

Living the American Dream with MS



As the 47th lieutenant governor of the state of Illinois, a wife, a mother of three and a person diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, I have a very full, but hectic life. I work every hour that I'm awake serving the people of Illinois.

My MS journey started in 2010 when I suffered an accident while walking. This fall resulted in subsequent MRI and medical examinations that revealed I had MS. At first, I had the blues — as you know, this is not an easy diagnosis to take. My husband was instrumental in helping me push forward by encouraging me to run for Wheaton City Council and to take a teaching position on top of being a trial attorney. With the support of my family and neurologist, I vowed to never let MS stop me.

In October of 2013, Governor Bruce Rauner asked me to be his running mate. It was then that I saw an opportunity to show by example that MS does not need to be an obstacle. If my story could empower others, then it was a story worth sharing. And if raising awareness can bring us closer to a cure, then I will continue speaking out.

In just the past six months, through MS Society events like the Women on the Move Luncheon and Walk MS, I've had the opportunity to meet and interact with so many MS warriors. As an MS warrior myself, and now the first Latina lieutenant governor in the state of Illinois — and the entire country — I want to do my part in raising awareness.

It has been assumed that MS uncommon in the Hispanic/Latino population, but that is not the case. Recent studies are showing an increase in the number of people throughout Latin America who have MS — a figure that is rising faster than the growth rate of that region's total population. As the fastest growing minority group in the U.S., it's important to raise

awareness about the disease across the Hispanic/Latino population in order to better educate individuals and families about available treatment options, resources, programs and services. It is my goal to help all those affected by MS to continue to move their lives forward.

As the saying goes, "If you've met one person with MS, you've only met one person with MS." It's a mysterious disease and every single case is different. But together, our stories are powerful and serve a real need in raising awareness and educating others about MS.