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## Special thanks to Phyllis Weiss

SSEEO has drawn its strength from dedicated Board Members and has attracted outstanding volunteers over the past 15 years. One of those special Board Members is our President, Phyllis Weiss. We are saddened to announce that Phyllis will be stepping down as SSEEO's President.



Phyllis & her family

Being a President of a Board is a tough role, and Phyllis took on her duties with dedication, grace and determination. She has been a visionary, strategic thinker and committed leader always willing to support SSEEO and the stroke community. SSEEO would like to thank Phyllis for her many contributions.

*"Passion and dedication with a strong connection to purpose have defined Phyllis' leadership as President of SSEEO. I will never forget the first time I heard Phyllis speak of her recovery journey and her dedication to helping other stroke survivors. As evidenced then and throughout her years with SSEEO, Phyllis has given heart and soul to advancing services for stroke survivors." Terry Guymon, retired VP of Neurosciences, Advocate Health Care.*

Phyllis will be taking some much needed time off to spend time with her husband, grandchildren and her church community. She will continue to be a SSEEO volunteer.

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## Survivor Story

### Meet Maureen Pekosh....stroke survivor and now SSEEO reporter



Maureen has joined SSEEO as a volunteer reporter. She believes that stroke survivors finding each other is key to their recovery and has agreed to become the new SSEEO correspondent. She hopes to share many stories of other stroke survivors overcoming odds and living to the fullest. Previously, she was a contributing columnist writing a general interest column for the Glenview Journal for over 15 years.

I had a stroke in July of 2011. Back then, I didn't know much about strokes.

I was diagnosed with heart failure in June. I began experiencing loss of peripheral vision and tingling in my fingers and toes. My cardiologist assured me it was my weak heart's inability to pump blood to those small capillaries. While washing my hair

in the shower my right hand clenched in a fist on top of my head. Thinking I was about to faint, I exited the shower. I screamed for help. The next thing I remember was my daughter opening the bathroom door to check why she heard a crash. My head was leaning so far to the left it hurt. My daughter called 911. When I tried to answer the paramedics, the words I uttered sounded nothing like those I formed in my head. I was worried about being naked and having shampoo in my hair.

The next thing I remember was waking up in the middle of the night in an unfamiliar room. I was tied to the bed and there was a pipe down my throat. It seemed like a lot of unnecessary care for someone who fainted. Stroke was still not on my radar. The next morning the doctor informed me I had suffered an ischemic stroke. They believed my weak heart had pumped a blood clot to my brain. Though blood flow to part of my brain was cut off, hopefully the quick administration of tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) minimized the damage. I spent the next 5 days in the hospital. I left with no apparent deficits and focused on my heart failure. Within two months I had developed drop foot; two months later I had frozen shoulder.

I did minimal rehab while waiting for a heart transplant. Serious rehab began post-transplant, more than two years after my stroke. I had three devices to assist with walking and was told I would never walk on my own. I persisted. I enrolled in a stroke study at the RIC (now Shirley Ryan Ability Lab) where I slowly began to regain some of the movement I had lost. I no longer feel like Igor. I have been back to rehab four more times and I exercise regularly. I walk independently and encourage others to know the signs of stroke, seek second opinions, and never give up.

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## **A big thank you from....** *Neuroscience Symposium 2019*

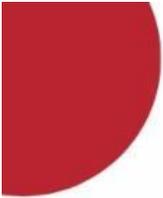


"On behalf of Northern Illinois Chapter of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses, I would like to thank SSEE0 for spending their Saturday afternoon educating healthcare professionals on resources and programs available to survivors and their caregivers. This year's symposium was an incredible milestone for the chapter, with 187 healthcare professionals register, making it the largest attended event in the history of the Northern Illinois Chapter."

*"Brian Herbst and Erin Gianaras gave heartfelt testimonies on their courageous journeys as young stroke survivors. Their stories will forever be engraved in our memory, as we join them in their efforts to not only support stroke survivors but to advocate for them as well, ensuring a better quality of life for them and their families."*

Lisa Brezinski, MS BSN RN SCR N CNRN  
Northern Illinois Chapter, American Association of Neuroscience Nurses

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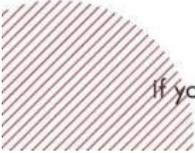
## Seeking Survivors of Stroke & their Caregivers for a One Time Survey & In-Person Focus Group

### Who is eligible:

People  $\geq$ 18 years old who had one or more strokes or who care for a person with stroke (informal caregivers).

### Location:

Rosalind Franklin University Campus  
3333 Green Bay Road, North Chicago Illinois 60064  
For more information visit [sseeo.org](http://sseeo.org)



If you or someone you know may be interested, contact Julie Schwertfeger at 847-578-8730 OR email [Julie.Schwertfeger@Rosalindfranklin.edu](mailto:Julie.Schwertfeger@Rosalindfranklin.edu)



[Click here for more details and the focus group flyer](#)

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