



## A Letter from Brian

This month I celebrated my 52nd birthday. Like many people, celebrating my birthday is a chance to reflect on where I've been and where I'm going. Through all the highs and lows, I've always had friends and family to support me. When I was diagnosed with Parkinson's, I also had a chance to make new friends in the Parkinson's community. I've said it before but it's worth repeating – meeting other people with Parkinson's and making new connections in our community was the best thing I did when I was diagnosed.

Community is so important to living well with Parkinson's that we've made it the foundation of our programs at BGF. Whether you're part of our online community or one of the folks who comes out for our events in Portland, you're important to us. You're helping us build a community that supports one another to do what's possible today.

If you haven't had a chance to connect with your community lately, I encourage you to do so. You never know who you might meet – like when I met my Portland to Coast teammate Todd Vogt (in the picture standing at the very end on the left) who is a champion rower on his way to the Paralympics in Paris this summer! I'm proud of Todd, who is living with young onset Parkinson's disease, for continuing to find ways to do the things he loves. Parkinson's doesn't define us and we're stronger together.

*Keep living well,*

*Brian Grant Foundation empowers people impacted by Parkinson's disease to lead active and fulfilling lives.*

Learn more at [briangrant.org](http://briangrant.org).

### In This Issue:

- A care partner profile feature
- Meet the new host of On Time: A Parkinson's Podcast
- Helpful tips if you're experiencing trouble sleeping
- Online and in person events for people with Parkinson's

### Thank You to Our Program Sponsors

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Discover more inspiring stories from the Brian Grant Foundation community at [briangrant.com/stories](https://briangrant.com/stories).

## CARE PARTNER PROFILE

### Rebecca Gifford

Writing has been part of my life since I bought my first journal at age 12. As a teenager, the angst of living became moody rants and bad poetry. While I spent my high school days in the school orchestra and planning to become a veterinarian, I spent my late nights pouring my soul into a red rose fabric-covered book. It turns out writing wasn't just how I expressed myself in the dark of my room.

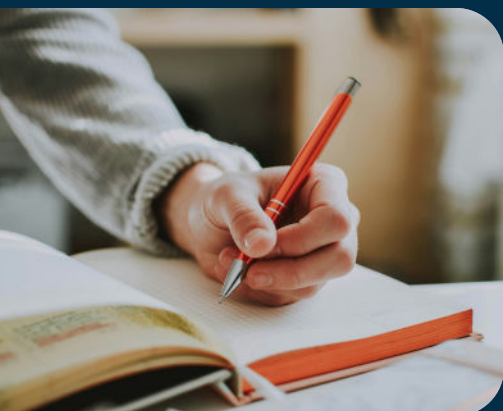
I was only a few months out of journalism school when I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. That experience became a column then a memoir. Writing proved itself again to be a healing balm, and this time I chose to include others, witnessing firsthand the power of storytelling for good — for connection. Then the busy-ness of jobs, marriage and parenthood meant that for years my writing was saved for employers and clients. My journal entries became sporadic and often started with, "I can't believe it's been so long."

My husband Larry was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2017. It wasn't long before I understood this new part of our life would require getting my tools in good condition. Exercise, nature and meditation had become essential to my adulting, but writing for myself had become all about the expectations — only publishable, good writing allowed.

I began again, reconditioning my writing muscles, taking workshops, making writing an outlet for frank emotions and wild creativity, a tool for reflection and finding lessons and even clarity in the uncertainty. I relearned to make my journaling time about exploration, fun, and even ranting and writing bad poetry if that's what I was feeling that day. I remembered that my writing practice is where I deepen my relationship with myself.

The gravy on the poutine is that now I get to take what I've learned and create a space for others looking to explore their inherent creativity with curiosity and without expectations. I get to ask questions, write haikus, laugh, cry and witness as writers open up and add a meaningful tool to their human-ing toolbox. It's where I get to connect and create connections for others, too.

I can't help but believe that this was where my journey was taking me all along.



## Add writing to your human-ing toolbox with Journaling Together

Join Rebecca Gifford as she leads a one-hour virtual journaling class for people with Parkinson's and their care partners on the **second Wednesday of each month** beginning on **May 8, 2024**. Designed to keep your creative muscles conditioned, each class will offer a unique prompt or question to write about in the company of others with the option to share with the group.

Visit [briangrant.org/events](https://briangrant.org/events) to register.

## On Time: A Parkinson's Podcast



We are proud to announce that Larry Gifford is our new host for *On Time: A Parkinson's Podcast*! Larry is a rockstar in the Parkinson's community, tirelessly advocating for people with Parkinson's and co-founding PD Avengers. As a seasoned leader in broadcasting and host of his own podcast, *When Life Gives You Parkinson's*, Larry brings decades of experience to Season 5 of *On Time*, which launches on April 1, 2024. Larry will lead conversations on a topic he champions: reducing the stigma around Parkinson's.

### MORE ABOUT LARRY GIFFORD

At the age of 45, Larry received the diagnosis of Parkinson's in 2017. Since then, he has emerged as an ardent advocate and activist for the cause. Co-founding the Global Alliance to End Parkinson's, also recognized as PD Avengers, Larry has committed himself to raising awareness and striving for a world free of Parkinson's. In October 2023, he underwent a significant DBS surgery, marking a pivotal moment in his journey.

Larry's impact extends to various fronts—he serves as a cohost of the *When Life Gives You Parkinson's* Podcast, is a member of the Michael J. Fox Foundation, and holds a position on the editorial board for the *Journal of Parkinson's Disease*. Through these roles, Larry plays a vital part in advancing knowledge and understanding within the Parkinson's community. His dedication to research is evident through his contributions, including co-authoring three published papers that offer valuable insights.

Transitioning from a distinguished 30-year career in radio, Larry currently calls Vancouver, B.C. home. Alongside his wife and partner-in-Parkinson's, Rebecca, and their son Henry, Larry continues to make impactful strides in the Parkinson's advocacy space.



**wellness webcast**

## Trouble sleeping?

Our February Wellness Webcast focused on getting a better night's sleep with Parkinson's disease. Webcast presenter Dr. Michelle Dagostine, a Movement Disorders Specialist at Hartford HealthCare, discussed sleep science, treatments for PD-related issues, and shared some sleep stats and tips for improving your sleep.

- 60–98% of people living with PD will experience sleep disorders throughout their life.
- Sleep disorders are one of the most common non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's.
- Sleep disorders are related to decreased memory, increased risk of falls, and lower quality of life.
- Sleep disorders will increase motor dysfunction and the non-motor symptom burden.

### HERE ARE A FEW SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS:

1. Minimize or eliminate screen time within two hours of sleep.
2. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, exercise, and heavy meals close to bedtime.
3. Train your body that the bedroom is a place to sleep.
4. If you are having a lot of trouble sleeping, get out of bed and do something very boring until you are tired again.
5. Maintain a sleep routine even on the weekends.

**Watch the recorded webcast at [briangrant.org](https://briangrant.org).**



## Upcoming Virtual & In-Person Events

**July 25:** Brian Grant Foundation Mix & Mingle (Tigard, OR)

### RECURRING

**Breath by Breath: Mindfulness Drop-In Class**  
Tuesdays @ 11:30am-12:30pm PT (Online)

**YOPDX: Social Gathering for People with Young Onset Parkinson's**  
Second Mondays @ 6:30-8:30pm PT (Portland, OR)

**YOPDX Pals: Meetup for YOPDX Care Partners**  
Fourth Mondays @ 6:30-8:30pm PT (Portland, OR)

### WELLNESS WEBCASTS

Second Wednesdays @ 12:00-1:00pm PT

**April 10:** When PD Gets in the Way of Exercise

**May 8:** Cognitive Issues and Parkinson's

**June 12:** Microbiome and Parkinson's

**July 10:** Making Cooking Easier

**August 14:** Women and Parkinson's (Sponsored by Amneal)

Visit [briangrant.org/events](https://briangrant.org/events) for more info or to register.



### 2024 Annual Gala

April 25th at 6:00pm PT  
Portland, Oregon

Join us for an evening of auctions, fine dining and entertainment to benefit the Brian Grant Foundation.

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY AT  
[briangrant.org/gala](https://briangrant.org/gala)