll paw me and then she leads me to Mike.”

Like many service dogs, Venus also offers emotional support. “We take her virtually everywhere,” says Ann, which also makes her part of how they educate people about MS. “With Venus, people will talk to Mike. Without her, they don’t.”

“We put up a little sign saying, ‘I’m bored,’” jokes Mike, who uses a wheelchair and will wait in it while Ann is shopping. “We try to have fun with it, but a lot of people don’t know what from fetching the phone to raising awareness about MS, service dog Venus is a huge help to Ann and Mike Bunting.
Our MS movement is canvassing the Greater Carolinas community! Our team of volunteers and staff continue to drive the Society’s work forward in each corner of North and South Carolina. We strive to engage and support people with each connection we make. Have you connected with us lately?

Every person affected by MS and those who care for someone with this disease has a different way of connecting. To that end, hopefully you’ve seen the myriad of activities we’ve offered in a community near you and have found the right connection point for yourself. If not, call or visit us online.

**Below includes some of what we’ve been doing:**

We rallied our MS movement through Walk MS and Challenge Walk MS with more than 8,000 Walkers and volunteers taking part in 19 different Walks, plus the three-day, 50-mile Challenge Walk, raising an excess of $1.5 million!

Staff attended self-help groups in Asheville and Hendersonville, the greater Triad area, Rocky Mount, Roxboro, Columbia, Myrtle Beach, Bluffton, Charleston, Spartanburg, Shelby, Goldsboro and everywhere in between to ensure members know how to reach MS navigators and understand the variety of services offered by the Society.

Volunteer community leaders in High Point, NC and Myrtle Beach, SC held successful fundraising events which gathered hundreds in their local areas to help fuel MS research and Society services.

More than seven hundred people attended family events, social engagements and educational programs in Durham, Charlotte, Cary, Charleston and beyond.

Over 300 activists took to Capitol Hill in March to advocate for issues affecting people living with MS, including the request to hear patient testimony around the issues surrounding Access to MS Medications.

While all of this community work is happening, MS research is still at the forefront. You’ll read in the pages ahead that the FDA has designated two potential treatments for progressive MS as “Fast Track Products” meaning there is great promise for these treatments on the horizon.

Thank you for all that you have done to connect with and engage in our MS movement. We continue to explore ways to strengthen our community MS networks and we’d like to hear from you. Please, contact me or any of our staff if you would like to connect with others in your area. And don’t forget to utilize our most valuable resources by visiting www.nationalMSsociety.org or calling 1-800-344-4867.

Sincerely,

Kristina Fransel McGraw
Greater Carolinas President
MS is. We didn’t know what it was when we first got it.” Recently, the Bunting family had to learn even more about the disease when their daughter, Rebecca, was diagnosed with it. “It was a shock,” says Mike. “We had been told the chance of our daughters getting the disease was slim.”

Today, the family bands together even more. “We had a team for Mike, and now we have a team for Mike and Becky,” says Ann. “Venus always participates—people love her.”

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Saturday, November 19
Raleigh
Columbia
Charlotte

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE:

www.nationalMSsociety.org/greatercarolinas
nct@nmss.org
MSconnection.org

PREFER A DIGITAL COPY?
If you would like to receive an online version of MS Connection, please email us at nct@nmss.org, and we will email you a copy instead.
OCRELIZUMAB GRANTED “BREAKTHROUGH THERAPY DESIGNATION” FOR PRIMARY-PROGRESSIVE MS BY FDA

Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, has announced that the experimental therapy ocrelizumab has been granted “Breakthrough Therapy designation” by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of people with primary-progressive MS. This designation means that once Genentech files for approval of ocrelizumab to treat primary-progressive MS, the review process can be expedited. According to a February 16 press release, Genentech plans to pursue marketing approval for both primary-progressive MS and relapsing multiple sclerosis.

“We are encouraged by this news and look forward to following the FDA’s actions regarding ocrelizumab,” says Timothy Coetzee, PhD, Chief Advocacy, Services and Research Officer at the National MS Society. “People with progressive MS need solutions and we are hopeful that this is the first of many treatments that will be developed for this form of MS.”

Breakthrough Therapy designation can expedite the development and review of therapies intended to treat a serious condition when clinical evidence indicates that the treatment may demonstrate substantial improvement over available therapy. The designation was granted to ocrelizumab based on phase III trial results presented at the European Committee for Treatment and Research in MS in 2015. Compared to placebo, ocrelizumab significantly reduced the risk of progression of clinical disability by 24% in 732 people with primary-progressive MS.

Ocrelizumab is a monoclonal antibody that binds to a molecule (CD20) on the surface of immune cells called B cells, and depletes them from circulation. B cells have several functions including making antibodies, and they may play a role in immune-system mediated damage to brain and spinal cord tissues in MS. Ocrelizumab is administered by intravenous infusion every 6 months. There currently are no FDA-approved disease-modifying therapies to treat primary progressive MS, which is characterized by steady worsening of neurologic functioning, without any distinct relapses or attacks, or periods of remission.

February 17, 2016.
Read more at http://bit.ly/1VVLWGg
MN-166 (IBUDILAST) GRANTED “FAST TRACK” DESIGNATION BY FDA TO SPEED ITS POTENTIAL APPROVAL FOR PROGRESSIVE MS

MediciNova, Inc. has announced that the experimental oral therapy MN-166 (ibudilast) has been designated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a “Fast Track Product” in terms of its development as a possible treatment of progressive MS, including secondary progressive and primary progressive MS. Fast Track is a process designed to facilitate the development, and expedite the review of, treatments for serious conditions and fill an unmet medical need (read more on the FDA Web site). Fast Track would apply once the company submits the data from phase III trials to the FDA, along with a New Drug Application.

Investigators are currently conducting a phase II clinical trial of ibudilast in 250 people with progressive forms of MS, at 28 sites nationwide. The study, called the SPRINT-MS trial, is principally funded by the National Institutes of Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS), with additional support by MediciNova and the National MS Society. This trial is ongoing with all participants enrolled, and is expected to report results in 2017.

“This is good news for people with progressive forms of MS, for which there are few treatment options,” says Bruce Bebo, PhD, Executive Vice President, Research at the National MS Society. “We look forward to the completion of this groundbreaking clinical trial and the FDA’s Fast Track review of the results.”

Among other actions, ibudilast inhibits an enzyme called phosphodiesterase, and has been shown to protect brain tissue in animal models. While considered a “New Chemical Entity” in the United States and Europe, ibudilast is marketed in Japan and Korea to treat asthma and symptoms from cerebrovascular disorders. In a previous study, ibudilast did not reduce relapses or MRI-observed new lesions in a phase II trial involving people with relapsing MS. However, some evidence that this agent could protect the nervous system from damage (neuroprotection) was observed, which is why it’s being tested further in people with progressive forms of MS.

March 22, 2016 (Neurology 2010;74:1033)
If you care for or care about someone living with MS, we hope you can attend the Triangle Caregivers Conference. Again this year, there will be two locations.

**Tuesday, June 21**
8am-3:30 pm  
McKimmon Center, Raleigh

**and**

**Tuesday, June 28**
8am-3:30 pm  
Durham Convention Center, Durham

For more details, and to register, go to www.trianglecaregiversconference.org.

**WEBINAR/TELELEARNING SERIES**

This series brings together a collaboration of MS experts to help you build strategies to live your best life with MS. Each free webinar and telelearning program features two presenters with time for Q&A. Join us online or by phone on a variety of topics (see below). Webinars are scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month, 8-9:15 pm ET.

**Upcoming topics:**

- **Traveling with MS** – June 14th
- **Understanding and Managing Your Spasticity** – July 12th
- **Mood in MS** – August 9th
- **Health Insurance** – September 13th

**NORTH AMERICAN EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

“MANAGING BLADDER AND BOWEL ISSUES”

People with MS may find that bladder and bowel symptoms prevent them from fully interacting with their community, friends and family. It doesn’t need to be that way. Once diagnosed, these common MS symptoms are manageable and treatable. Learn about the latest advances and recommendations from clinicians at the forefront of MS research and treatment, and from people living with MS as they share experiences and insights. The program will consist of a video highlighting the experiences of people living with MS and health care professionals. Following the video, a health care professional will facilitate a question and answer period. Participants will also receive a program booklet on this topic.

**Tuesday, May 24th | 6-8 pm**  
Speakers: Jacqueline Lyle, RN, and Chelsi Smith, RN  
Carolinus Rehabilitation  
275 Beatty Dr.  
Belmont, NC 28012

**Tuesday, June 14th | 6-8 pm**  
Speaker: Dr. E.D. Guyton, Jr.  
Hilton Garden Inn  
2671 Hospitality Blvd.  
Florence, SC 29501

**Thursday, June 9th | 6-8 pm**  
Speaker: Dr. Jessica Floyd  
Embassy Suites-Greystone  
200 Stoneridge Dr.  
Columbia, SC 29210
SC AFRICAN AMERICAN CONFERENCE

MIND, BODY and SPIRIT: Join the celebration of this annual education conference for African Americans and their families. Enjoy speakers, networking, sharing coping tips, fellowship and more!

Saturday, September 24th at the Medallion Conference Center, Columbia, SC

Panelists: Dr. Mary Hughes (neurologist); Dr. Evelyn Hunter (psychologist); Dr. Zelda Council (nutritionist); Chris Jenkins (fitness instructor).

Pre-Event Social on Friday, September 23rd at the Medallion Conference Center.

CHARLOTTE RESEARCH NIGHT

Join Dr. Donna Graves from Carolinas HealthCare System for an update on the latest discoveries in MS research. She will discuss details of some of the emerging therapies in MS, as well as discuss the latest findings for complementary therapies and wellness approach to MS management. Lastly, Dr. Graves will present some of the clinical trial opportunities in the Charlotte region.

Tuesday, June 14th | 7-9 pm
Crowne Plaza Charlotte Executive Park
5700 Westpark Drive
Charlotte, NC 28217

EVERY CONNECTION COUNTS

The National MS Society connection programs bring together people who share common life experiences for support and education. Learn new information and strategies for managing your MS and find support from others.

- MSconnection.org – join our online community to support one another and explore issues that shape your world.
- Join a local self-help group (see pages 8-9)
- Connect with peers one-on-one to find someone who can provide you with helpful tips, suggestions and emotional support. Learn more by calling 1-800-344-4867.
- MS Friends connects you with volunteers living with MS. Call 1-866-673-7436 for more details.

Questions? Contact an MS Navigator at 1-800-344-4867.

PT EVALUATION AND EXERCISE PROGRAM

The Medical University of SC (MUSC) in Charleston is holding a personalized PT evaluation and exercise program for people living with MS. The two-part clinic will be held on the following dates:

Tues., July 26 and Tues., August 2nd from 1-3 pm
Wed., July 27 and Wed., August 3 from 1-3 pm

Attendees must participate in both days of one of the sessions. For more details, call Eric Monsch at monsch@musc.edu or call 843-792-0091 to sign up. Deadline is July 19th.
**SELF-HELP GROUPS:**

**NORTH CAROLINA SELF-HELP GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Group Details</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamance County</td>
<td>2nd Thurs, 10:00 am, Burlington, Annie 336-226-7712</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaufort County, NC</td>
<td>1st Wed, 4:30 pm, Washington, Sondra 252-916-5233</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buncombe County</td>
<td>“Oh! You Look So Good” Group, 1st Tues, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Asheville, Marci 828-298-1727, Virginia 828-683-9564, Awareness Group- MS Community of WNC, 1st and 3rd Thurs, 12:00-2:00 pm, Asheville, Leslie 828-772-4920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carteret County</td>
<td>Last Mon, 6:00 pm, Morehead City, Kathryn, 252-241-4719</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chatham County</td>
<td>3rd Tues, 6:00 pm – 7:45 pm, Pittsboro, Eileen 919-535-4135 or <a href="mailto:PittsboroMS@gmail.com">PittsboroMS@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chatham County</td>
<td>3rd Tues, 6:00 pm, Shelbi, Kristen 704-481-9628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumberland County</td>
<td>3rd Sat, 12:00-2:00 pm, Fayetteville, Jackie 910-303-8665, Paulette 910-487-3093</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davie County</td>
<td>2nd Mon, 6:00 pm, Jackie 336-909-5877</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durham County</td>
<td>3rd Tues, 6:00 pm, Phyllis 919-471-3058</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edgecombe/Nash Counties</td>
<td>2nd Fri, 11:00 am, Rocky Mount, Kat 252-972-2232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elkin/Tri-County</td>
<td>1st Mon, 10:00 am, Deb 336-835-8419</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forsyth County</td>
<td>Kernersville, Newly Diagnosed and Minimally Affected, 4th Tues, 6:15 pm, Sheri 336-992-2134, Matt 336-750-0732, Tabor Cares Group, 1st Thurs, 7:00 pm, Winston-Salem, Marianne 336-765-4361, You, Me and the Lord, too!, 2nd and 4th Tues, 10:00 am, Winston-Salem, Dolores 336-784-8460</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilford County</td>
<td>Greensboro, Aquatics Exercise Group, M-W-F 11:00 am, Wyn 336-852-2182, Greensboro Men’s Group, Every Wed, 9:30 am, John 336-545-0100, High Point/Jamestown, But You Look So Good, 2nd Sat. 11:00 am, Lisa 336-454-6785</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henderson County</td>
<td>Social Group, 3rd Thurs, 9:30 am, Hendersonville, Cathy 828-693-8172, Jo Ann 425-420-7070, Evening Group, 1st Thurs, 6:00 pm, Hendersonville, Jim 828-595-9910</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson County</td>
<td>2nd Tues, 2:00pm, Sylvia, Gordon 828-293-2503</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnston County</td>
<td>3rd Tues, 11:00 am, Clayton, Janet 919-553-5727, Lori 919-669-7406, Jennifer 919-553-4960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee County</td>
<td>2nd Mon, 6:30 pm, Sanford, Rosemary 919-499-4230</td>
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<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>Daytime Group, Every other Thursday starting April 28 from Noon – 1p.m., Charlotte, Ellie 704-236-7315, Christian-Oriented Group, 4th Wed, 11:30 am, Charlotte, Barbara 704-542-6012, Minimally Impaired/Newly Diagnosed, 2nd Thurs, 7:00 p.m., Charlotte, Becky &amp; Lester 704-366-3536, Rick 704-541-2138</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hanover County</td>
<td>2nd Thurs, 7:00 pm, Wilmington, Burt 910-383-1368, Lisa 910-399-7252</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onslow County</td>
<td>3rd Thurs, 7:00 - 9:00 pm, Jacksonville, Margareta 910-353-2243</td>
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<tr>
<td>Person County</td>
<td>1st Tues, 7:00 pm, Roxboro, Sherry 336-599-0014, Robert 919-641-8073</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pitt/Greene Counties</td>
<td>2nd Sat, 10:00 a.m, Ayden, Jimmy 252-524-5431, Jane 252-653-4185</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rowan County</td>
<td>2nd Mon, 6:30 pm, Salisbury, Christine 704-798-3341, Jill 704-798-5088, Tonda 704-636-9405</td>
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</tbody>
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Scotland County
• 2nd Thurs, 5:30 pm, Laurinburg, Juanita 910-291-7327

Wake County
• Cary Group, 2nd Thurs, 12:00 pm, Cary, Mary Ann 919-779-2101, Russell 919-387-8549, Trish 919-618-6956
• Raleigh Evening Group, 3rd Wed, 6:30 pm, Holly 919-779-3487, Cherry 919-720-4843
• Raleigh Wellness “Making Waves”, 1st Wed, 1:00 pm, Kim 919-832-2651
• Southern Wake County Group, 2nd Thurs, 7:00 pm, Mary 919-552-7680
• Triangle African American Group, Robbin 919-255-8210, Juluan 919-604-1194 Kenyan 919-772-9222, Dannyle 919-675-1710

Wayne County
• 2nd Tues, 7:00 pm, Goldsboro, Maxine 919-242-9641, Glen 919-965-6452

Wilkes County
• 2nd Thurs, 5:15 pm, Wilkesboro, Wanda 336-667-1889, Kent 336-903-1539

South Carolina Self-Help Groups

Aiken County
• 3rd Sat, 10:00 am, Aiken, Pam 803-645-2092

Beaufort County, SC
• MS Low Country Group, 4th Fri, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Bluffton, Betty 843-757-4402

Charleston County
• Charleston Group, 3rd Sun, 3:00 pm, Debbie 843-532-9513
• North Charleston Area Group, 2nd Tues, 11:00 am, Sharon 843-640-1507

Dorchester County
• 3rd Fri, 11:00 am, Summerville, Elizabeth 843-873-0818, Valerie 843-376-9041

Florence County
• 3rd Tues, 5:00 pm, Florence, Keith 843-862-3931

Greenville County
• But You Look So Good! Group, 3rd Thurs, 6:00 pm, Greenville, Crissy 864-906-1019, Allie 864-275-4756

Horry County
• 3rd Sat, 11:00 am, Myrtle Beach, Ernie 843-213-1423, Judy 843-945-9582, Darlene 843-385-3780, Tiffany 843-467-4911

Lexington County
• 1st Tues, 1:00 pm, Lexington, Marcy 803-543-3195

Orangeburg County
• 1st Thurs, 6:00 pm, Orangeburg, Suzanne 803-531-9707

Richland County
• Columbia Daytime Group, 3rd Tues, 12:00 - 2:00 pm, Columbia, Tim 803-348-0833, Darlene 803-272-0216
• Columbia Afternoon Group, 4th Mon, 2-4 pm, Columbia, Bob 803-736-3174, Sandy 803-736-5073
• “Let’s Talk About MS” Group 4th Tues, 6:30 pm, Columbia, Ranva 803-316-3653, LaRhonda 803-727-4962

Spartanburg County
• 2nd Mon, 5:30 pm, Spartanburg, Jonathan 864-252-8942, Sharon 864-706-2519

Some groups take a break over the summer. Please call the self-help group leader to make sure the group is meeting this summer.

Get Connected with a Self-Help Group

For more information on joining a self-help group or starting one in your area, please call 1-800-344-4867 or visit us on the web at www.nationalMSsociety.org/greatercarolinias and click on Groups and Discussions.
ADVOCACY:

NORTH CAROLINA
ACTION DAY SET
FOR WORLD MS
DAY, MAY 25

Join MS Activists urging NC lawmakers to create transparent step therapy protocols and an exceptions process. Step therapy, also known as “fail first,” prescription drug formulary processes, should be accessible and transparent for both people with MS and their healthcare providers. Also during the Action Day, we are hopeful that there will be an opportunity to weigh-in on statutes that will shape the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles’ Medical Review Program to eliminate its discriminatory treatment of people with disabilities.

This is the seventh year that the Society’s Action Day at the North Carolina General Assembly will be held in conjunction with World MS Day. World MS Day brings the global MS community together to share stories and raise awareness. In 2016, the theme for World MS Day is ‘Independence’. We will explore how people with MS can be independent, acknowledging that independence can mean different things to different people.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25

Where: North Carolina General Assembly, 16 West Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601

Time: 10 am - 3 pm EST

To register visit: http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Chapters/NCT

All registered attendees will receive details for a training call to be held on Wednesday, May 18 at 12 pm EST

Questions: Abby Emanuelson at abby.emanuelson@nmss.org
Amy Meisner was diagnosed with MS in 1997. For someone who has always danced, MS would seem like the end. But for Amy, it means the start of a new chapter. She’ll never leave the floor, still dances from her wheelchair, and is a great choreographer. Embracing Amy’s undying passion, the National MS Society teamed up with LaTonya Swann to create an entirely new and inspired dance experience through virtual reality. See their experience and find out how you can share yours at WeAreStrongerThanMS.org.
WALK MS: A SPECIAL THANK YOU

This spring, more than 8,000 walkers and volunteers rallied in 19 communities throughout North and South Carolina for a common cause—creating a world free of MS. Walks were hosted from the mountains to the coast in both states, including state attractions such as the NC Zoological Park, to raise funds and awareness.

United, we are projected to raise over $1.2 million dollars to help change the lives of people affected by multiple sclerosis.

Modern Automotive, a family-owned dealership group founded in 1933 in Winston-Salem, NC, and Biogen served as local presenting sponsors.

Modern Automotive has 10 dealerships in North Carolina. They are a long-time sponsor of Walk MS as well as their corporate walk team, Modern Automotivators.

Biogen develops, manufactures and markets innovative therapies for patients living with serious neurological, autoimmune and hematologic disorders, including multiple sclerosis. In addition to their sponsorship, they sponsored a corporate team this year.

We are thankful to Modern Automotive and Biogen for their exceptional support and to all of our sponsors, including our premier National Walk MS sponsor: Novartis and newest National Walk MS sponsor: Genentech. Locally, Acorda Therapeutics, Golden Corral, MSC Industrial Supply Co., Raleigh Neurology and Teva Neuroscience were our Patron sponsors.

Behind the scenes, 12 task forces and several Walk MS community ambassadors helped to set the stage for these events. We are currently recruiting for our 2017 positions. For more information about opportunities to get involved in Walk MS in your community, please reach out to the Greater Carolinas Walk MS team at walk@nct.nmss.org or 919-834-0678.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Walk MS as a donor, participant, volunteer and sponsor. Step-by-step, dollar-by-dollar, we are making a difference. We are humbled and grateful.

Participants at Walk MS: Asheboro (NC Zoo)
SAVE THE DATE OLD SPORT...

The 28th Annual

GREAT GATSBY GALA

AUGUST 27TH, 2016

7:00PM-11:00PM • WELLS FARGO ATRIUM • 301 S. TRYON ST. CHARLOTTE, NC

Tickets Available at www.GatsbyGala.org

VIP Speakeasy Lounge
Live Entertainment
Swing Dancing
Heavy Hors’ Oeuvres
Desserts
Wine
Beer
Silent Auction

Linking Lives

Linking Lives is a unique program through our Bike MS events. This program connects individuals with MS to Bike MS cyclists who may not have a direct connection to someone living with MS. If you are living with MS and want to help create powerful connections through our Linking Lives program, please contact Rebekah Malkin at rebekah.malkin@nmss.org or 336-645-3315.
ANNUAL HIGH POINT LUNCHEON

The 16th annual spring High Point MS Luncheon was held on March 22nd. Proceeds from this event go directly to the National MS Society to support critical research and local programs and services. This year, the luncheon is projected to raise $110,000 through the generosity of those who supported this event. Greater Carolinas Chapter President Kristina McGraw said, “The High Point Luncheon brings together folks from the High Point community who want to do something about MS now.”

Mark and Rena Norcross started this fundraiser 16 years ago, and it has really grown over the years. McGraw said, “Most come to support Mark and Rena but walk away with a new awareness of the disease and how their donations are being put to use.” Each year, the Norcross’ present an award to someone who has generously given time, talent and personal resources to help those with MS and to help us get closer to a world free of MS. This year’s Norcross award went to longtime table host Barbara Coughlin. Barbara is one of several table hosts who create their own centerpieces around the luncheon theme. Table hosts used cowboy boots, hats and bandana motifs to play up this year’s country music theme.

Country music singer and entertainer Julie Roberts was the keynote speaker and performer at the event. Julie was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2005 at the height of an incredibly exciting and critical time in her career as a country music singer. Roberts said, “Accepting my diagnosis of multiple sclerosis was probably the most difficult part of my MS journey. However, it also helped me retake control of my life.” Julie has made it her life’s mission to inspire those living with this disease to keep chasing their dreams. She also does all that she can to connect with and raise awareness for organizations set up to help those who live with MS.

McGraw said, “Fundraisers like this luncheon not only raise the critical funds needed for research and local programs and services, but they also help bring awareness of this disease. This awareness will help propel us in the future to find a cure.”

Mark and Rena Norcross
SAVANNAH TO TYBEE ISLAND, GEORGIA: MARCH 3-5, 2017

3 DAYS. 50 MILES.
CONNECT TO END
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

LEARN MORE: challengeMS.org or 1.800.344.4867

MARCH 3-5, 2017 | SAVE THE DATE!

The Dean Smith Charity
GOLF TOURNAMENT
Benefiting Multiple Sclerosis Research

June 12-13, 2016 | Zen & Thornblade Club | Greenville, SC

BASH FOR MS
SUNDAY JUNE 12, 2016
ZEN, DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE
6:30 P.M. - 10:30 P.M.

GOLF TOURNAMENT
MONDAY JUNE 13, 2016
THORNBLADE CLUB
11:00 A.M. SHOTGUN START

BUY BASH TICKETS VIA FUMSCHARITY@GMAIL.COM

SOLD OUT!
WAYS TO GIVE

MY GIVING STORY

My uncle was the first in my family to be diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. That was in the late 1930s, when diagnosing MS was an extremely difficult process. In those days, no one really knew very much about MS at all. He was a musician — a concert pianist. Shortly after his diagnosis, it became clear that he was no longer going to play the piano, professionally or otherwise. And, as we all know, there were no treatments available at that time. He died just a few years after his diagnosis.

So where was the National MS Society when this was going on? It did not yet exist. The Society wouldn’t be founded until the mid-1940s when Sylvia Lawry put her ad in the New York Times trying to get information about the disease with which her brother had recently been diagnosed. So — no effective treatments, very little knowledge, nothing in the way of organized programs or services for people whose lives were affected.

When I was 5 years old, MS struck my family a second time. My parents had bought a new house to accommodate our growing family. My father was standing in the yard in a trench the landscapers had not yet filled in. There was water in the trench up to his knees, yet he did not feel it. He was admitted to the hospital later that day and diagnosed with primary progressive MS. He never returned home and my sisters and I did not see him again. His MS was unusually aggressive and he died two weeks after the diagnosis.

“At 5, I was not able to conduct medical research, but I was able to raise funds.”

ELI RUBENSTEIN, FORMER CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL MS SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At 5, I was not able to conduct medical research, but I was able to raise funds. In those days the Society led door-to-door fundraising campaigns where volunteers carried little boxes shaped like treasure chests, known as “Hope Chests for MS.” With the Hope Chest, I canvassed the neighborhood seeking contributions.

The suburban town we lived in was like a small village and my parents, who had been
active in civic affairs, were fairly well known. I continued my annual appeal to our neighbors until I left for college. We did very well with those appeals. I was proud of the impact we were making together.

While I was completing my law degree some 20 years later, our older sister noticed numbness in one of her arms and some visual disturbances. She called me in an understandable panic — we knew our family history. She was, however, assured at the time by her doctor to cut down on cigarettes and she’d be fine. So she went ahead with plans for a trip abroad. Two weeks later I received a call from a doctor at in London to let me know that she had been diagnosed with MS. As it turned out, her MS, like my father’s and my uncle’s, was primary progressive.

Here it was the 1970s and there were still no treatments for this disease; still no real understanding of the disease process, and no answers about its cause. There was, however, the Society. After years of public education campaigns, there was greater awareness of MS and programs and services for people affected by the disease in many areas of the country. Yet, there was still no cure and no effective disease-modifying therapy available to our sister. For 15 years she coped with the unpredictable symptoms of progressive MS until she too lost her battle.

We have made incredible progress since the time MS ravaged my family. We have learned and continue to learn more about the disease. A lot more. The research that we poured hundreds of millions of dollars into has paid off with a clear picture of the disease process. Today, there are nearly 15 disease-modifying treatments and more in the pipeline. We have a sense of what might contribute to triggering the disease process, and even some clues about what might prevent it. I’m very proud of where we are today, and of how much we have achieved over our history.

I became involved with the Society because I intended to do something about MS. There is still much to be done and I’m proud to be a part of such a successful organization moving closer every day to achieving our vision of a world free of MS.

Eli Rubenstein is former chair of the Society’s National Board of Directors; he has been a director on the Board since 1998 — the same year he won the Norman Cohn MS Hope Award. He was inducted into the Society’s Volunteer Hall of Fame in 2007, joined the board of the MS International Federation in 2010, and was honored with the Society’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.

Learn about the many ways we can move closer to a world free of MS at: www.nationalMSsociety.org/donate
VOLUNTEER:

MEET CHRIS AND FELICIA HOOVER

Chris and Felicia Hoover of Raleigh are extraordinary contributors in the movement, to cure MS. Through volunteering in Bike MS by creating Team Hoover, attending Capitol Hill this year as MS Activists, and beginning to participate in Walk MS, they have an inspirational story to share.

Chris was diagnosed with MS 6 years ago, even though symptoms started much earlier. Felicia said, “It was a crushing blow but also an explanation for many problems he has had over the years.” She wonders how things would be different today if Chris had been diagnosed earlier.

Team Hoover: Volunteers and Riders

Bike MS Team Hoover was created by members of Chris’s church just months after his MS diagnosis. Chris said, “We were all reeling from the news and they wanted to show their support in some tangible way.” Since he loves sports and enjoyed riding himself, his church provided a thoughtful way to encourage him and show him that this is not the end, but a beginning. Felicia said, “Team Hoover marked the start of the fight and the end of the mourning period that comes with such a devastating diagnosis.”

One feature of Team Hoover that makes it unique is that the team is comprised of both riders and several volunteers. Team Hoover started out with 12 riders and 4 volunteers and now has about 48 riders and 48 volunteers. Chris said, “Our volunteers make it happen—our riders are the beasts!” According to Felicia, many are motivated by Chris’s spirit to get out of their comfort zones and train for something they have never tried previously. She believes that volunteers show that you don’t have to be a rider to join the movement against MS. She said, “we cheer at the finish line, pass out drinks, and do everything we can think of to support our riders.”

Felicia said that more volunteers mean greater MS awareness, which helps promote earlier diagnoses of MS. She wants other people living with MS to get an earlier diagnosis and that will help them live a fuller life with MS. Having more volunteers will also help raise more money for research to find a cure faster. Team Hoover works together, both volunteers and riders, as a team, where Chris, Felicia, and their three daughters, Hannah, Emily, and Faith all serve as volunteers.
MS Activists at 2016 Public Policy Conference

Chris and Felicia recently attended the National MS Society’s 25th Annual Public Policy Conference (PPC) on Capitol Hill. “It’s interesting to see how government legislation works and how the work we are doing really helps people,” said Chris. Felicia said it was an amazing experience. “What we did really mattered,” she said, “Having one-on-one conversations with the people who can make change happen was good for them and us. Our lawmakers on both sides of the aisle care and want to do good things. Hearing our stories and discussing specifics for how they can help was welcomed.”

Being MS activists has impacted Chris and Felicia’s involvement with Team Hoover. Felicia said the experience gave her a sense of urgency. She said, “I am 100% convinced that MS will be cured—I want to help people like Chris who are fighting this disease now, and I want this to be the last generation that has to fight it.” Chris is even more motivated now than before to raise money. “I have learned a lot more about the new research being done,” Chris said, “I am motivated to do everything I can to help that research along.”

Next Step: Walk MS

Now the Hoover family is participating in Bike MS, advocacy, and Walk MS! Daughter Emily pulled together a team this past season and the whole family participated for the first time. Chris said that he is glad that he was part of three events this year. Felicia said, “There is a whole new group of people learning about MS, raising awareness one person at a time.”

Cornhole Tournament Fundraiser in Raleigh for Team Hoover

Saturday May 21 2pm - rain date May 22 | Check in 12:30 to 1:45
Lake Park Swim Club Tennis Court
6333 Lakeland Drive
Raleigh, NC 27612

$50 entry fee per team. Entry fee includes: Use of the pool and volleyball courts, food, drinks and beer.

Double Elimination. Cash Prize.

A raffle will be held throughout the day with a grand prize at the end.

Register by emailing Chris at christianbhoover@gmail.com or calling 919-518-4963.
Greater Carolinas Chapter
3101 Industrial Dr. Ste. 210
Raleigh, NC 27609

May is National Bike Month! Save $15 on registration in May with discount code, BIKEMONTH.

Don’t just ride, Bike MS

Bike MS: Historic New Bern Ride
September 10-11, 2016

Bike MS: Tour to Tanglewood
September 17-18, 2016

Bike MS: Breakaway to the Beach
October 8-9, 2016

Register today online at www.bikeMScarolinas.org or by calling 1-855-372-1331.