



## 2025 OPTIMISM AWARD HONOREES

### COMMUNITY MEMBER AWARD HONOREE



**Diane Hutchins**

Living with Parkinson's since 2005, Diane is passionate about raising awareness about PD. She has been a devoted community advocate for Parkinson's, always willing to tell her story – speaking with legislators, the press, and others living with this disease. Diane has also dedicated herself to participating in research studies to support scientists in learning more about the mysteries of PD.

Diane has been instrumental in building and fostering the PD community in the greater Olympia, WA, area by bringing people together and making herself available to those seeking local resources and support. She is known for her sense of humor, genuinely optimistic outlook, and passion for helping others.

Diane has facilitated a local support group for many years, creating a warm and welcoming space with her positivity, gentle presence, and inspirational energy.

As one member of her support group recounts on his first time meeting Diane, "I didn't know a person in the room until she approached and greeted me. She proudly wore a t-shirt with the statement, 'I have Parkinson's Disease. What's YOUR excuse?' across the front. I knew at that moment that this was the support group for me."

Thank you, Diane, for your hope and optimism and your commitment to making a positive impact on our Parkinson's community. APDA Northwest is honored to recognize you as this year's Community Member Optimism Award recipient.

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### SERVICE PROVIDER AWARD HONOREES



**Heidi Bowen & Cheryl Remington**

Heidi and Cheryl are the heart of NeuroFit in Auburn, Washington. Designed for people with Parkinson's, this thriving, growing program provides a well-rounded exercise and maintenance program. They specialize in helping PwPs address the unique challenges faced by individuals with Parkinson's, including essential body movement, balance, strength, and cognitive tasks.

Participants love Heidi and Cheryl because they understand Parkinson's and tailor their program to each individual's needs. Their warmth and compassion provide the foundation for PwPs to learn and grow in their skills.

Heidi and Cheryl go beyond the textbook definition of strength in optimism and hope in progress. They both have a special way of showing their unwavering support and understanding of each person while being able to push and hold participants accountable at the same time. Their dedication and commitment to participants' progress and well-being

are exceptional and unmatched. Many PwPs in their class talk about their infectious optimism; "They cheer us on, so we cheer each other on."

As one of their participants said, "Heidi and Cheryl have shown me that I can do things that I didn't think I could do. They have supported me in my weaknesses and helped make them into strengths. They have restored my hope in myself and my health. Honestly, I don't know where I would be today without them."

On behalf of APDA Northwest, we'd like to thank Heidi and Cheryl for all they have done to help our Parkinson's community stay active and optimistic. We are honored to recognize you both as this year's Service Provider Optimism Award recipients.

## 2025 OPTIMISM AWARD NOMINEES

### COMMUNITY MEMBER NOMINEES



#### **Nina Meierding**

Nina has been deeply involved in the Parkinson's community for over 30 years. Her connection to the disease began with her father, who had Parkinson's, and grew even stronger 18 years ago when her husband, Bill, was diagnosed. As a long-time caregiver, Nina has become a vital member of Poulsbo's support group leadership team.

Drawing from her personal journey, Nina understands the profound impact Parkinson's has on both people with Parkinson's (PwPs) and their families. She recognizes that caring for her spouse means also prioritizing her own well-being—a philosophy she embodies and shares with others.

Through her actions, Nina exemplifies "strength in optimism, hope in progress." She consistently extends a warm hand to new PwPs and caregivers, meeting them where they are and offering unwavering support tailored to their unique needs. Her compassionate approach ensures that everyone feels seen and supported along their journey.

Nina's extensive knowledge and experience make her an invaluable resource. She stays informed about the latest research and advocates for adaptations that help PwPs and their families embrace life to the fullest.

As one person PwP shared: "Nina has inspired me to believe that my husband and I CAN do this. We have value as individuals. We are not alone; thus, we have hope for the future."

Thank you, Nina, for your love, wisdom, and selfless devotion to the Parkinson's community. You are truly an inspiration.

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#### **Marilyn and Carroll Raether**

Marilyn and Carroll Raether serve as the leaders of the Shelton Parkinson's Support Group at the Shelton Senior Center. They stepped into this role with compassion and commitment after the passing of their respective spouses, both of whom had Parkinson's Disease.

Marilyn and Carroll work tirelessly to support the group by arranging guest speakers, participating in Parkinson's related activities, no contact boxing and exercising, and attending conferences. They even hosted several potlucks at their home, providing members with a wonderful opportunity to connect and socialize in a warm and welcoming environment.

Known for their optimism, kindness, and unwavering dedication, Marilyn and Carroll are deeply admired for their efforts to keep the group thriving.

As one support group member perfectly put it, “This world needs more Raethers!”

Thank you, Marilyn and Carroll, for your love, generosity, and steadfast devotion to the Parkinson’s community.

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## SERVICE PROVIDER NOMINEES



### Tiffany Salido

Tiffany Salido is an Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy in Yakima, where she has made a significant impact on the Parkinson’s community. She has spearheaded and led several group exercise classes tailored specifically for people with Parkinson’s, dedicating herself to exploring exercise programs that may help mitigate some of the disease’s most challenging aspects.

In addition, Tiffany has created Saturday walking programs for PwPs, offering encouragement and expert instruction on the proper use of walking sticks. Her dedication extends far beyond the classroom and walking trails. She has generously volunteered her time to lecture at local Parkinson’s support groups and frequently attends meetings without solicitation, providing knowledge, encouragement, and hope to those living with Parkinson’s.

Thank you, Tiffany, for your tireless commitment and the specialized care you provide to our Parkinson’s community. Your efforts truly make a difference!

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### Nate Coomer

Nate Coomer is the founder of The Parkinson’s Fitness Project (TPFP), a program dedicated to providing specialized, in-person and online therapeutic services exclusively for people with Parkinson’s. TFPF’s physical therapy sessions are tailored to each individual’s needs, while their online “Daily Dose PD” exercise program offers customized workouts designed specifically for PwPs.

Nate’s commitment to the Parkinson’s community reflects the motto “Strength in Optimism, Hope in Progress.” His commitment and enthusiasm to help better the lives of those with Parkinson’s disease is on display every day. Over the last 10 years Nate has built an incredible program and he has put together a remarkable team of therapists and fitness professionals.

TPFP actively participates in the Northwest’s Annual Optimism Walk, where they lead the pre-walk warm-up each year. Nate is a regular (and well-loved) presenter at a variety of APDA educational programs and he is a familiar face at the Magic of Hope Gala.

Participants in Nate’s programs consistently praise him for how he makes them feel. He is kind, respectful and he listens attentively to concerns and collaborates with care partners and patients in order to provide the most effective and personalized care possible. Plus, he has an infectious energy that is empowering and motivational!

Thank you, Nate, for inspiring our Parkinson’s community to keep moving and for your specialized care and encouragement. Your dedication makes a lasting difference in so many lives!

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## **Adrienne Fox**

Adrienne Fox is the Program Coordinator and Coach for Rock Steady Boxing at Cappy's Boxing Gym in Seattle. She is dedicated to fostering a welcoming, fun, and educational environment for her participants. Adrienne's classes continue to grow in popularity, currently serving 53 boxers across four weekly sessions.

Boxers in Adrienne's classes trust her expertise, feel at ease in the gym, and thrive on the camaraderie they share with fellow participants. This supportive atmosphere keeps them coming back, offering both physical and emotional benefits.

"For the first time since my diagnosis, Adrienne has given me something to be excited about—a way to feel empowered and hopeful about my future," says boxer Chris Crombie.

Adrienne is far more than just a coach, notes boxer King Cushman. "She has helped us gain new confidence to tackle the frustrations of dealing with Parkinson's disease, particularly in learning how to be more balanced and stable in our daily lives. With her ever-positive attitude, she raises our spirits and inspires us to 'get back on track.'"

Through Rock Steady Boxing, Adrienne offers more than fitness—she provides a lifeline of hope. Boxer Don Pick shares, "She gives us hope that we can live with Parkinson's and not only be defined by the disease."

Thank you, Adrienne, for empowering our Parkinson's community to stay active, confident, and hopeful for the future!