



**Janice Gross**  
Early organizer

## **A Short History of the Michigan Polio Network, Inc. 1984-2018** **Frederick Maynard and Sunny Roller**

Mt. Pleasant, Michigan was the site for the first meeting of the Late Effects of Polio Coalition in August of 1984. Health educator, Jean Prout and polio survivor, Josephine Strauss spearheaded this assembly with assistance from other polio survivors that included Charlene Bozarth, Ruth Cornwell and Janice Gross. Representatives from Easterseals, the March of Dimes, Michigan Department of Public Health, the office of Senate Majority Leader John Engler, Social Security Administration and the press were also in attendance.



**Dr. Fred Maynard,**  
National authority  
the late effects of  
polio  
and MPN advocate

This was a time in history when many polio survivors were unexpectedly becoming more disabled and were suddenly forced to seek help for new symptoms of pain, weakness and fatigue. Because there was an obvious and troubling abyss of information and assistance, the Coalition began monthly meetings to work out organizational details and maintain pressure on the legislature for support. For polio survivors, this was an opportunity to compare notes on past and present experiences, which proved to be both liberating and fuel for their frustration. The Coalition's goals were to obtain financial support for needed services, to increase awareness and educate the public and medical providers, to encourage further research into the cause of the late effects of polio, and to provide an 800 hotline for information and consultation. Frederick M. Maynard, M.D. a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation physician at the University of Michigan and one of the nation's foremost authorities on the late effects of polio quickly joined the Coalition, bringing a national perspective on what was known about new medical problems among polio survivors. He also brought Sunny Roller and others from Ann Arbor and southeast Michigan into the group. The Michigan Kenny Foundation provided their support, expertise and resources as well, and Easterseals Michigan offered use of their toll-free 800 phone number to field many calls for information and help from polio survivors in Michigan and neighboring states.



**Sunny Roller**  
Advocate and  
Organizer

Jean Prout's capable leadership took this Coalition through difficult months of defining its identity and purpose and by Spring 1985 a statewide conference was being planned. The Michigan Polio Network (MPN) was established in time to become the official organizer of the October 1985 conference. This conference boasted 375 attendees, which included polio survivors, caregivers, families, and representatives of rehabilitation networks coming together to understand the new dilemma being faced.

Following the conference, Janice Gross turned over MPN leadership to its first elected Chairperson, Charlene Bozarth. Charlene's sensitivity to polio survivors' needs and her organizational skills served to launch the Network into its lasting effectiveness. With assistance of Attorney Roger Gross, an application was submitted for 501c3 status to create our non-profit corporation. In 1986, the chairperson changed from Charlene Bozarth to Jerry Hazel who served as Chairman until May 2002. Jerry aptly led meetings with a booming voice and a can-do spirit.



**Charlene Bozarth**  
First MPN  
Chairperson

Charlene, Jerry, Karen Treberg, William Messerol, Sunny Roller, Liina Paasuke, Sue Anderson and several others worked tirelessly to establish support groups throughout the State. Veteran journalist, Frank Lee, brought his literary skill to the Network, establishing the newsletter, Polio Perspectives, which Network members still read today. Through grant funding from the Michigan Department of Public Health and Michigan Kenny Rehab Foundation, Dr. Maynard and Sunny Roller organized a team of rehabilitation professionals to conduct Empowerment Workshops for medical professionals and polio survivors in nine Michigan cities. Later they wrote a training manual, Stay Well! to promote local health and wellness programs for polio survivors, and they gave it to the MPN for publication and distribution. A Post-Polio Library Collection was begun by the MPN in 1987, and was kept in a Burton Township Library for lending throughout the State of Michigan's Library System. It soon became an international resource.



**Frank Lee**  
Polio Perspectives

The initial dreams of Jo Strauss, Charlene Bozarth and Janice Gross were realized in the above accomplishments of the MPN during its initial five years and led to another 22 years of continued successful work to support the educational and service needs of Michigan's polio survivors.



**Jerry Hazel**  
MPN Chairperson  
1986—2002



**Bruce Sachs**  
**MPN Chairperson**  
2006—2018

**2006 to 2018**  
**The Michigan Polio Network Continues**  
**By: Bruce Sachs**

The Network continued to educate our members with annual conferences, except instead of having a conference in 1997 a series of Town Hall Meetings were held across the state. This included a two day meeting in Marquette.

After many years under the leadership of Jerry Hazel, Daniel Matakas succeeded Jerry as Chairman for two years, followed by Velma Allen-Farmer for the next two years. After serving as 1st Vice Chairman during Velma's term Bruce Sachs was elected Chairman and has continued in that position.

Tim Brown joined the MPN board of directors in 2008 and was immediately elected to the office of Treasurer. After his first term, Tim was reappointed to the board, re-elected Treasurer and also Vice-Chairman. Tim continued as Vice Chairman-Treasurer through the dissolution of MPN in 2018.

As the number of polio survivors decreased and the ability to find polio information on the Internet became easier, the need for two day conferences became less important.

MPN Librarian Barb Oniszcak established a web site, which provided polio information for our members. When Barb moved, the web site was continued under the direction of Mike Scharl and the library duties were assumed by Laura Barbour.

The MPN continued to offer one day conferences with decreasing attendance until 2013 when it was decided to provide polio information through the Polio Perspectives, the library and the web site.

Throughout the late 1990's, long time MPN board member Bonnie Levitan worked tirelessly and eventually successfully with others on the board to convince St. John Hospital to establish a post-polio clinic to treat polio survivors. By the year 2000, the Center for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation directed by Dr. Daniel Ryan opened a post-polio clinic which, continuing today, regularly cares for polio survivors.

During these intervening years several members of the Board attended the Post-Polio Health International Conferences in St. Louis in 2005, the International Conference in Miami, in 2006, and the International Conference in Warm Springs, Georgia in 2009 and returned with information to share.

In 2006, Bay Cliff Health Camp in Big Bay, Michigan currently operating as a highly respected camp for handicapped children, began to offer a week long post-polio retreat for survivors and their caregivers. Dr. Frederick Maynard developed the idea and plan for polio survivors since Bay Cliff has a rich history of helping polio patients in the past. Some members of the Michigan Polio Network were involved, with Dr. Maynard, in the initial planning and Dr. Maynard agreed to serve as the Medical Director for the newly developed retreat. The Network sponsored scholarships to the retreat for polio survivors.

Keeping one of the most common complaints of polio survivors in mind that their doctors or medical service providers have little or no knowledge of polio or post-polio issues, in 2015 several members of the MPN board were determined to find a way to use MPN resources to address this problem in any way possible. Leading this effort were Tim Brown and Bonnie Levitan. They reached out to The Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB), a recently instituted medical school partnership between one of Michigan's top universities and the state's largest health system. They contacted the Dean's office and arranged an appointment to discuss what they viewed as an opportunity to in some way raise awareness of polio survivor's issues among their medical students and perhaps even the teaching staff. As a result of this meeting, MPN was named a Community Partner with OUWB and began working with a series of medical student research projects studying polio survivor issues. The final findings of those research projects were made available to all current and future OUWB students succeeding in the goal of increasing awareness of polio survivor concerns.



**Vera Hazel**  
**Long time Editor**  
**Polio Perspectives**



**Barb Oniszcak**  
**First Librarian and**  
**Webmaster**



**Laura Barbour**  
**Librarian**



**Bonnie Levitan**  
**Post-Polio Clinic**  
**MPN Board Member**



**Community Partner**



**Tim Brown**  
**Long time MPN**  
**Treasurer/Vice Chair**

From the beginning of the Network the quarterly newsletter, Polio Perspectives, has been published with Vera Hazel as the editor during most of these years. Thank you Vera.

In 2018, recognizing that MPN had successfully fulfilled its original Mission Statement and that the time for dissolution was upon us, the Board of Directors of MPN with our member's best interests in mind diligently sought a means to terminate MPN's normal operations without leaving a single member lacking continuing post-polio information resources. Tim Brown initiated discussions and negotiations with the leadership of Post-Polio Health International which lead to such a solution with the development of our "transition plan." This plan affected the transition of MPN into PHI. MPN transferred its assets to PHI which in turn accepted all of MPN's active members as active members of PHI. Tim entered into an agreement with a tax attorney who with his guidance lead MPN through the final steps of discontinuance and dissolution.

It has been a long and successful run.

Please keep in touch with us through our informative website,  
[www.michiganpolionetwork.com](http://www.michiganpolionetwork.com)

