

SEPT. 2026



AMERICAN
PARKINSON DISEASE
ASSOCIATION

MISSOURI CHAPTER

- Letter from APDA Missouri Team
- Staff List
- July PEP Recap

2

- APDA Midwest Parkinson's Conference Recap
- Optimism Walk

3

- Parkinson's Disease and the Power of Physical Therapy

4 + 5

- Support Group Schedule
- Exercise Class Schedule

6 + 7

- Strategies for Communicating Effectively With Your Doctor

8 + 9

- Community Voices
- Research Opportunities

10 + 11



The Power of Physical Therapy

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurological condition that affects movement, balance, and coordination. Common symptoms include tremors, muscle stiffness, slow movements, changes in posture, and difficulties with walking or balance. While Parkinson's presents daily challenges, many people continue to live active, independent lives with the right support. Health-focused physical therapy is a key part of managing Parkinson's disease and maintaining mobility, safety, and confidence.

How Physical Therapy Helps You Move Better

Physical therapy (PT) is designed to help people with Parkinson's stay active and mobile for as long as possible. A physical therapist experienced in neurological care creates an individualized treatment plan based on each person's symptoms, abilities, and goals. Therapy focuses on improving strength, flexibility, posture, balance, and walking.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Board Executive Committee:

President: Lora Downey

Vice President: Grant Wiens

Secretary: Dr. Erin Foster

Board Development

Committee Chair: Cindy Owens

Board Stewardship/

Financial Development:

Andrew Kennard, Tim Vosse

Members:

- Dr. Yi-Fang Chiu
- Dr. Rebekah Griesenauer
- Barry Kessler
- David Kodner
- Amy Lentin
- Matt McCarty
- Lori Riti
- Linda Sanders

MO Chapter Staff:

Michelle Bolk Development Director

Amanda Landsbaum Program Director

Jen McNamee Fundraising and Events Manager

Kim Sanders Manager of Programs and Community Engagement

Regional Staff:

Cathy Krane Regional Director

Alix Huffman Regional Manager of Marketing and Communications

Cassidy Olson Regional Administrative Coordinator

BUILDING YOUR SUPPORT TEAM MATTERS

Navigating Parkinson's disease is complex, and no single person or resource can meet every need. It's crucial to surround yourself with layers of support. Start with a doctor who understands Parkinson's (see pages 8-9 for tips on communicating with them), and add other healthcare professionals, such as physical, occupational, and speech therapists, as needs arise (more on the benefits of physical therapy on pages 4-5). Prioritizing mental and emotional health is also important. Consider a counselor for one-on-one care or connect with our support groups or exercise classes (pages 6-7) to meet others on this journey. Don't underestimate the power of family and friends; one community member shares her honest story on pages 10-11. We hope that you'll count on our local APDA Chapter as part of your team, too.

We're here for you!

[The APDA Missouri Chapter Team](#)

JULY PARKINSON'S EDUCATION PROGRAM RECAP

On July 9th we were thrilled to host Dr. Nathan Wachter, a movement disorders specialist, at the Spencer Road Library branch in St. Peters, Missouri. Over 100 people attended, and the overwhelming response we heard was that the presentation was extremely informative and helpful.

Thank you to our sponsors who help make these valuable programs possible.



If you would like to receive recordings of the presentations via email, scan this QR code or go to:
tinyurl.com/mska8hpr



2026 APDA MIDWEST PARKINSON'S CONFERENCE

Although the severe weather forecasted impacted our annual Midwest Parkinson's Conference, over 300 people attended! It was a great afternoon filled with expert speakers and helpful community vendors. Fortunately, this year the presentations were recorded and were able to be shared with the 800 registrants.

Thank you to our 2026 Midwest Parkinson's Conference Sponsors!

Champion Sponsor



Collaborator Sponsor



Partner Sponsors



Advocate Sponsors

- Bethesda Health Group
- Boston Scientific
- CND Life Sciences
- Continuum Family of Services
- dannce.ai
- EverTrue Anywhere Care
- Friendship Village
- HouseFit Physical Therapy & Fitness
- Senior Helpers
- The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis/The Rehabilitation Institute of Southern Illinois



Let's make an impact. Join the Optimism Walk today!

Scan the QR code or visit:

apda.link/MOptimism2026



*Two Walks.
One Mission.*

Southern Illinois Optimism Walk

Saturday, September 26th
9:00 am Check In, 10:00 am Walk Start

Tri Township Park
410 Wickliffe St., Troy, IL 62294

Missouri Optimism Walk

Saturday, October 10th
9:00 am Check In, 10:00 am Walk Start

Westminster Christian Academy
800 Maryville Centre Dr., Town and Country, MO 63017

PARKINSON'S DISEASE AND THE POWER OF PHYSICAL THERAPY: STAYING ACTIVE, MOBILE, AND CONFIDENT

By: Angie Saskowski

Exercise is especially important for individuals with Parkinson's. Research shows that regular, targeted exercise can improve movement quality, reduce stiffness, and support overall function. Physical therapists teach safe exercises that address common challenges such as shuffling steps, difficulty turning, freezing of gait, and reduced arm swing. Therapy sessions often include walking programs, balance training, stretching, and strengthening activities to support daily movement, focusing on moving with bigger motion in the upper and lower extremities through repetitive, high-effort movement. Physical therapy helps patients to learn to walk with larger steps, improve posture, and move more efficiently during daily activities.

Improving Balance and Reducing Falls

Balance issues and falls are common concerns for people with Parkinson's. Physical therapists assess balance, walking patterns, and fall risk, then provide targeted training to improve stability and safety. Therapy may include balance exercises, leg and core strengthening, and practice navigating stairs, curbs, and uneven surfaces.

As balance improves, many patients feel more confident

moving around their homes and communities. This increased confidence often leads to greater independence and reduced fear of falling.

Home Modification Recommendations

Physical therapists also help make the home environment safer. They may recommend removing loose rugs or clutter, improving lighting, installing grab bars in bathrooms, adding railings on stairs, or rearranging furniture to create clear walking paths. Therapists can also recommend assistive devices, such as canes or walkers, and provide training on how to use them safely. These simple changes can greatly reduce fall risk and support independence at home.

Confidence and Safety in the Community

Staying active outside the home is important for physical, emotional, and social well-being. Physical therapists help patients practice skills needed for safe community mobility, such as crossing streets, walking longer distances, getting in and out of cars, and managing symptoms in busy or distracting environments.

Through education, practice, and encouragement, physical therapy empowers people with Parkinson's to stay active, mobile, and confident helping them continue doing the things that matter most.



3 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Physical therapy helps people with Parkinson's stay active and independent.

A personalized physical therapy program improves strength, flexibility, posture, balance, and walking ability, helping individuals maintain mobility and continue participating in daily activities.

Targeted exercise can improve movement and reduce fall risk.

Regular, high-effort exercise and balance training can reduce stiffness, improve walking patterns, and build the confidence needed to move safely at home and in the community.

Small changes can make a big difference in safety and confidence.

Physical therapists provide home safety recommendations and community mobility training, helping people navigate everyday environments more safely while maintaining their independence.



Practical Tip: Take Bigger Steps

When walking, focus on taking slow, deliberate, bigger steps while swinging your arms naturally. This simple practice can help reduce shuffling, improve posture, and make walking feel more stable. Start by practicing for 5–10 minutes in a safe, open area each day.

Try This Today:

As you walk through your home, say to yourself, “Big steps, tall posture, swing your arms.” Using this simple cue can help reinforce better movement patterns.



Looking for PT Support?

Contact APDA to learn about local physical therapy programs and resources near you.



636.778.3377



apdamo@apdaparkinson.org

EXERCISE CLASS SCHEDULE

Register online at apdaparkinson.org/mo

MISSOURI

CARONDELET - YMCA

Tues 11:00 am- Exercise for Parkinson's

Fri 12:00 pm- Exercise for Parkinson's

CHESTERFIELD - APDA Office

Tues 9:00 am – Seated Exercise | Level 1

Tues 10:00 am – Circuit Training | Level 3

Tues 11:00 am – Strength and Cardio | Level 2 - Full

Tues 12:00 pm – Strength and Cardio | Level 2 - Open

Wed 10:00 am – Movement Training | Level 2

Wed 11:00 am – Seated Exercise | Level 1

Thurs 11:00 am – Tai Chi for Parkinson's

Thurs 12:00 pm – Parkinson's Boxing | Level 3

Thurs 1:00 pm - Strength and Cardio | Level 2

Thurs 2:00 pm – Seated Exercise | Level 1

Fri 11:00 am – Tai Chi and Meditation

CHESTERFIELD - SSM Health and Day Institute

1st and 3rd Tuesday of Each month - 3:30 pm

CHESTERFIELD - YMCA

Mon/Wed 12:15 pm – Parkinson's Pedalers | Level 2

CRESTWOOD - Sports Medicine and Training

Tuesday 9:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson's | Level 2

Thursday 2:00 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's | Level 2

EUREKA - Timbers of Eureka

Tues/Thurs/Fri 12:30 pm- Exercise for Parkinson's

JEFFERSON COUNTY - YMCA

Mon/Thurs 10:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

KIRKWOOD - YMCA

Mon 11:45 am – Parkinson's Pedalers | Level 2

MARYLAND HEIGHTS - YMCA

Tues/Thurs 11:30 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

OLIVE CROSSING - SSM Health and Day Institute

1st and 3rd Tuesday of Each month – 3:30 pm

SOUTH CITY - YMCA

Monday/Wednesday 12:00 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's

SOUTH COUNTY - YMCA

Tues/Thurs 3:00 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's

ST. CHARLES - SSM Health and Day Institute

1st and 3rd Tuesday of Each month – 3:30 pm

ST. PETERS - BJC

Thursday 10:00 am- Strength and Cardio | Level 2

Thursday 11:00 am – Seated Exercise | Level 1

STE. GENEVIEVE - Potential Therapy Services

Thursday at 10:00 am- Exercise for Parkinson's | Level 2

SUNSET HILLS - SSM Health and Day Institute

1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month - 3:30 pm

WASHINGTON - YMCA

Mon & Wed 1:00 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's

Fri 11:30 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

WARRENTON - SSM Health and Day Institute

1st and 3rd Tuesday of Each month – 3:30 pm

VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM

Tues 9:00 am – Seated Exercise | Level 1

Thurs 2:00 pm – Seated Exercise | Level 1

ILLINOIS

BREESE - Clinton Co. YMCA

Tues/Thurs 12:30 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's

CARLINVILLE - Area Hospital

Tuesday 10:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

COLUMBIA - Monroe County YMCA

Mon/Wed 12:05 pm- Exercise for Parkinson

DECATUR - YMCA

Mon/Wed/Fri 11:00 am – Pedaling for Parkinson's

Tues/Thurs 9:00 am – Parkinson's on the Move

DOWNTOWN BELLEVILLE - YMCA

Mon/Wed 11:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

EAST BELLEVILLE - YMCA

Tues/Thurs 11:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson's

EDWARDSVILLE - YMCA

Tues/Thurs 11:00 am – Exercise for Parkinson

O'FALLON - SSM Health and Day Institute

Coming soon!

O'FALLON - YMCA

Tues/Thurs 12:00 pm – Exercise for Parkinson's

QUINCY - YMCA

Tues/Fri 10:30 am – Fit to Fight PD Boxing

SPRINGFIELD - First Presbyterian Church

Tues/Thurs 1:30 pm – The Joy of Movement

VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM

Wed 10:30 am – The Joy of Movement

SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

Register online at apdaparkinson.org/mo

MISSOURI

BALLWIN – Meramec Bluffs Care Center

4th Tuesday 2:00pm

BRENTWOOD – Mid-County YMCA

1st Saturday 10:30am

CAPE GIRARDEAU – Cape Girardeau Library

2nd Monday 5:30pm

CHESTERFIELD – APDA Office

2nd Monday 10:30am – Caregivers (only)

2nd Tuesday 1:15pm – Early in Diagnoses (2-4 years)

4th Tuesday 1:00pm – Newly Diagnosed (0-2 years)

CHESTERFIELD – Jennifer Frieswick Counseling

1st Friday 11:00am – People Living with PD (only) **Hybrid**

EUREKA – Timbers of Eureka

1st Tuesday 1:45 pm

OLIVETTE – Private Home Care Company

3rd Tuesday 11:00am

OVERLAND – Parkview Library – Hybrid

2nd Thursday 12pm – Black and African American families

ROLLA – Phelps Health Cancer Inst., Conf. Rm B

3rd Tuesday 2:30pm

SOUTH COUNTY – Cedarhurst of Tesson Heights

4th Wednesday 10:00am

STE. GENEVIEVE – Potential Therapy Services

2nd Thursday 11:00am

ST. PETERS – Spencer Road Library

1st Tuesday 1:00 pm

ST. PETERS – Spencer Road Library

2nd Tuesday 10:00 am – Caregivers (only)

SULLIVAN – Sullivan Hospital

2nd Wednesday 1:30 pm

WASHINGTON – Public Library

2nd Monday 3:00 pm

VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM

Adult Children (only) – 2nd Wednesday 9am

Black & African American Families – 2nd Thursday 12pm

Caregivers (only) – 3rd Monday 1pm

People living with PD (only) – 1st Friday 11:00am

We Care, South Asian Families – 3rd Friday 2pm

All welcome – 4th Tuesday 6:30pm

Young onset (only) – Every Thursday 6pm

ILLINOIS

ALTON – SSP Main Bldg., The Meeting Room

2nd Wednesday 1:00 pm

ALTON – SSP Wellness Center

2nd Tuesday 2:00 pm - **Caregivers ONLY**

BELLEVILLE – SWIC Programs and Services

for Older Persons

3rd Monday 1:30 pm

CARLINVILLE – Carlinville Area Hospital, MOB Com Rm.

4th Tuesday 11:00 am

CENTRALIA – Heritage Woods Independent Living

2nd Wednesday 2:00pm

COLUMBIA – Monroe County YMCA

3rd Wednesday 1:00pm

DECATUR – Westminster Presbyterian Church

3rd Thursday 1:30 pm

EDWARDSVILLE – YMCA Niebur Center

1st Tuesday 2:00 pm

GREENVILLE – Bond County Senior Center

2nd Tuesday 1:00 pm

HIGHLAND – St. Joseph's Hosp., Sullivan Conf. Rm

2nd Wednesday 2:00 pm

OKAWVILLE – St. Peters UCC Church Hall

1st Tuesday 6:00pm

QUINCY – Public Library

2nd Saturday 10:00 am

SPRINGFIELD – Chatham United Methodist Church

4th Friday 1:30 pm

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR DOCTOR

By: Sydney Settle OTD, OTR/L

Parkinson's disease is complex and is best managed with an interdisciplinary team of providers. A neurologist is a key player on your Parkinson's healthcare team. Their role is to provide treatment and coordinate care with other providers.

Appointments with your neurologist are incredibly valuable, therefore it is critical you make the most of this time. The more prepared and equipped you are for these appointments, the better personalized treatment they can provide.

Follow these strategies before, during, after, and between appointments to effectively communicate about your Parkinson's experience with your neurologist.

Starting 1 Month – 2 Weeks Prior:

Track and monitor motor and non-motor symptoms

Consider how long and often symptoms occur. Record how disruptive symptoms are, and the impact on your daily life. Use a journal, your cell phone, or worksheets to track and record symptoms.

Update medication list

Update your medication list to include all the prescription medications, over the counter medications, and supplements you are currently taking. Be sure to include dosage, time taken, and any side effects noted. Also beneficial to include any previously tried medications and reason for discontinuing.

Determine top 3 priorities

Frame your priorities around the expertise of the neurologist. Remember that the neurologist's role is treatment. Choose your top 3 priorities you'd like to discuss at the visit.

Ask a trusted person to join you

A trusted person can assist with logistics, such as parking and finding the office. They can be helpful in answering questions and providing an additional perspective to the neurologist. Additionally, they can take notes during the appointment, so you are able to fully engage with the neurologist but have the option to review information later.

1 Week – 1 Day Before:

Plan for logistics

Make sure you have the neurologist's office address and directions. Consider time of appointment and expected traffic when planning for travel time.

Gather items to bring

Compile the items to bring to the appointment including symptom list, medication list, extra dose of medication, water/snack, and a journal or phone for taking notes.



Day of Appointment:

Arrive early

Parkinson's symptoms can make it difficult to get out of door for an appointment. Allow plenty of time to get ready and arrive at the appointment early.

Stay focused on priorities

During the appointment, stay focused and discuss your priorities. Make sure the conversation stays focused on updates since your last appointment, along with your future treatment plan.

Ask:

Best way to follow-up between appointments

Make sure you have the correct information and way to get in touch if something comes up before your next appointment.

Referral to other providers

If needed, ask for a referral to other providers such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, or counseling.

Clarification, if needed

Do not hesitate to ask clarifying questions if something is unclear.

After Appointment:

Review notes

After the appointment, review the notes taken during the appointment, noting any significant changes in the treatment plan.

Implement changes

Incorporate these changes into your daily routine.

Set-up online healthcare portal, if applicable

If your doctor uses an online healthcare portal, make sure you have username and password. Set up your account and make sure you can message them if needed.

Schedule healthcare appointments

If you receive a referral to another healthcare provider, call and schedule your appointment.

Between Appointments:

Don't adjust treatment

Resist the temptation to adjust your treatment without notifying or discussing with your neurologist or nurse practitioner. This can limit their ability to make decisions regarding your treatment plan moving forward.

Continue to track and monitor symptoms

Track any significant changes and disruptive symptoms. Do not hesitate to call the nurse practitioner or use the online healthcare portal to share these symptoms with your neurologist.

Connect with APDA Missouri Chapter

Engage with the many free in-person and virtual programs offered by the APDA Missouri Chapter. Join us for an exercise class, support group, and educational program near you!

Implement these practical strategies so you can become a more confident, active participant in your Parkinson's care.

Giving Highlight

Boost your giving power by donating appreciated stock to APDA. This allows you to receive a charitable tax deduction for the full market value and may avoid capital gains taxes, maximizing your gift.

For more information or questions, please reach out to Michelle Bolk at:
mbolk@apdaparkinson.org



COMMUNITY VOICES: PEG GETTEMEIER

HOPE & OPTIMISM IN OUR COMMUNITY

Reflection Questions

You regularly attend exercise classes and support groups. What helps you keep showing up on days when it might feel easier to stay home?

My husband nudging me to go and offering a ride if that would make it easier to attend class. It is also the class instructors and participants. Everyone is happy to see and support each other. The instructors are always encouraging. They push you to be vested participants while respecting where you're at both physically and mentally. I also keep reminding myself how much better I feel and perform when I attend the different classes.

However, I do not have the guilt I once did when I missed a class. Some days you need a mental health day. Most of us can only manage one activity a day and exercise class is usually that activity. I need time to organize my life or just grab lunch with girlfriends. Life is a delicate balance, and we all need to figure out what our personal balance is. Don't feel guilty if your balance is very different than your neighbor's.

What helps you get through the harder days with Parkinson's?

My husband, followed by family and friends. When I'm having a tough day, my husband encourages me to only take care of myself.



On occasion during one of the harder days, I will panic and be fearful thinking "have I hit another plateau and are these days going to be my new normal?" I try to bring myself back to reality and hope tomorrow will be better.

Two years ago, I thought within a year I would be in a skilled care facility. Everything was changing so quickly.

I was depressed and anxious. I had even become tactilely defensive. I couldn't stand anything too tight or not super soft. The tactile defensiveness would have me pacing the floor. Inside, I had the creepy crawlers, and I cried for no reason. Not realizing what was going on with my body is referred to as "down time". My medication had run out of its effectiveness, and it wasn't time yet to take another dose. I also needed something to help me with my anxiety and depression. It was talking to other PD clients in my classes that I came to understand what was going on. Everyone was so open and understanding. They helped me ask the questions I needed to ask my doctor.

I still have harder days that I'm very sad and struggle, and I have given myself permission to have a few of these days – but only a few. If the struggles go beyond a few days, I now know I need to reach out to someone for help. Sometimes it's my counselor and sometimes it's my physician.

What gives you hope right now?

RESEARCH. My grandfather passed away in 1964 of PD. I was 10 years old. I only remember him with PD. In 1964 there were no medications for PD, only brain surgery to relieve a few symptoms. To this day I remember the name of the neurologist/surgeon because he was such

a part of our lives. This doctor developed a close relationship with my grandparents to the point he would ask himself to dinner on Sunday evenings. I feel the research going on now I will benefit from.

Has your idea of a “good day” changed since your diagnosis? If so, how?

YES. A good day used to be hitting the floor at 6 or 6:30am



and keeping active all day and maybe attending meetings in the evening. Now a good day is planning one, maybe two, activities a day. One of the activities usually has something to do with PD. Most days are planned to include one or more naps. It has been difficult to walk away from church and community activities that I enjoyed doing. Figuring out and accepting what is a “good day” has taken reflection, compromising, accepting, and lots of discussions with my husband and kids.

I have taken some control over what I consider a good day. These are a few changes we have made over the past year to make my days better: hiring someone to cut the lawn, trim bushes, rake leaves. Outsourcing the heavier tasks gives me the time and energy to work with my flowers and lighter garden tasks. Someone comes to clean 1x per month. The best thing I have done is hire a neighborhood teenager. She helps me a few hours every week during the summer and here

and there during the school year. She gives me so much control over my life. I call her my legs. We clean out closets and she puts all the boxes in my car for goodwill; in the spring she helps me scrub down all my outside furniture. The list goes on and on. I know how lucky I am that we can afford to have help with chores. Our kids and grandkids are a great help, but they can only do so much. Plus, I like the independence paying individuals gives me.

If you could share one message with others living with Parkinson’s, what would it be?

Of course I can never say just one thing. This is my message. Be proactive, educate yourself, and participate in research. Most of all, be able to forgive yourself.

Research Happening Near You!

Research moves us closer to better treatments, and you can be part of it. APDA Missouri regularly shares local studies seeking volunteers, including projects focused on exercise, memory, technology, and Parkinson’s care. Check out the latest opportunities to learn more.

Visit our website to learn more: [apda/link/MOresearch](https://apda.org/link/MOresearch)



» Upcoming Events and Programs

PD Essentials is a one-hour session available in-person in Missouri or virtually via Zoom, providing an opportunity to ask questions and access local and national resources. Upcoming date:

- **November 6th, 1:30 PM**
 - In Person, APDA office, Chesterfield, MO

Parkinson's Education Programs for individuals with PD and their care partners include:

- "Ask the Doctor" session with Joel Perlmutter, MD
 - **Monday, November 23rd, at 1:30 PM**
 - Clark Family Library, MO.

Optimism Walks

Save the date for our largest community celebrations!

- Southern Illinois Optimism Walk - **September 26th**
- Missouri Optimism Walk - **October 10th**
 - **NEW LOCATION!** Westminster Christian Academy

Visit our Upcoming Events & Programs page for details and to stay up to date on everything happening with APDA Missouri.
Go to: apda.link/moupcoming



Need help with registration? Call us at 636.778.3377 for assistance, and we can register you by phone!

APDA MISSOURI CHAPTER

16100 Chesterfield Parkway W, Ste. 125
Chesterfield, MO 63017
636-778-3377

Office Hours: 9am - 4pm | Tuesday - Friday
Staff available by phone on Mondays

LET'S CONNECT

apdaparkinson.org/mo
[@apdamissouri](https://twitter.com/apdamissouri)

