

# Greater Fresno Parkinson's Support Group

"Helping to optimize the quality of the lives of *People With Parkinson's* and their *Care Partners*."

**HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!!!**



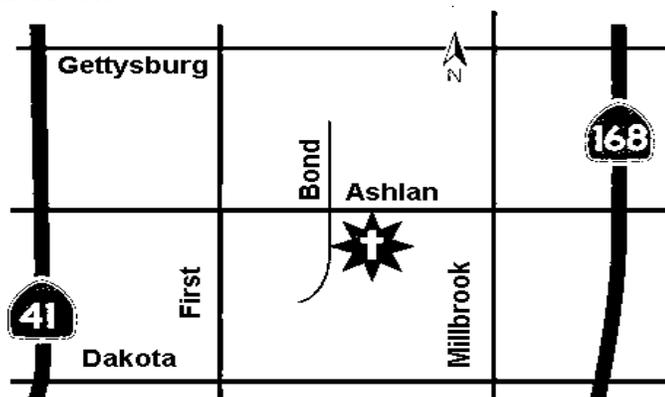
Our Next Meeting is on



**SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2011**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

At **THE BRIDGE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH** in Rooms 212-213 upstairs via elevator in the **Atrium** at **3438 E. Ashlan Ave., Fresno, CA 93726**, at the southeast corner of Ashlan & Bond between First & Millbrook. Enter the parking lot from Ashlan Ave.



**BRING ON THE CURE!!!**

## Word of the Month:

**Aspiration** (as"pī-ra'shun): In medicine, aspiration is the entry of secretions or foreign material into the trachea and lungs. The patient may either inhale the material, or it may be blown into the lungs during positive pressure ventilation or CPR. When it occurs in eating and drinking, the food or drink in question is often colloquially referred to as "going down the wrong pipe."

## **OUR MARCH PROGRAM:**

Our featured speaker this month is Debi Kallas. Debi will provide information regarding the benefits of physical fitness to the aging process. She has been teaching with Fresno Unified School District Adult Education, in the Older Adult Program for 18 years teaching Physical Education to Senior Citizens. Debi graduated from Fresno State with a Kindergarten through Adult Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. She has taken post-graduate classes in Kinesiology, Special Education, and Psychology. She also has a Group Instructor Certificate and a Personal Training Certificate specializing in Older Adult Programs. She previously worked for Clovis Adult School for 10 years in the same capacity as Fresno Adult School.

Debi is currently teaching at the Manchester Fresno Adult School Campus, 5 mornings a week, Physical Fitness, Stretch and Tai Chi, and Aerobics. The fitness classes include free weight training, resistance bands, and a variety of exercises to increase strength, flexibility, and mobility. Debi's goal is to keep her students strong and committed to their journey to good health.

On a personal note, Debi adds: "I am a wife and mother and am Grammy to two beautiful little boys. I love to walk, ride my bike, garden, read, and be with my family and friends. Most importantly about me, my Faith is the foundation in all that I do."

For more info, call Fresno Adult School 457-6000 and ask for the Older Adult Program. Classes: Physical Fitness Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:00 am to 9:15 am and 9:30 am to 10:45 am; Tuesday Stretch & Tai Chi 7:30 am to 8:45 am; Thursday Light Aerobics 7:30 am to 8:45 am. The cost is free. Location: Manchester Center, upstairs near the food court, Room 6. Open Enrollment--no specific start date.

Please respect the *confidentiality* of personal medical information revealed to one another in our meetings. Always *check with your own doctor* before changing your medications or treatments based on what you read in this Newsletter or hear at our meetings from others, even medical experts, as Parkinson's disease is such a complex disease and our respective bodies react differently to the disease and to the medications and treatments prescribed to treat it.

## STAGES OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE [www.healthquadrant.com](http://www.healthquadrant.com)

Parkinson's disease is a progressive condition in which symptoms and the extent of disability gets worse with each stage. Hoehn and Yahr, based on their research, came up with the 5 stages of Parkinson's disease to provide a model to analyze the illness and to differentiate between the treatments at each phase. The neurologist will consider the stage of the illness while deciding on the treatment.

**Stage 1:** At this stage, only one side of the body shows symptoms. Hence, it is termed unilateral disease. Some early signs of Parkinson's disease, like occasional mild tremors, may be seen. This initial stage can last for many years. This is the least troublesome of the 5 stages of Parkinson's disease. Neuroprotective treatment is generally used which is intended to halt further damage to the patient's nervous system. A drug called Rasagiline, which is a selective MAO-B inhibitor, seems to be promising at Stage 1. Vitamin E was used earlier, but many doctors say it is not particularly effective.

**Stage 2:** Now the disease has spread to both sides of the body and is called bilateral disease. If symptoms of Parkinson's disease show up even to a small extent on the side of the body that used to be free of symptoms earlier, the illness is said to have progressed to Stage 2. This includes even insignificant signs, like a mild tremor on the other side once in a while. Many doctors prescribe dopamine agonists at this stage. It used to be thought that these drugs are useful only at advanced stages. But researchers say that using dopamine agonists earlier can help prevent some of the side effects of using medication like Levodopa at later phases.

**Stage 3:** At this stage, the signs of Parkinson's disease have progressed further. They may now include problems in maintaining body posture. Falling down is fairly common at this stage. This used to be the stage at which the patient started taking Levodopa or dopamine agonists, but as pointed out above, dopamine agonists are prescribed at an earlier stage.

**Stage 4:** The symptoms including falling and general postural instability worsen at this stage. Doctors recommend surgery for some patients, which can alleviate the symptoms partially. But surgery is an option only for those who are relatively young and in good general health.

**Stage 5:** This is the end stage of Parkinson's disease. The patient can usually walk only with assistance and is bound to a wheelchair most of the time. The patient is usually on Levodopa. It may be combined with a COMT inhibitor to make the effects of Levodopa last longer. Surgery might be an option too, particularly a type of surgery called pallidotomy which is performed to destroy a small set of brain cells. Pallidotomy may help in stopping tremors as well as controlling the rigidity associated with Parkinson's disease. A specialized form of treatment called "Deep Brain Stimulation" may be an option too. Brain tissue is stimulated with electric currents (of a low grade) through implanted electrodes.

### OFFICERS

#### Co-Leaders/Emcees:

Russell Templeton  
Doug Jackson  
Bruce Medlin

#### Treasurer

Barbara Burmeister

#### Membership Committee:

Sue & Doug Jackson  
Faye & Jack Smith

#### Care Partners Group Leader:

Anne Guenther

#### Librarians:

Mac & MaryAnn MacDonald

#### Newsletter Editor:

Ellen Jablonski

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Bill & Barbara Burmeister  
Anne Guenther  
Ellen Jablonski  
Doug & Sue Jackson  
Riley and Linda Jones  
Bruce Medlin  
Jack & Faye Smith  
Russell & Jan Templeton  
Martin and Marianne Weil

### WEBMASTER

Frédéric "Fredo" Martin  
WorkingArts Marketing, Inc.™

### PEER COUNSELORS FOR OUR CARE PARTNERS

Anne Guenther (559) 322-7076  
Sue Jackson (559) 434-7928

Fresno-Madera Area Agency  
on Aging: (559) 453-4405 or  
(800) 510-2020  
Or online:

Caring From a Distance:

[www.cfad.org](http://www.cfad.org)

Family Caregiver Alliance:

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

Natl. Family Caregivers Assoc.:

[www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org)

Well Spouse Association:

[www.wellspouse.org](http://www.wellspouse.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
TO UPDATE OUR MAILING LIST,  
OR TO SUBMIT MATERIALS OR  
SUGGESTIONS, CONTACT:

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**(559) 593-9953**

## Treasurer's Report by Barbara Burmeister

**Greater Fresno Parkinson's Support Group (GFPSG) Checking Account Report:** The January 27 – February 24, 2011, Wells Fargo Bank Statement shows a beginning balance of \$470.98. Debited from the account was a check to WorkingArts Marketing, Inc. in the amount of \$251.25; this amount included a yearly fee of \$47.95 for domain name registration and management of websites fresnoparkinsons.org, fresnoparkinsons.com and gfpsg.org, as well as \$203.40 for website hosting for gfpsg.org for January – December 2011. Deposited to the account was \$77.00 in donations from the February meeting, leaving an ending statement balance of \$296.73. Not posted on the January 27– February 24, 2011, statement were two checks totaling \$141.48 for February 2011 newsletter-related expenses, leaving a balance of \$155.25.

As the balance in our Wells Fargo Checking Account had diminished over the months, the GFPSG Steering Committee approved disbursing \$1,000.00 from the GFPSG fund held at the Fresno Regional Foundation to replenish operating funds in the GFPSG Wells Fargo checking account. This account is used for monthly hospitality and newsletter-related expenses, as well as periodic donations to The Bridge in appreciation for the use of their facilities throughout the year. The current balance in our account is \$1,155.25.

Monies donated directly to our Support Group are not tax deductible; however, they do help cover the cost of newsletter, refreshment, and operating expenses. Thank you for your support.

**Fresno Regional Foundation (FRF) Fund Report:** In February 2011, there was one \$50.00 gift made to the GFPSG fund held at the Fresno Regional Foundation. Disbursed was a check in the amount of \$1,000.00 to replenish the GFPSG Wells Fargo checking account. The current balance in our FRF fund is \$3,488.93.

Donations or gifts to our Support Group through the *Foundation* are tax deductible and can be made on-line, or by check, Visa, or MasterCard. Make your check out to the Fresno Regional Foundation and specify that the donation or gift is for the Greater Fresno Parkinson's Support Group Fund. The mailing address for the Fresno Regional Foundation is: 5250 N. Palm Avenue, Suite 424, Fresno, CA 93704. For additional information, you can call them directly at (559) 226-5600 or visit their website at [www.fresnoregfoundation.org](http://www.fresnoregfoundation.org) to make a gift online.

### **Resource of the Month:** <http://www.uctv.tv/search-details.aspx?showID=18008>

An online video on the *University of California Television* website. What is it like to live with Parkinson's, a degenerative neurological disease? Where do you turn for the latest treatment options delivered with compassionate care? To help answer these questions, people with Parkinson's share in this 30-minute video presented by the staff at UCSF their heartfelt stories of what it is like to live with this disease. Leading medical experts from UC San Francisco's renowned Parkinson's Disease Clinic and Research Center also share their expertise about the latest research.

### **Brain Awareness Week:**

Brain Awareness Week is a global campaign to raise public awareness about the progress and benefits of brain research, including research into the causes of Parkinson's disease and how to treat it. In celebration of Brain Awareness Week, taking place from March 14-20, the *National Parkinson Foundation* is proud to present 8 Steps to a Healthy Brain: (1) Exercise; (2) Eat Healthy; (3) Give Your Brain a Workout; (4) Stay Social; (5) Manage Stress; (6) Get Enough Sleep; (7) Track Medications and Supplements; and (8) Avoid illicit Drugs and Excessive Alcohol Consumption.

## **Synopsis of Our February 12, 2011, Program:**

We had 36 attendees. Aubrey Fast of *San Joaquin Valley Rehabilitation* talked about their Parkinson's class which focuses on improving strength, flexibility, and functional mobility and will aid in the participant's ability to perform activities of daily living and maintain muscle tone, flexibility, and endurance; it also provides socialization to reduce isolation. (559) 431-2635. The Care Partners had a breakout session while the remainder discussed various issues such as leg neuropathy, Valley Caregiver Resource Center's benefits; dry mouth caused by medications or by Parkinson's which could be treated by Botox®, MI Paste from your dentist, Salivart® Oral Moisturizer, or Biotene®.

## **Tax Tips for Caregivers: It's That Time of Year... By Francine Huff**

Caring for an aging relative can result in many out-of-pocket expenses, but there are tax breaks available to help. Here are a few tips on how caregivers like you can keep more money at tax time.

*Claim Them as a Dependent:* If you provide more than half of the support for a relative, you can claim him or her as a dependent on your income tax return. For 2009, the amount of the exemption for each dependent was \$3,650.

*Deduct Fees for Help:* Medical expenses incurred for a relative in a nursing home or rehab can be deducted, as long as they are your dependent. Keep track of fees paid for in-home help such as nurses, therapists, and adult day care.

*Itemize Medical Expenses:* There are many care items you can deduct, including the cost of doctor visits, surgeries, lab work, and supplies like false teeth or wheelchairs. If your loved one can't travel alone, you can also deduct transportation expenses like mileage, parking, tolls, and even meals and lodging if your main reason for being there is to get medical care.

*Keep Careful Records:* You can only deduct medical expenses if they exceed 7.5% of your adjusted gross income so you'll need to retain all receipts and/or documentation in order to establish that you meet the deduction requirement.

*Use Flexible Spending Accounts:* Flexible spending accounts (FSA's) allow you to put aside pretax dollars for medical expenses. Once you pay for eyeglasses, hearing aides, prescriptions, or some other medical expense, you can reimburse yourself out of your FSA.

*Consult with a Tax Professional:* To ensure you fully understand all the deductions to which you are entitled, talk to a tax professional.

*Take Advantage of Tax Deductions.* Being able to deduct care expenses makes it easier for caregivers like you to provide in-home help, adult day care, assisted living facilities, and other services your loved one may need.

*ElderCarelink* has a nationwide network of service providers for all care needs, and can help you find the best options for your loved one quickly.

**Chuckle of the Month:** While on a road trip, an elderly couple stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. After finishing their meal, they left the restaurant, and resumed their trip. When leaving, the elderly woman unknowingly left her glasses on the table, and she didn't miss them until they had been driving for about forty minutes. By then, to add to the aggravation, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around, in order to return to the restaurant to retrieve her glasses. All the way back, the elderly husband became the classic grouchy old man. He fussed and complained, and scolded his wife relentlessly during the entire return drive. The more he chided her, the more agitated he became. He just wouldn't let up for a single minute. To her relief, they finally arrived at the restaurant. As the woman got out of the car, and hurried inside to retrieve her glasses, the old geezer yelled to her, "While you're in there, you might as well get my hat and the credit card!"