

John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center



Spring 2025 Newsletter, Volume 11 Issue 2

Direct from the Director

This year, the John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center (MSAC) has been exceptionally active. The focus this year has been "Building Your Medical Community", emphasizing the importance of having a strong, healthy community to help us live the best version of ourselves. Throughout this newsletter, we will illustrate how this theme was incorporated into our various program offerings.

This edition will highlight our collaborations with professional colleagues to deliver patient education programs for the MS community. We also presented at the Consortium of MS Centers conference, educating professional colleagues on the benefits of day wellness programs for individuals living with MS. Furthermore, we partnered with community organizations for financial support, which allows us to offer our program to anyone living with MS, regardless of their financial circumstances. We highly value all opportunities to enhance knowledge, expand partnerships, and collectively support people living with MS.

Although the focus of the year was on "building" medical community, we also recognize that, in some cases, the medical community has already been established. For that reason, we expanded our approach to this theme to include "strengthening" medical community. We welcomed fourteen new members to our program, broadening our reach within the MS community. Additionally, Nate Opiana, who joined us as Administrative Coordinator earlier this year, has since transitioned into the Exercise Specialist role. With his background in fitness training, Nate's passion for physical wellness will be a great asset. We look forward to further strengthening our team as we look to fill the Administrative Coordinator position and are considering additional opportunities to strengthen our service delivery in the coming year.

The MSAC aims to enhance the overall health and wellness of individuals living with MS. We hope to support our members, fostering enhanced self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of achievement.



The MSAC staff

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

~Henry Ford

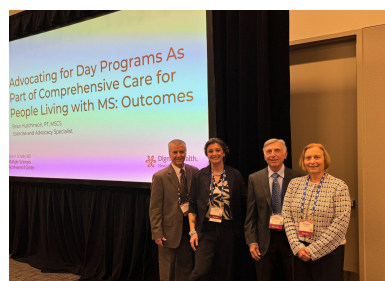
MSAC represented at 2025 Consortium of MS Centers Conference

The Annual Meeting of the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers (CMSC) was held May 28-31, 2025 in Phoenix. The CMSC meeting provides an opportunity for dissemination of scientific and clinical information with healthcare professionals involved in the treatment of people living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Attendees represent a multidisciplinary approach to managing MS including neurologists, nurses, rehabilitation and mental health professionals.

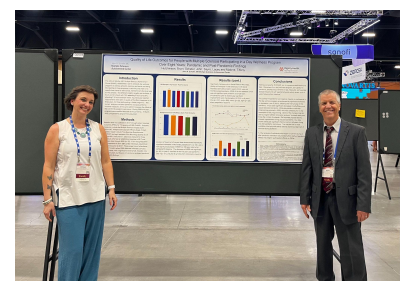
At this year's meeting, the John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center (MSAC) was well represented, hosting a clinical symposium on the 'Benefits of Day Wellness Programs for People with MS' and presenting a poster on the MSAC's eight year outcomes data. Both were very well received with the symposium receiving high marks for program content and effective delivery of content. Likewise, many practitioners stopped by the poster to ask questions about data results and how to implement these programs in their community.

In addition to the educational content provided during the conference, it provides great networking with other healthcare professionals and potential collaborators on educational programs for our local MS community. Finally, meeting with potential funding partners to discuss support of MSAC programs and services is an important component of the meeting.

Next year's CMSC meeting will be in Charlotte, NC, May 27-30, 2026 and the MSAC hopes to have continued involvement in 'spreading the word' about our unique programs in Sacramento!



Brian, Tiffany, Dr. Randy Schapiro and Dr. Barbara Giesser presenting at CMSC 2025



Brian Hutchinson and Tiffany Malone at CMSC 2025 poster presentation

John A. Schafer, MD

Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center



Building Community Through Fun Activities

The past six months at the MSAC have been filled with activity, laughter, and plenty of community connection! Our members have been busy getting out, exploring new places, and making memories together. This year, we kicked things off with an exciting kayaking adventure in collaboration with Sacramento State, where participants enjoyed beautiful weather, calm waters, and plenty of teamwork. We also hosted our MSAC Annual Picnic, which had an incredible turnout—more than 80 people came together to share food, fun, and friendship.

Our adventures didn't stop there! Members took a stroll through the lush Sacramento State Arboretum, discovering native plants and enjoying the peaceful surroundings. A trip back in time at the California State Railroad Museum, helped us learn about California's rich history and the golden age of trains. And of course, what's summer without a little celebration? Our Ice Cream Social brought everyone together for a sweet afternoon of treats, laughter, and music. To top it all off, we tested our knowledge and quick thinking at Trivia Night, where friendly competition and lots of laughs made for an unforgettable evening.

We're so proud of how active and engaged our community has been—and we can't wait to see what the next six months bring!



One of our Walk & Roll events to the local Arboretum



8 MSAC members kayaked for the day at Sac State Aquatics



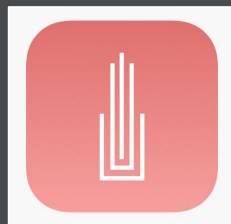
Strolling the California Train Museum



Linda showed off her art skills at our Paint Workshop

Featured App

Letter Box: Create words using letters on the board. Connect words in a sequence, the last letter of the previous word is the first of the next word.



Exercise Can be Fun!

Committing to regular exercise can be a challenge. Finding new ways to make exercise fun and engaging can help reduce those challenges. Boxing and Aquatic exercise are two therapeutic modes of physical activity which add fun and variety to your exercise program.

Boxing offers both physical and neurological aspects. Non-contact boxing can improve balance, coordination, and mobility through repetitive movements. With proper guidance boxing can be safe, engaging, and extremely motivating.

Aquatic exercise and therapy are amazing ways for those living with MS to improve mobility, balance, and strength. The properties of the water help reduce joint strain, ease spasticity, and promote relaxation. This makes it a safe, empowering exercise option for symptom management.

Nate Opiana was hired as the MSAC's Administrative Coordinator, in February 2025. He transitioned to his new role as the Exercise Specialist in September. Nate's background in Kinesiology and Personal Training provides familiarity with one-on-one training, log tracking, and goal setting. Nate is dedicated to extending his exercise knowledge and helping others improve their physical well-being. If you have any questions for Nate, you can contact him at Nathan.opiana@commonspirit.org.



Nate bobbing and weaving his way through his boxing class.

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Live Mindfully

The study of positive psychology is the study of what makes people happy. There is no single meaning for happiness. Happiness is relative to the person experiencing it and is based on how we feel about our own lives. Happiness can be very challenging for people, as we can be consumed by the amount of negativity surrounding us and influenced by the many things that don't go the way we had expected. One strategy for building habits that influence positive mood is to acknowledge the possibilities in our life. When we expect a negative outcome, when we surround ourselves with negativity, we will continuously be inundated with negative thoughts and feelings. When we open our minds to what's possible, we allow ourselves to see the good and feel more confident to make healthy life changes.



Program Offerings

For upcoming events please visit our website at dignityhealth.org/msachievementcenter

Celebrating Your Generosity to MSAC

From June through December 2024, the JCPenney store located at the Roseville Galleria raised funds for the John A. Schafer, MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center (MSAC) through their round-up campaign. On June 28, 2025, the store presented the MSAC with a check for \$5,268. Over sixty MSAC members, family and friends, and employees of the store gathered together for the check presentation, and every MSAC member who attended also received a \$25 JCPenney gift card. The store also opened early and allowed attendees to shop before the store opened to the public. The MSAC has been selected as the store's campaign recipient again for 2025.

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Mercy Foundation is proud to serve as the philanthropic partner of the John A. Schafer MD Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center and provide vital support for the Center's life-affirming care for its members, and their loved ones.



2025 JCPenney Roundup check presentation and member gathering.



MERCY FOUNDATION
Inspiring philanthropy. Changing lives.

Thank You For Your Generous Support

American River Infusion Services
Dale H. Melin
John A. Schafer, MD
Marty and Elaine Vanich
TG Therapeutics
Vivienne Brett

Brian and Jennifer Hutchinson
EMD Serono, Inc.
Kevin and Tiffany Malone
Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, Inc.
The Sacramento Bee

CyberGrants LLC
Genentech USA, Inc.
Kramer Family Foundation
Rebecca Kleiner and Ed O'Connell
Todd and Amy Hoddick

***Contributions reflect donations of \$2,000 or greater, received January 1, 2025 through June 30, 2025. A full list of donors is acknowledged through Mercy Foundation.*

To make a donation to the MSAC, please visit <https://supportmercyfoundation.org/donate> or contact Senior Philanthropy Officer, Kathy Lopez, at (916) 851-2011 or kathy.lopez@commonspirit.org.

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Professional Colleagues of the MSAC to Strengthen your Medical Community

Pamela Rosenthal is a masters prepared nurse practitioner with over 20 years experience in the primary care, geriatric and neurology fields. She has worked for Mercy Medical Group/Dignity Health since 2011. She joined the neurology/MS team in 2018 and works alongside Dr. Lulu in the Mercy Multiple Sclerosis Center. When she is not working, she is usually exploring the Sierra Foothills/Tahoe trails on her mountain bike or by foot with her dog Ginger.



Aaron M. Skelton, MD is a comprehensive ophthalmologist with a decade of experience, focusing on cataract surgery and glaucoma management. He also cares for patients with a variety of eye and neurologic conditions, including optic neuritis, double vision, and other neuro-ophthalmic issues. Known for his patient-centered care and thoughtful, thorough approach, Dr. Skelton works closely with each patient to understand their needs and guide them through diagnosis and treatment with clarity and compassion. Outside of work, Aaron is a proud dad of two young kids. He loves spending time outdoors with his family—camping, fishing, hiking, and traveling whenever they get the chance.

Dr. Uday Poonamallee is a urologist with the Mercy Medical Group, who has been practicing Urology for 35 years. He went to medical school at New York University and did his Urology residency at UC Davis Medical Center. He treats general urologic problems, with a focus on voiding dysfunction and sexual dysfunction.

