

“A Parkinson’s Life – Doing Well by Doing Good”

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Objective: Illuminate the need and impact of effective Parkinson’s role models.

Methods: My diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease in February of 2008 didn’t strike me with the devastating force that so often accompanies the diagnosis. Instead My family and I accepted the challenge to better understand and effectively manage the complexity of organizing care, work, and family that can be overwhelming at times. The opportunities to simply give up and let the disease have its way were there to be taken. Fortunately, my parents, family, and faith inspired me with the determination to fight and the recognition that I could illuminate for others that a life with Parkinson’s can be one of vitality, meaning, and promise. For too many, the isolation that Parkinson’s often imposes prevents one from gaining the exposure to those who share similar circumstances, yet express a joy and confidence in life. A confidence necessary to summon the will to provide oneself with the permission and expectation to want more from life. My aim is to not only provide a brighter vision of what can be, but to also serve as a beacon for others to play a similar role as a model for others. We are in the end, a community and that community is lifted and fortified by its collective will to expect more and live life to its fullest. This requires the work of legions of role models. The answer for me was as simple as just showing up. By doing so the doors of opportunity presented themselves. Participating in community events produced by the likes of the Davis Phinney Foundation or the Baehr Challenge, and many others provided the ready means to get engaged and social media enabled me to share the richness of these experiences within our community and a much broader world. These chances to convey a sense of hope, opportunity, control, and peace are gifts that keep on giving. And they are gifts that must be assumed by many more within the Parkinson’s community. In the end, I have learned that a vital key to living well with Parkinson’s comes from doing good for others.