

Moreland Hills woman spreading word about InMotion

By RYAN DENTSCHEFF | Posted: Monday, November 28, 2016 11:45 am

Karen Hess of Moreland Hills said she feels fortunate that no one in her immediate family suffers from the debilitating Parkinson's disease.

But with 36,000 individuals in Northeast Ohio alone and 10 million worldwide diagnosed with the disease, it's no surprise that many of her friends have family members who have Parkinson's and some who suffer from it as well.

Having that close connection with the neurological disease led her to get involved with the recently established InMotion, a nonprofit based in Warrensville Heights. The group is dedicated to helping people with Parkinson's manage their movement disorders, take charge of their well-being and embrace opportunities and challenges ahead. All of the services at InMotion are free.

Mrs. Hess, 56, is on the board of directors at InMotion and serves on the marketing communications committee, working on spreading the word about the organization and the benefits it provides to people. She is also involved with the Forever InMotion fundraising campaign.

She said she got involved with InMotion after being asked to help with marketing communications with the nonprofit organizations Painting with Parkinson's, established by Allan Goldberg, and Parkinson's Pals, another nonprofit organization.

Through these efforts Mrs. Hess met Dr. Karen Jaffe, who established Shaking with Laughter with her husband, Marc.

Dr. Jaffe was diagnosed with Parkinson's several years ago at the age of only 48. The average age of Parkinson's onset is 60.

Then, in the spring of 2015, Dr. Jaffe and Mr. Goldberg, with three other partners, established InMotion and Mrs. Hess was eager to take part.

"(Dr. Jaffe) was telling me about this amazing concept that she and her fellow founders were working on," Mrs. Hess said. "She asked me to help.

"And then this place started to evolve, and I thought, 'this is really special. This is really exciting.' And once I got involved, I realized how this is changing people's lives.



Karen Hess

Karen Hess of Moreland Hills is on the board of directors of InMotion and is spreading the word about the good work the organization does in helping people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Mrs. Hess said she wanted to become part of “telling this story because it’s a story that if we tell it to people, it’s going to bring people here and I know it’s going to change their lives.”

Dr. Jaffe said Mrs. Hess has played a pivotal role in the growth of InMotion. One example is that shortly after getting involved, Mrs. Hess took the lead on a project now called the Warrensville Heights Initiative. Dr. Jaffe said that community outreach, especially in underserved communities like Warrensville Heights, is one of InMotion’s most important goals.

Now, through Mrs. Hess’ efforts, the organization is now a partner with the city of Warrensville Heights. “They understand that we are a part of this community and that we want to be a part of this community,” Dr. Jaffe said. “We serve a larger community and Karen is getting the word out to other communities as well. She’s been key and instrumental at some of these initiatives.”

The InMotion facility features a large gym area with workout machines, treadmills and miniature football field where individuals suffering from Parkinson’s engage in various exercise programs such as yoga, boxing, cycling, dance and Tai Chi. InMotion also puts on art, singing and Reiki programs as well as promotes support groups and education for its clients.

“What we’re finding is that our clients not only have a community and a place where they can go that’s open and inviting, get support services, and learn, but as they take these exercise classes, they are doing better,” Mrs. Hess said.

Mrs. Hess said much of her care giving spirit can traced to her days being mentored and inspired by family friend and local businessman and philanthropist Vic Gelb.

Mr. Gelb over the years was affiliated with many community organizations and nonprofits including the Playhouse Square Foundation, United Way, Shoes and Clothes for Kids, New Directions, the Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland, and the Lake County Adolescent Counseling Service, just to name a few.

“Seeing all of the things that he did, and he would council me on things, I think that had a big influence,” Mrs. Hess said.

Mrs. Hess also worked over the years with other nonprofits such as the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in Cleveland – which merged with another organization to form the Domestic Violence Center – as well as with the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation.

Now, she continues to pay that lesson she learned from Mr. Gelb forward and give back as much as possible. She said she wants to continue spreading the word about InMotion.

“One woman said to me ‘I jump out of bed on the days that I’m coming here,’” she said. “It’s just very rewarding and I think the potential here has just started to be tapped. I think this has the ability to have ramifications to help so many other people throughout the country and even the world. My hope is that one day there will be places like this everywhere.”

Mrs. Hess moved to Moreland Hills more than 15 years ago. She and her husband, Roger, have three children, Zach, Taylor and Brian. She has one grandchild, Alice, the 4-month-old daughter of Zach and

