

Rocking to cure MS



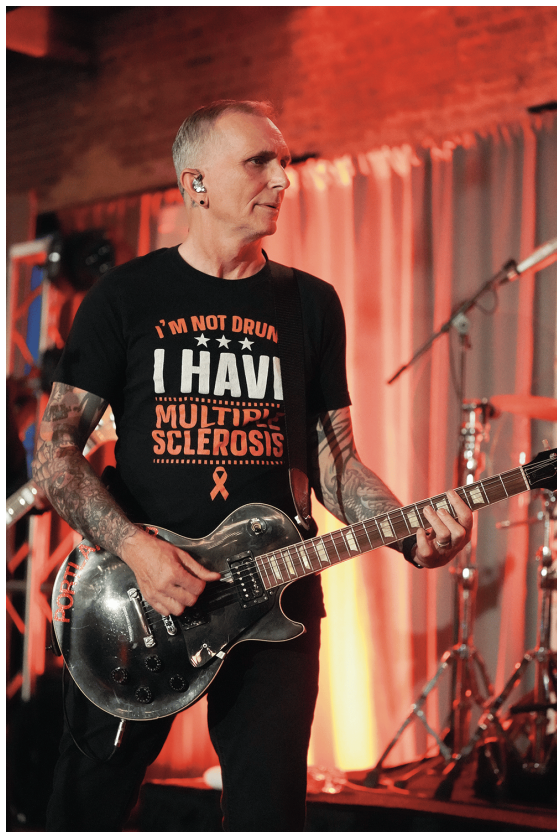
A gala in Indianapolis features private concerts to raise money for MS research.

by James Townsend

Fundraisers in the Midwest frequently focus on golf tournaments or dinners. But a group of people in Indianapolis decided to take a different approach.

“We wanted to do something that would stand out,” says Bob Dalzell, a member of the group.

So, they created a gala that featured private concerts by national music acts, bands with a multi-generational appeal. Beginning in 2019, three one-night, sold-out June galas and concerts featuring the



Everclear's Art Alexakis, who lives with MS, has performed at the IN Cure of MS gala.

likes of Smashmouth, Sister Hazel and Everclear called "IN Cure of MS" have raised spirits and significant funds for MS research for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The first two events raised more than \$400,000. Even in 2020, when there was no event because of the pandemic, sponsors and donors still ponied up \$83,500. The 2022 event was expected to meet or exceed previous years' totals.

Abbie Quiocho's family jumped into supporting MS research after one of Abbie's three sisters was diagnosed seven years ago at age 27. Quiocho was impressed with Everclear lead singer Art Alexakis, who was diagnosed with MS in 2015. "Art was really great, going around after the band's performance to meet and talk with some of the attendees, especially those who were affected by MS.

"We have a great group of volunteers," Quiocho continues. "My family members have done Walk MS and other fundraisers, but we wanted to create something unique to our community."

The evening included cocktails, dinner, games, awards, live and silent auctions of donations of vacations, sideline tickets for the Indianapolis Colts games, artwork and even a bottle of Sweetens Cove bourbon autographed by the Colts' most famous quarterback, Peyton Manning. Past auctions have featured bottles of bourbon autographed by Indy 500 drivers

and a pair of gloves from famous IndyCar driver, Alexander Rossi.

The 2022 theme was “Speak Easy, Give Greatly” and many attendees wore costumes from the 1920s. “It was a blast,” says Dalzell, who helps develop the event’s theme each year. “It feels really rewarding to deliver not only a great evening but a significant amount of money to the cause.”

One of the event’s biggest draws has been Jeff Saturday, the well-known former Colts center and ESPN analyst who’s served as the honorary host. Says Dalzell: “Only after he agreed to be the host did we discover that his grandmother had been diagnosed with MS.”



Guests enjoy specialty cocktails, live music and auctions.

Ten people are members of the IN Cure of MS leadership team, but many others contribute in a variety of ways, says Quiocho, whose father, Jay Brammer, is one of the fundraising chairs. Her mother, Becky Brammer, serves as the catering chair. Quiocho says being involved in IN Cure of MS takes her way out of her comfort zone but has enlarged her life.

“I’ve made new friends through this, and there are many things at the event that move me. This year, for instance, the band got one of the attendees in a wheelchair up on stage with them and danced with her,” she says. “And every year, we have someone named the ‘MS Warrior’ who speaks about their experience. I tend to cry a lot when they do.”

The MS Warrior for 2021 was Mike Knight, a writer diagnosed in 2013. (Knight writes for

Momentum magazine). At the gala, Knight, who uses a wheelchair these days, talked about how life can paint you into smaller and smaller corners that help you realize how much we are given every single day, and how we fail to appreciate it at our own peril.

“Try and live as fully in as many of the moments we have,” he says. “That’s what I want people to know.”

IN Cure of MS is just one of the 800 to 1,000 annual fundraising events that are part of the National MS DIY program.

“To date, the Indianapolis event is definitely one of the most successful events,” says Christina Carro, senior director of emerging events for the Society. “But it’s wonderful to see the many creative ideas people come up with around the nation.”

The key to having a DIY program success is passion, Carro says. “When someone comes up with an idea they’re passionate about, they reach out to us, we register them, share our toolkit and resources with them, and support them with our staff of 12 to 15 people.

“Giving people room to invent their own ways to raise research funds is proving to be a winning formula,” Carro says, adding that in 2022 alone, the DIY programs have raised nearly \$3 million.

James Townsend is a freelance writer in Boulder, Colorado.

Find more information about [IN Cure of MS](#).

Learn how to [organize your own DIY event](#).