

# Advocacy is personal—and powerful



**Cyndi  
Zagieboylo, President &  
CEO**

**by Cyndi Zagieboylo**

Spring is always an exciting time at the National MS Society. The Public Policy Conference, which takes place each March, engages more than 300 MS activists, who visit Capitol Hill to share their experiences of living with multiple sclerosis with legislators who can help us change the world. Legislators learn what life is like for their constituents and are asked to take action to improve the lives of people affected by MS.

This year marks the 25th Public Policy Conference, and it's remarkable how far we've come. Back in 1991, much of our advocacy focused on general accessibility issues; we needed to be able to get into public buildings and participate in life. Now, our priorities are on access to healthcare, and on continued and increased funding for research. It's a different world today—primarily because people shared their stories about what they wanted from life and what was in their way.

In this issue of **Momentum**, you'll read stories of three individuals who have made a tremendous difference in the lives of people with MS by making connections and speaking up. (See "[25 years of advocacy](#).")

Spring is also when the Walk MS season begins, with more than 330,000 participants at more than 500 locations raising awareness and funds each year. Participating in Walk MS is a powerful and very public way to demonstrate our commitment to changing the world for people with MS and, ultimately, creating a world free of MS. It is the largest gathering of people with MS and their loved ones. And for many people, it's also their entry point into the MS movement. We are dedicated to being trusted partners throughout each person's MS journey. No one should face MS alone.

As you'll read in "[Walking their way](#)," Walk MS is accessible to everyone, no matter how you move from one place to another. Whether you use a cane, a walker, crutches, a wheelchair or a scooter, you can participate. You may decide you'd rather stay in one spot and cheer on others or welcome first-timers. No matter how or why you show up, it's a contribution to the movement. Living your day with MS and living your life the way you want to advances our movement.

In this issue, you'll also read about the importance of being proactive in your own care—whether that's learning the latest information on disease-modifying treatments or partnering with your physician to find solutions to symptoms. (See "[Take control of your care](#).") My take-away is that it's critical to be assertive in your MS management. It's a matter of self-advocacy. You know your body better than anyone. Make sure that people are hearing you and helping you achieve your goals.

Whether you focus on your own care, support others or help change legislation, you're participating in advocacy. No matter how you choose to do it, get involved. Each person, each conversation, each connection is an opportunity to contribute. The possibilities in what we can accomplish are extraordinary. Together we are stronger. Together, we will change the world for people with MS.

Cyndi Zagieboylo  
President & CEO  
National MS Society

Let me know your thoughts. Email me at [cyndi@nmss.org](mailto:cyndi@nmss.org).  
To get involved, join the MS Activist Network at [nationalmssociety.org/MSactivist](https://nationalmssociety.org/MSactivist).