

April 26, 2009

Dear Friends of MSQLP,

I know it is no surprise that the economy is down – we're all living with unexpected changes. For us, the biggest impact has been the great reduction in donations and grant funding. We are not alone in this struggle – most non-profits are facing similar constraints.

The board met to review our financial situation. We had to balance two concerns:

- How can we continue to provide services with reduced funding?
- If we have to cut services, how can we minimize the impact on clients who are most vulnerable?

The answer to the first was easy - cut costs. The hard part was deciding what to actually cut. The smallest cuts were simple – reduce expenditures on specific items like office supplies. We gained a large savings by moving to a different office in our building – this cut our rent by almost half. But these changes still didn't meet our new reduced budget. It was with great sadness that we made the decision to lay off our wonderful social worker, Susan “Dockie” Lewis, and replace her with a staff of volunteer medical professionals – nurses, social workers and therapists - who will carry on our case management program, coordinated by a small office staff.

By making this change we can continue to operate our basic HouseCalls program but there will be differences. We will not be able to come to your house as often as we have in the past. Instead we will conduct more of our case management program over the telephone or have you come to us. Our monthly Support Groups, Water Aerobics classes and Supportive Therapy counseling groups will meet as scheduled with no interruption. We consider this reduction plan a stopgap measure until the economy improves or we can increase funding. We will then rehire a social worker to run our case management program.

Our Newsletter will be available for download from our website (at www.msqlip.org) and by email. If you do not have access to a computer, call our office (831 333-9091) and we will mail you a printed copy. The next edition will be available May 15, 2009. If we do not have your current email address, send it to us at msqlip@sbcglobal.net. The internet (both our web site and email) will become our primary means of sending you information.

With these changes we can meet our reduced budget and still offer services to all – not just to those most vulnerable. However, we must raise \$7,000 by June 30 to bridge the funding gap until our next fundraiser in July. At our Walk-n-Roll on September 19, 2009 we hope each one of you will collect donations from your friends, neighbors and families to help keep our programs going. Without your help we cannot survive but, working together, we can make a difference in the lives of our local friends living with MS. As we all know, the disease doesn't go away just because funding has.

How can you help us at the present time? Any donation would be wonderful – no amount is too small. Or would you like to volunteer as the volunteer coordinator, a friendly visitor, a friendly caller, a handy person or a gardener? There are so many ways you can help. If you are able to give a donation, send a check (519B Hartnell Street – same address) or donate online at www.MSQLP.org.

Sincerely,

Donna Krasnow
MSQLP Board Chair

Some MS stories from the clients we visit, call or to whom we provide support services. Sometimes what they most need is a person to talk to who understands their disease.

My first symptom was numbness in my feet and legs. My balance started to worsen and I fell frequently. I had to quit my job as my cognitive skills were fading. I became very depressed. My son was only one-year old at the time. I had to adjust to the isolation of being home, not being a provider and having a total change of life. Prior to this, my wife was able to stay home with our son while I was able to support her.

I recently noticed changes in my memory and cognitive function. When I drive to my doctor appointments now, although I have been taking the same route for a long time, I get lost. When I call to tell the office that I will be late, they ask, “How late will you be?” I feel so frustrated because I really don’t know since I am lost. I feel so helpless at times.

I am a 43-year-old woman with MS. What a shock! This explains why I have had so many aches and pains. I thought I had had a stroke. What started out as a headache and dizziness turned to numbness and stinging down the left side of my body. I don’t know what it would be like to not have chronic pain and fatigue but I’d like to know that feeling someday. Since many of my symptoms are invisible it is frustrating that people expect so much of me and don’t understand my illness. I feel anger, uncertainty, frustration and fear. People often say to me, “How can you feel so ill when you look so good?”

I am 47 and have lived in a nursing home for 15 years. Since I am a quadriplegic I have to depend on others for just about everything. I feel so isolated living in a nursing home with people who are 80 – 90 years old. Most employees here don’t understand the special needs of people who have MS. For example, when it gets too warm, I experience memory loss, fatigue and blurred vision.

We have great financial stress since I was diagnosed with MS. We are not classified as low income but remain unable to pay the expense of a caregiver or domestic help. My husband has the overwhelming burden of working full-time, providing 24-hour care and maintaining all the household chores. This makes me feel helpless and dependant.