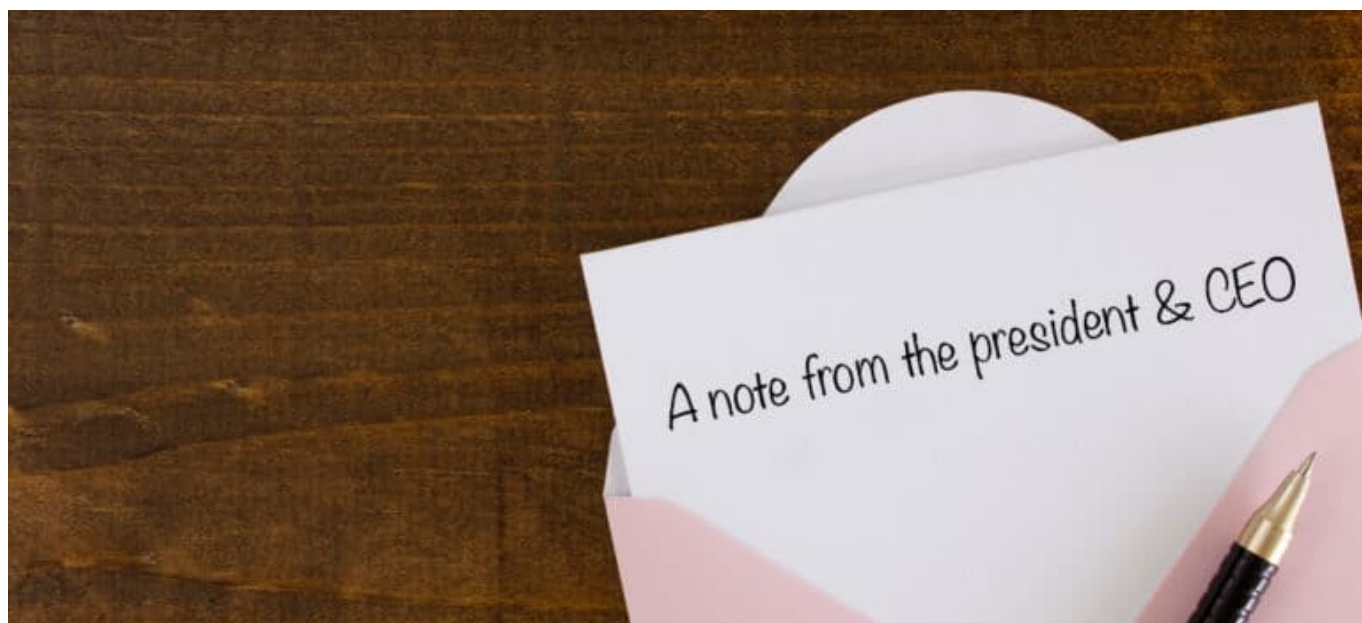


A resource for younger generations



by Cyndi Zagieboylo



Teenage years can be difficult just to get through. Your 20s are a time to figure a lot of stuff out and to start choosing a life path, maybe even a life partner. Adding a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis during these times complicates everything. What does the National Multiple Sclerosis Society need to be to ensure that younger generations can live their best lives?

We, at the Society, want to be a place for people, young and not-so-young, to connect with one another because we know that is how many solutions to life's challenges can be found. At the same time, we want to be a gathering place for the best information about MS and the resources people need. In this fast-paced world where the ways people communicate are changing all the time, how can we be relevant to everyone?

Young people, especially Generation Z, might be hesitant to join an organization built by

baby boomers. Maybe the [Society's website](#) isn't the first place they turn to when they're diagnosed. They probably aren't reading this Forward! We must expand and change, to keep up to date and understand how young people plug in, what inspires them and what they want to contribute. Social media and a digital presence are key. As Kate Tomlinson, the Society's vice president of digital marketing, puts it: "The Society has a long history of evolving to find and connect people to the MS movement. Just like [the Society's founder] Sylvia Lawry used the tools of her time—placing an ad in the newspaper—we must continually evolve to find and connect people with the tools of our time and keep looking ahead to adapt and change. We have a strong digital presence and strong engagement in social media, and we continue to evaluate and evolve all the ways we connect."

Rusty Grim, chair of the Society's digital marketing advisory committee and CEO at Owen Jones & Partners, agrees: "The MS Society should continue to meet people where they are. Of course, that means many things—meeting people where they are with respect to their relationship to the disease and where they are most comfortable engaging."

And Grim makes another key point that goes beyond the digital arena.

"It is also important that the stories and information that we tell and express are relevant to each audience that we want to reach."

The Society strives to reach every person with MS. We want to be YOUR National MS Society, no matter your age.

How can we do that? How can we be most relevant to younger generations?

I hope you'll let me know what's on your mind.

Cyndi Zagieboylo
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Let me know your thoughts. Email me at cyndi@nmss.org.