

Streaming to end MS



DIY fundraising goes virtual.

by Kelsey Blackwell



Warren Torrence raises money for MS through live streaming.

Warren Torrence started supporting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in 1998 when he and his father first participated in Bike MS: Breakaway to the Beach, riding 150 miles from Rockingham, North Carolina, to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, nearly every year since.

In 2015 though, Torrence decided he wanted to try something different. “I liked doing the Breakaway, but I’m not as outdoorsy as my dad,” he says. “I thought there’s got to be another way that I can raise support.”

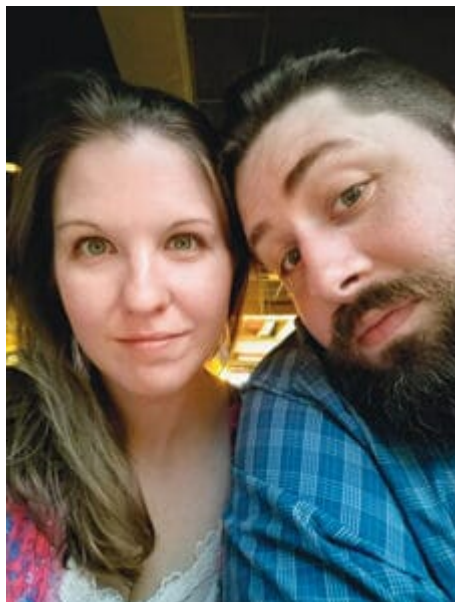
Torrence decided to get together with some of his online gaming friends and see if he could raise money through live streaming. The first year he raised \$700. For the past two years, he’s raised more than his dad has, averaging roughly \$1,200 a year. “I’m like, ‘Ha! You have to ride your bike, I get to stay at home,’ ” Torrence says with a chuckle.

Streaming for charity often means raising money from the comfort of your home, though not always. What is streaming and how can you raise money doing it? Those were the questions Christina Carro, senior director, Emerging Events at the Society, asked before launching [Stream to End MS](#) in May 2020. Carro was approached by streamers such as Torrence, who were already streaming to raise awareness and funds for MS and suggested that the Society launch an official campaign.

“We had to look into it,” Carro says. “More people [were staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic], and we discovered that streaming is a huge and growing industry. It gives people another way to fundraise in ways they maybe hadn’t thought about.” Carro also notes that distinct from the Society’s more traditional fundraising campaigns such as Bike MS and Walk MS, Stream to End MS gives a new audience a way to participate.

Limitless possibilities

From online gaming to cooking tutorials to creating artwork, streaming possibilities are virtually limitless — that’s part of its allure. The other bonus is that you don’t have to be a tech guru to get started. “All you need a good idea and the ability to broadcast yourself,” Carro says. “On the Stream to End MS website, we’re setting up user-friendly guides so anyone — from people who are familiar with streaming to those who are interested in trying it for the first time — can get involved.” So far, more than 90 registered streamers have collectively raised more than \$50,000, a number Carro anticipates will continue to increase given the popularity of streaming.



Josh Conti and his wife, Molly, have raised more than \$2,000 for the National MS Society since March 2020.

“It’s cool,” says Josh Conti, leader of the MS fundraising streaming group the Dadbod Squad. “To be honest, when I first found out about streaming back in 2004, I thought it was the most ridiculous thing ever, but then I saw it and my mind changed. There’s a sense of virtual community.”

Streaming allows streamers to broadcast content in real time. Viewers who tune in can ask the streamer questions or even take part in an online game. When streaming for charity, a streamer can include information about how to donate on the screen.

Since launching his streaming campaign in March, Conti and his squad — which includes his wife, Molly, and six friends — have raised more than \$2,000. Separately and together, Conti and his crew stream themselves playing video games ranging from old-school Super Nintendo games to interactive Jackbox Party games. “Our campaign is ongoing,” Conti says. “Between everyone on our team, we stream almost every day, and our goal is just to raise as much money as we can for the National MS Society.”

The Society’s Stream to End MS campaign encourages fundraisers to be creative in designing events that suit their interests and lives. Carro and her team actively work with streamers to help bring their ideas to life. One key to creating a successful campaign is ensuring time for preplanning. “It makes a difference when a streamer has time to plan it out and promote through their networks.”

Another essential aspect for success is to make it your own, suggests Torrence, who streams

under the name Timberwolf. “You have to live stream what you love,” he suggests. “Whether that’s riding your bicycle and live streaming from your handlebars or playing video games, people want to engage with you and donate because you’re sharing who you are.”

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Learn about [Stream to End MS](#).