

Providing Education and Support for those with Parkinson's Disease, their families and friends, caregivers and healthcare providers in the greater Austin Community.



CAPITAL AREA PARKINSON'S SOCIETY

A 501(3)(C) Non-Profit

(512) 459-9876

www.capitalareaparkinsons.org

March, 2007

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March Meeting

The next meeting of CAPS will be held Saturday, March 17, 2007 at 2:00 pm in the Mc Fadden Auditorium at Seton Main Hospital.

Parking is available in the garage at the south entrance. Free parking vouchers are available at the meeting.

Parkinson's can make it difficult to do things others take in stride. Using public transportation is one example. Have you ever watched one of those big, shiny Cap Metro buses go roaring by and wonder how you could catch one? What other transportation services are available to the elderly or people with disabilities? Nancy D. Crowther, our speaker this month, can help you answer these questions and more. She's been an Accessible Transportation Specialist for Capital Metro for seventeen years, Cap Metro's community liaison with senior citizens and people with disabilities. Whether the information is for you or for

someone you love, please stop by this month's meeting. You'll be glad you did.

February Meeting Update

Many thanks to Michelle Ciucci for her presentation on speech and swallowing disorders. She made information that could have been a dry and hard to swallow (ahem) interesting and insightful, through the use of PD statistics, animal model findings, and video clips of x-rays of a person swallowing and a subject's speech, pre- and post-therapy. (Okay, it really *was* interesting. I'm just not doing it justice.) See the last page of this newsletter for more information on Michelle's presentation.

Again, our thanks to her for sharing this insight into her work. We hope she'll become a "regular" with CAPS!



The Learning Curve

Well, here we are again, time once more for another edition of TLC. I've not seen anything from another prospective contributor, so I'll just have to assume a) that you read my previous ramble, and b) you'd like to hear more. So be it.

When Mom came to live with us, it was a bit of a shock to discover all that was involved in full-time family Caregiving. I won't go into a detailed list here (though that may come later if no one stops me), but one of the first things to surface had to do with a subject near and dear to my heart: food. In retrospect, it's hard to say how much of my life revolves around the kitchen table. Some of my fondest memories are accompanied by heavenly scents and flavors, from a big Thanksgiving turkey with all the trimmings to the huge pile of beef fajitas that so often accompany our family gatherings. When I found out that Mom's sense of smell and taste had diminished as a result of her Parkinson's, I was taken aback. When she talked about it, it was with a faint but distinct longing in her voice; clearly, her life was no less touched by food than mine. The sense of loss was palpable.

Then came another discovery: as if Fate had decided life wasn't complicated enough, She threw in another twist. Whatever Mom ate would have to be low in sodium or her feet would swell until they hurt and she couldn't get her shoes on.

Food without salt? Puh-*leeze*. You might as well rule out twice-baked potatoes at Thanksgiving or hard-boiled eggs at Easter.

It wasn't a conscious thing. I just found myself in the kitchen doing stuff I hadn't done before with food. I've never been much of a cook - I prefer consumption to production - but making meals tempting and enjoyable became something of a challenge.

My earliest efforts are best left undescribed. Over time, though, things changed for the better as I began to see food differently: taste is only part of the equation. Other variables include texture, colors, even presentation - how the

table is set and the dishes in which the food is served. I didn't completely abandon flavor either, but just upped the ante a bit. Stronger seasonings came into play, things like garlic and onions and bell peppers. A side benefit is that peppers come not only green in, but in red and orange as well, which contribute to color and presentation. Onions can be red, too. Both Mom and Susan - my Better Three- Quarters - have a running joke about how I redefined "staples" to mean red onions and green and red peppers.

I'm not going to load you up with a bunch of recipes; the longer I cook, the less I use them anyway. There's a kind of harmony to cooking *sans* recipe, and the more you do it, the better it "sounds". I know, that doesn't make a lot of sense, but it's how I think about it. Let me give you an example.

This non-recipe doesn't have a name, but in keeping with the 'harmony' theme, I'll call it "Veggie Medley." Splash some olive oil in a large, non-stick pan, enough to coat the bottom. Peel and then cut a small red onion into thin slices and toss them into the oil. Do the same with a small red and a small green pepper (after taking out the seeds, of course). Now turn a couple small zucchini into a pile of thin slices and throw them into the mix as well. Season to taste (more on that below). Now cook it all up at medium heat until the onions and squash are translucent, or until it looks right to you.

The seasoning I use is a combination of Mrs. Dash's Table Blend and McCormick Roasted Garlic and Bell Pepper or Basil and Garlic. Some extra garlic powder can be added if your breath won't be an issue. Make it your own. Experiment. Try some Cajun spices. Try some ginger (gingerly!), black pepper, whatever you've got handy that seems like it will go with. Serve it with some baked chicken and rice, or whatever entrée you're hankering for. And make it presentable: take the time to set the table with napkins and dishes that match, at least in color. Remember that "appetizing" means more than just flavor.

Bon appetit!



"Use It or Lose It"

At the February session, while the Caregivers were sharing experiences, we found ourselves talking about exercise. In the main session, Michelle Ciucci had spoken about how "use it or lose it" is not just a cute phrase, and that experiments with lab animals had shown that Parkinson's-related symptoms could be reduced by activity . . . and increased by the lack thereof. Someone suggested that T'ai Chi - a gentle, no-impact exercise regimen that focuses on balance, breath and body control - would be something to explore and then spread the word about, so off we went to "dig up the dirt" on this "soft" martial art. Thanks to Merle Lewis who was good enough to do much of the ground work.

- St. Matthews Episcopal Church: Mon. & Wed. 9-10. \$15 per year for membership in their Senior Activity Center. For more information, call 345-8314
- Dell Jewish Community Center: Wed. 8:10-9:10. \$8 per class for members of the Jewish community. \$11 per class for others. Call 735-8000 for more information.
- St. David's Health and Fitness Center: Tues 9:30-10, Fri. 3-3:30. Cost depends on age, family membership, etc. An initial consultation fee of \$60, and a stress test if over 55. Call (512) 397-4263 for more info.
- Austin YMCA lists T'ai Chi classes on their Web site, and has locations all around the Austin Area. For more information, call (512) 335-9622.
- Two of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Centers - the Senior Activity Center at 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue (474-5921) and the South Austin Senior Activity Center at 3911 Manchaca Road (448-0787) also list T'ai Chi classes on their schedules. Give 'em a call.

If you'd rather not brave the weather or the crowds, there are a number of other good resources available for learning to 'do' T'ai Chi. Two with which I'm familiar are:

- *Tai Chi for Seniors*, a beginner's video from National Syndications Inc., and
- *T'ai Chi in a Chair: Easy 15-Minute Routines for Beginners* by Cynthia W. Quarta

More from Michelle Ciucci's presentation:

- Many with Parkinson's Disease (PD) who speak softly think they are talking normally - "I think my spouse is going deaf!"
- A simple audio or video tape can demonstrate otherwise
- It's hard to overstate the importance of communication in our lives
- 89% of people with PD have voice and speech difficulties; only 3-4% get therapy
- 95% have swallowing difficulties; only 3% get therapy
- Aspiration pneumonia is a danger to PD sufferers that may be avoided through therapy
- Ms Ciucci recommended LSVT (Lee Silverman Voice Training)/LOUD (www.lsvt.org)

Volunteers Needed

If anything gets done by the Capital Area Parkinson's Society, it gets done by People Like You that volunteer to make the wheels turn and without whom, all would grind to a halt. Right now, we are in need of some help:

- A name tag manager (Badger? ;), to store CAPS's name tags, bring them to the meetings, keep them up-to-date, make new ones and the like;
- A database person, someone with a little Microsoft Excel experience to keep the mailing list current, print mailing labels for the newsletters.

For more information on these or other ways you can help, please contact us by phone at 512-459-9876, by email at info@capitalareaparkinsons.org or by "snail mail" (USPS) at P.O. Box 27565, Austin, TX 78755-2565.

Cabs to CAPS?

For some time now, we've been looking into ways to help folks get to the monthly meetings. Now, thanks to the generous donation from the Freddy Powers Parkinson's Foundation (<http://www.freddypowers.org/>), we're getting set up to provide taxi vouchers to those who need them. If you could use a ride to the meetings, please let us know at your earliest convenience (using one of the methods listed in the previous paragraph). Include:

- your name
- the address where you'd be picked up (including Zip Code)
- the number of riders

After a month, we'll take a look at what we've got and announce the results.

It's that time Again . . .

Just a gentle reminder: dues are due. If you haven't chipped in your 15 bucks yet, won't you take the time to do so now? It is, after all, for a good cause.

Support Group Meetings

Here's the latest on the new PD support groups CAPS has set up around the Austin area. (Thanks to Susie and Kitty for their hard work!)

Austin, TX Support Group: The Austin Parkinson's Disease Support Group meets on the 3rd Friday of each month, from 1:00 - 2:30 PM. Location: Parsons House, 1130 Camino La Costa, Austin. For more information, please call Jaime Eyer 512-454-5502 or email [Susie Lightfoot Scherr](mailto:Susie.Lightfoot.Scherr) or [Kitty Hoskins](mailto:Kitty.Hoskins).

Bastrop, TX Support Group: The Bastrop Parkinson's Disease Support Group meets on the 4th Thursday of each month, from 2:30 - 3:30 PM. Location: Argent Court, 508 Old Austin Hwy, Bastrop. For more information, please call Dawn Smith at 512-321-9500 or email [Susie Lightfoot Scherr](mailto:Susie.Lightfoot.Scherr) or [Kitty Hoskins](mailto:Kitty.Hoskins).

Burnet, TX Support Group: The Burnet PD Support Group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month, from 1:00 - 2:30 PM. Location: Take Aim Team Training Center, 401 Buchanan Drive (Hwy 29), Burnet. For more information, please call 512-756-4949 or email [Susie Lightfoot Scherr](mailto:Susie.Lightfoot.Scherr) or [Kitty Hoskins](mailto:Kitty.Hoskins).

March Young Onset Group Meeting

The Young Onset Group meeting will be held Sunday, March 18th, 2007 at 3:00 PM at the Red Lobster, 109 W. Anderson. For more information, contact James Shrader at 671-3067 or at mr12stringjms@aol.com.

About the Newsletter Staff

This newsletter is assembled monthly, for better or worse, by Tom Fisher, AKA jumspstart5@sbcglobal.net. (Please note that is *not* 'jumpstart5'.) Any and all suggestions and comments will be appreciated.