

MS ACTIVISM



Oregon's 2nd District Representative Greg Walden with (L-R back) MS Oregon Chapter delegates Merilee McDowell, Carol Choutka, Brie Stoianoff, Lisa Roth and Pamila Hussie (front). -Contributed photo

-Continued from PAGE ONE Society, MS is an "unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body."

The cause of MS is still unknown. Many scientists believe the disease is triggered by unidentified environmental factors in a person who is "genetically predisposed" to respond. Two to three times more women are diagnosed with MS than men.

That wasn't the case with one of the Oregon delegates, however; Stoianoff's husband has MS. He's also a veteran, and McDowell said they learned there might be a link between the two.

"(We learned that) Statistically, there are a high amount of people from Desert Storm who have MS, and they're trying to figure that out," she says.

And figuring it out—talking about research and coping strategies and fundraising plans—was part of what excited McDowell about the opportunity.

"I wanted to talk to some of the doctors who are doing the research. I met a woman who is doing wonderful research. I shared some spiritual things that have helped me, and she shared with me things she's found that have helped. We helped each other. Positive reinforcement is so important to all of us in our lives," McDowell says.

She wasn't at the conference because she's a rookie, though. Rather, McDowell, the only Oregon delegate from east of the Cascades, was instrumental

in starting the Eastern Oregon Walk MS in Heppner, now in its 18th year. She has also chaired or co-chaired the event every year. She believes she was asked to attend the conference because of the success of Eastern Oregon Walk MS.

"Our small community has raised such a large amount of funds compared to other, larger areas," she says. "They have said we are their example to other walks of how to put a walk together."

McDowell, of course, says she jumped at the chance to travel to the nation's capital and speak about her passion.

"I felt very privileged that I was even asked. I saw it as an opportunity to share my story with a broader audience. And just the chance to go to DC!" she says.

And share her story she did. Aside from meeting with other MS activists and hearing speakers, conference attendees also underwent training for one of the biggest pieces of the event—going up to Capitol Hill to speak with legislators. As resident of Oregon's 2nd District, McDowell met with Rep. Greg Walden.

"I'm a constituent of Greg Walden, so I told my story to him. Everyone had certain legislators to talk to," McDowell explains.

McDowell added that not everyone at the conference got to speak with their legislators; Congress was in session that day, and some had to content themselves with sharing their stories with congressional staffers. However, "Greg Walden came off the floor to speak with us, and I got to tell him

my story."

She also says she had the chance to speak briefly with Sen. Ron Wyden, though not share her story as she did with Walden.

McDowell says she felt the visits to her congressmen were successful.

"Everybody was very receptive and considerate of us. I felt like I was really heard by my congressmen and their staffers," says McDowell.

While the visits to the Capitol were unforgettable, McDowell says other parts of the five-day trip were just as memorable in their own way. Choutka made it possible for delegates to tour some of Washington during their stay.

"I was able to, because of Carol Choutka, see the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial—which was awesome—and the reflecting pool. I got to see the World War II memorial, Vietnam memorial and Korean memorial."

It was during that portion of the journey that she says she had her most notable moment.

"I stood in the Lincoln Memorial and I looked over the reflecting pond to the Washington Memorial and thought of Martin Luther King standing there and giving his speech, the 'I have a dream,' speech," she recalls, "and I was thinking, 'He stood right here.' I would hope we all have that dream."

"I really had a new appreciation of being an American and what that means. Way too many people died for our freedom. You realize what a gift it is to wake up in a free country and be able to do whatever

it is I would like to do," she says.

But, with all the emotions contained in the trip, there was also a lighter—and quite surprising—side.

"I was walking out of my hotel in Washington, DC my first day and saw someone in front of me with a t-shirt that said 'Heppner,'" recalls McDowell with a chuckle. It turned out to be Jeff and Christine Bailey of Heppner, who were also in DC for a conference. "I had to stop and say, 'Am I in Washington, DC? Did I really fly here?'" she says.

"Then I was in the airport to leave and come home, and Jerry Healy came and sat beside me and said, 'How are you doing?'" she adds. "I said, 'I can't get away with anything!'"

Despite the humor, though, McDowell remains serious about being an MS activist and finding a cure for the disease she has lived—and struggled—with for nearly four decades. Her goal?

"To end MS," she says, adding that when she was diagnosed there were no treatments, let alone a cure. "Some progress rapidly. I haven't, and I'm very grateful for that."

McDowell says there are now 13 FDA-approved therapies for people with relapsing/remitting MS, and the FDA is currently reviewing a drug for progressive MS.

"It's not hereditary but I've seen it happen in families. I have a grandson, and I don't want him, or my daughter, to be diagnosed with MS. Anything I can do to keep that from happening, I will."

The Eastern Oregon Walk MS is planned for Saturday, April 23, in Heppner. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. at All Saints Episcopal Church, with the walk beginning at 10 a.m.

Pre-registration is appreciated and can be done at www.walkms.org or by calling 503-445-8342, but walk-ons are welcome and may register the day of the event. There is no registration fee; donations of any amount are welcome.

Starbucks will be serving coffee, and fruit and cinnamon rolls will be provided, and a hosted lunch and door prizes will follow. The 5k walk is wheelchair accessible. A route map will be available for the 5k Run and 10k Run. For more information, contact Heppner MS Walk Co-Chairs Barb Orwick at 541-256-0455 or Taylor Disque at 541-256-0295.

A View from the Hill

By Doris Brosnan

Everyone at Willow Creek Terrace leaped from February into March with some symbolic menu items: "rabbit" legs, "wallaby spuds," "frog-eye" salad, and grasshopper cake. It was tasty fun to be silly, but maybe not as much fun as the paper airplane competition on Aviation Day, Feb. 23.

Most residents joined in as spectators or competitors for the flying of paper airplanes down the hall. One resident who expected to simply watch even became a late entry by building a plane on site and giving it a heave-ho. Winning, longest flights were those by the planes designed by Bud Wilson and newcomers Millie Hanna and Caroline Hall.

March began with a conversation about the Peace Corps, which became a reality on March 1, 1961. Several residents remembered that former resident Liz Beuhler had joined the Peace Corps after retiring from her career.

Several Residents observed the World Day of Prayer on the fourth by gathering privately to add their prayers to the effort. And everyone gathered two days later to enjoy the foot-tapping music of the Ol' Time Fiddlers, the entertaining musicians always welcome on the Hill.

When Daylight Savings Time began on March 13, residents were reminded to "spring forward," whether or not individuals agreed with the state on fiddlin' with time, which can be confusing for a day or so.

That day is also chosen by staff for the replacement of batteries throughout the Terrace's common areas and residents' apartments.

Heppner's annual St. Pat's Celebration was again a hit with some residents. Nine individuals attended Fr. Condon's new drama on March 17. They enjoyed the thought-provoking play, and they appreciated the Father's reserving them a table near the stage. (The gunshot ending startled everyone and caused some to shoot out of their chairs a bit!) The Big Green Parade on the 19th was, the eight attendees agreed, an especially good one, and they appreciated the cooperative weather.

Last Friday, residents hosted some children and grandchildren of the staff for Easter-egg coloring, accompanied by some treats, of course. And then, on Sunday, the residents had an Easter-egg hunt, accompanied by some laughs, of course.

March's special days will end on the 30th, which is Doctors Day. The Terrace honors and thanks their doctors and other health-care specialists by taking trays of healthy treats to the clinic and the hospital. Residents and staff view the medical attention available to the Willow Creek Terrace Community as a definite bonus for living there.

They view the availability of one apartment as an opportunity for someone to join their Community on the Hill. Interested parties should call 541-676-0004 for information.

Boardman to sponsor spring clean up

The City of Boardman will sponsor a community-wide clean-up the month of April.

The city has garbage vouchers available, with a \$50 limit, to residents of the City of Boardman. The vouchers are valid during the month of April at Finley Butte Landfill and the North Morrow Transfer Station. The garbage voucher program is meant to encourage citizens to clean up their residences by disposing of yard debris. City residents may pick up their vouchers at Boardman City Hall at 200 City Center Circle beginning March 31.

For more information on this program, call Boardman City Hall at 481-9252.

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For more information, please call Morrow County Public Works at 541-989-9500 or email: mcpublicwork@co.morrow.or.us

Cleaners, pool and spa chemicals



Garden chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers



Fluorescent light bulbs, batteries



Gasoline, used motor oil and antifreeze



Butane, propane, gas



Oil based paints, stains, strippers



APRIL 1ST, 2016
8AM - 11AM

Lexington Road Department Yard
365 W. Hwy 74, Lexington, OR 97839

ACCEPTED DURING THE EVENT:

Used oil, Oil filters, Spent Antifreeze, Automotive batteries, Alkaline & recharge-able batteries, Propane Tanks (smaller than 25 gal.) Oil based paint, Paint thinners and solvents, Roof and asphalt patch, Adhesives, glues and contact cement, Caulks sealers and joint compounds, Lawn and garden chemicals and fertilizers, Pool chemicals, Household cleaners (including bleach, ammonia, furniture polish, toilet bowl cleaners, carpet shampoos) Sludge (soil contaminated with oil) Mercury thermometers, Florescent lamps, All types of aerosol cans, Used cooking oil, Road flares, PCB ballasts, Organic peroxides (hardening agents)