

VISITING HOURS:

April Is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month

BY BETH ASHLEY

Parkinson's Disease Support Group Member

Seven years ago, I made an appointment with my doctor. It was time to check into a growing list of "inconveniences" that had been concerning me for months. Some of these "inconveniences" I was able to see for myself - my handwriting was getting smaller and less legible; when I walked, one arm just laid at my side instead of swinging as usual; and my sense of smell was dramatically reduced. I was feeling a slight internal tremor. I was getting slower in any sort of task I would attempt to do. On top of this, my friends and family were starting to notice things too - my voice was getting softer and more difficult for others to hear and my

facial expressions were getting flatter. I felt happy but those around me weren't seeing happy. I thought perhaps I'd had a slight stroke or these problems were the sign of a pinched nerve.

As I sat awaiting the doctor's diagnosis, I was unprepared for how just one word could change all that you thought your life was about. That word for me was "Parkinson's." I really did not know much about it other than it was something undesirable. Being a "take life as it comes" gal, my first instinct was to get informed.

I discovered that Yankton has a Parkinson's Support Group. The next thing I did was go to the library and start reading. I found Parkinson's to be a disease that plays no favorites. It shows no mercy! It attacks males and females in

almost equal numbers. This disease can start affecting you in your 20s or in your 80s. While there are a number of symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, not everyone who has the disease experiences all the same symptoms nor does the disease progress at the same rate in each person.

After I was first diagnosed, I was put on a medication that didn't work well and caused side effects. I went back to my doctor after two to three months. He then put me on a different medication that has continued to work for the past several years with a few tolerable side effects.

My symptoms have remained and are becoming more prominent. One of the main issues I face is balance. I have more falls, especially in the past four years.

I take care of myself by doing lots of

planning and positive self-talk. I can do most things I did before, it just takes longer. I have to do more planning to compensate for the changes. I need to do my writing and exercising in the morning. Since stress causes exacerbation of Parkinson's Disease symptoms, I have learned ways of coping. Driving on an interstate is stressful because of the big trucks, so I take state and county roads that have less traffic. I've found different ways to get to Sioux Falls for my appointments.

I could read all I wanted but a medical textbook cannot give you a feeling of compassion and understanding, it cannot lift your spirits with a sense of humor or a caring, kind word. Those are things you find in abundance at the Parkinson's

Support Group. Our group meets the second Friday of each month (except December) at 1:30 p.m. at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital Benedictine Center - 3rd Floor.

The Parkinson's Disease Support Group is not just for people who have this disease but for any family members and friends, who lovingly choose to share this journey with you. Come join us for informative talks, sharing, news on the latest research, refreshments, and, perhaps the most important, the sense you are not alone!

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.

Farmer: How Important Is Having A Sense Of Humor?

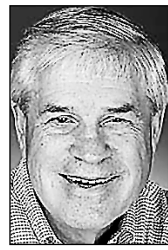
BY VAL FARMER

Having a sense of humor is serious business. Faith in God and the ability to laugh at adversity are twin defenses that give needed perspective and detachment when misfortune plunges us into despair.

Humor and suicide. Charles Dickens wrote a little fantasy about the visit of a little man to a baron suffering from despondency. He introduced himself to the baron as the "Genius of Despair and Suicide." He immediately began to persuade the baron to kill himself.

At one point in the conversation, the baron laughed. This disturbed the "Genius." He asked the baron to sigh, not to laugh. Later on, the baron gave a hearty laugh. The spirit of suicide uttered a frightful howl and disappeared.

There's also the story about an old man who was walking down a country road carrying a huge load of wood on his back. Feeling overwhelmed by his burden, he cast it to the ground and



VAL FARMER

he said, "Would you help me get this load back on my shoulders?"

Humor and adversity. T.W. Higginson said, "There is no defense against adverse fortune which is, on the whole, as effective as a habitual sense of humor."

Sometimes the only way to bear a burden is to laugh at them and bear them anyway. Life is hard, but without laughter, it appears intolerable. Sometimes the only choice seems to be between laughter and tears.

There was a time when my wife and I experienced an incredible series of misfortunes. We made a list. The list became so

long we laughed and delighted to remember other things to add to the list. It became hilarious. Somehow laughing about it magically made the pain bearable. Those events were never as painful again.

"Laughing or crying is what a human being does when there is nothing else to do. The biggest laughs are based on the biggest disappointments and biggest fears." - Kurt Vonnegut.

Laughter tells us we belong. One of the pleasures of belonging to a support group is the unexpected laughter one finds there. As participants recount their struggles or losses, they see the humor in precisely the same way. Humor defuses their anger. Humor heals their pain.

"Conversation never sits easier than when we now and then discharge ourselves in a symphony of laughter." - Sir Richard Steele.

Laughter heals the body. Emotions have great power in the healing process. Negative emotions such as hate, fear, panic, despair and frustration incapacitate the body. Positive

states of mind such as love, faith, hope, laughter, determination, purpose and perseverance mobilize the body toward health.

Behavioral immunology has confirmed the connection between immunity and the mind. Deep and sustained laughter releases endorphins that actually block pain. The statement, "If it didn't hurt so much I could laugh," is transformed to, "If I didn't laugh about it, it would hurt too much."

"For health and the constant enjoyment of life, give me a keen sense of humor: it is the next best thing to an abiding faith in providence." - G.B. Cheever.

Experts have found that high levels of stress precede illness. Thus, control over stressful events is important. Good health depends on control over stressful events. Even the illusion of control helps generate antibodies to fight disease.

Even when actual events are beyond our control, the only control we have left is our attitude and reaction to those events. Laughter is a way of

expressing, despite everything, that the distressing events haven't got the best of us yet.

"With the fearful strain that is on me night and day, if I did not laugh, I should die." - Abraham Lincoln.

The situation may be hopeless but it is not serious. Humor is the evidence of our freedom - the freedom to transform our pain, anxieties and circumstances into absurdities. We choose to accept the painful reality the way it is and laugh at it instead of lamenting about how unjust it may be.

"A man isn't poor if he can still laugh." - Raymond Hitchcock.

Laughter shows the deep realization that we are bigger than our troubles, that we are not doomed to live a sorry future after all. Tragedy becomes melodrama and melodrama becomes comedy.

"I don't think you can truly be funny unless there has been some suffering." - Carol Burnett.

The gravity by which some people view their troubles often

comes from a misplaced sense of pride or dignity. People who can laugh at themselves and their mistakes have disarmed their worst enemy - themselves. Laughing at oneself shows deep self-acceptance and takes away the threat of humiliation or embarrassment from others. By poking fun at our self-importance, we take the sting from our errors.

"If it is with outer seriousness, it must be with inner humor. If it is with outer humor, it must be with inner seriousness. Neither one alone without the other will do." - Robert Frost.

How important is a sense of humor? Charles Lindner had an answer. "A person has two legs and one sense of humor, and if you're faced with the choice, it is better to lose a leg."

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist specializing in family business consultation and mediation with farm families. He lives in Wildwood, Missouri and can be contacted through his website.

This column is sponsored by Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health.

LIFE DIGEST

Dakotaland Child Care Conference April 24

Dakotaland Child Care Conference will be held Saturday, April 24, at Mount Marty College Roncalli Center in Yankton. The conference runs from 8:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Conference break-out topics include "Play Like You Mean It!"; "Sam & Ella - New Kids on the Block"; "SET Youth Up for Fun and Learning"; "Inclusion: Ideas and Strategies to Support All Young Learners"; "Are You Ready?"; "The Pizza Garden - Where Our Food Comes From"; "Fun with Money: Teaching Preschoolers About Spending and Saving"; "Language Development, Celebrating Family Connections"; "Fiesta-Mexican Style" and "If You Have an Activity, The Child Will Learn."

The keynote address will be "Shaping Minds & Touching Hearts." This conference is designed for all child care home providers; child care center staff; pre-school staff, Headstart staff, foster parents, interested parents and anyone who cares about children.

Contact the Yankton County Extension Office, 605-665-3387 for further information and to register for the event. Pre-registration ends soon.

Keep Fit Class For Youth Registration Started

Sign up now at the Summit Activities Center for the next "Summit Keep Fit" class for youth members. The next class will be Saturday, April 24, running from 9-11 a.m.

This one-session class allows youth members ages 12-14 to use the cardiovascular and weight equipment in the weight and fitness area at the Summit upon completion. A parent must attend the class with the youth member.

There is a 10-member limit. For more class information, contact the Summit Activities Center at 668-5234 or stop in at 1801 Summit Street in Yankton.

National Junior Ranger Day Event Planned

The National Park Service at Missouri National Recreational River is planning the park's first-ever National Junior Ranger Day Event on Saturday, April 24, running from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Lewis & Clark Visitor Center.

Children of all ages and their families are invited to come out and learn how they can "Explore, Learn and Protect" their national parks, the Junior Ranger motto.

"Children will have the opportunity to attend three different ranger-led programs and complete special activity sheets that day to earn a special National Junior Ranger Day patch and certificate," said Anne Doherty-Stephan, the park's chief of Interpretation and Education.

Program topics and times include:

- National Park Service Mission and System - There are nearly 400 national parks. Come learn what they all have in common and watch a short music video in the theater at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., noon and 1 p.m.
- Missouri River Watershed - Come to the big contour map and learn about our country's longest river system at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.
- Stream Table - Throughout the day, there will be a ranger staffing an interactive stream table that demonstrates how rivers such as the Missouri work and can change course over time, both naturally and by human actions.
- Coloring Table - There will be a coloring table set up where children can complete activity and coloring sheets.

The purpose of National Junior Ranger Day is to provide opportunities for children and their families to visit their national parks and participate in activities that help them explore and learn about the National Park Service and System. Children all over the country will be participating in events at different national parks that day.

For more information, call Doherty-Stephan at (605) 665-0209, ext. 29.

Black Hills 4-H Teen Camp Set For June 13-15

BROOKINGS - The 2010 South Dakota 4-H Teen Camp is set for June 13-15 at Camp Bob Marshall, near Custer.

The camp is open to all young people ages 13-18, regardless of their membership in 4-H. The 2010 camp is titled "Tie it all Together" and focuses on the busy lives of today's youth.

The camp costs \$50 per camper and this fee covers all expenses. To register, campers should call their county Extension office before May 14. Registration forms and more information on what to bring and what to leave at home are available at the Extension office. The South Dakota 4-H Web site also has information. Visit the site at this link: <http://4h.sdstate.edu/>.

Campers can call Jackson County Extension 4-H/Youth Development Educator Jessica Eikmeier at 605-837-2133, or Tripp County Extension 4-H/Youth Development Educator Gail Frank at 605-842-2858 with questions or for more information.

Eikmeier, who is organizing the Teen Camp, said the theme hits home for busy youths.

"Many 13-18 year-olds work hard to balance academics, sports, extra-curricular activities, family, and friends," said Eikmeier. "It can be a daunting task, and at this year's camp, teens will learn how to discover the tools within themselves to achieve this balance."

Eikmeier said teens also will learn how their skills fit when working in groups and a number of leadership activities will help, some of which are based on the Raccoon Circles curriculum, where ropes and knots are used in a variety of ways.

"This is where the theme 'Tie it all Together' comes from," Eikmeier said. "Along with the leadership workshops, campers will have the opportunity to take part in an improv night, play outdoor night games, go canoeing, and take part in an off-camp excursion to Jewel Cave National Monument and Flintstone's Bedrock City theme park."

Eikmeier said campers who attend the Teen Camp will also undergo training to become Junior Counselors for the rest of the 4-H camps that occur at Camp Bob during the month of June.

Mrs. South Dakota 2011 Applicants Sought

SIoux FALLS - Applications are now being accepted for the title of Mrs. South Dakota International 2011, an official preliminary to the Mrs. International Pageant which will be held at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts Theater in Chicago. The dates are July 19-23, 2011.

The Mrs. South Dakota International 2011 Pageant will be held Saturday, Oct. 9, 2010, at the Orpheum Theatre in Sioux Falls.

The woman selected as Mrs. South Dakota International will become an ambassador from South Dakota and will receive an official title and sash.

Competitions will include:

- Private one on one interview, with each contestant selecting a platform, which she will speak about through her reign 50 percent;
- Fitness Wear (in lieu of swimsuit competition) 25 percent;
- Event Gown/Husbands selecting their wives on stage 25 percent;

Married women between the ages of 21-56 living in South Dakota that are interested should call Jessie Brower/South Dakota State Director at (605) 360-1117 or e-mail jessiebrower@hotmail.com.

YSD Kindergarten Registration Ongoing

Junior Kindergarten (Jr. K.) and Kindergarten registration for the 2010-2011 school year was held on Feb. 3. Parents who were unable to register their children at that time should contact their respective attendance centers as soon as possible.

Parents who are interested in Jr. K. should register at Webster School. Parents who live within the city limits are to register their Kindergarten children at the school that serves their area. Parents who live outside Yankton city limits or in an unassigned area are to register their Kindergarten children at Webster School or at the attendance center that presently serves their school aged children. A map indicating attendance center boundaries can be found at the school district Web site, www.ykd.k12.sd.us, under "About Us."

Any child who will be five years of age on or before Sept. 1, 2010, is eligible to attend Jr. K. or Kindergarten next fall. State law requires that a certified birth certificate be presented to verify the child's age. The hospital certificate cannot be used as the birth certificate for school registration. The birth certificate will be photocopied and filed in the child's school record. Children who were born in South Dakota may obtain certified birth certificates at the Yankton County Register of Deeds' office. The person requesting the birth certificate must provide state-issued photo identification.

A screening for 5-year-olds will be held on Tuesday, May 4 (8 a.m.-5:15 p.m.), and on Wednesday, May 5 (8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.), at the Yankton Community Library. Make an appointment to have your child screened by calling the office in your designated elementary school building or as outlined above: Beadle School - 665-2282; Lincoln School - 665-7392; Stewart School - 665-5765; Webster School - 665-2484.

South Dakota Kayak Challenge May 29-30

The South Dakota Kayak Challenge will be held on the Missouri River the weekend of May 29-30.

This will be a marathon kayak race from Yankton to Sioux City, Iowa, in 36 hours.

For more information, contact Steven Dahlmeier at 605-864-9011 or steven@sd kayakchallenge.org, or visit www.sdkayakchallenge.org.

Yankton Area Mental Wellness Conference Planned For June 9

The 12th annual Yankton Area Mental Wellness Conference is set for June 9-10 on the campus of Mount Marty College in Yankton.

This year's theme is "Counting on YOU to Make a Difference. Professional development credit and college credit is available.

For more information, visit www.aymwi.org.

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AM 1450

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