

# LifePlex celebrates Rock Steady Boxing



1st row: Cindy Riester-RSB certified trainer, Jig Casper, Sherry Hendricks, Paula Limerick, Kathy Casper-volunteer. 2nd row: Alan Kurtz, Rick Ward-RSB certified trainer, Nick Beyer, Alan Limerick-volunteer, Ed Milo. Boxer missing in picture: Cathy Burkett. Volunteers missing in picture: Kathy Ward, Janet Newberg, Mila Roose, Julie Monteleon.



One of the many activities for strength, co-ordination, reaction time, and fun.



Dennis and Judy Spiewak, Rock Steady Boxing volunteers, celebrated over 5 years with the program at LifePlex on March 27, 2024

You may know someone with Parkinson's Disease (PD). If you do, please keep reading. If you don't, keep reading. You can help. The Parkinson's Foundation puts the risk of developing Parkinson's disease at about 15% if you have a parent with the disease and about 5% if you have a sibling with the disease. Although it is less prevalent than many chronic illnesses it deserves our attention because Parkinson's is a degenerative disease and a devastating diagnosis for the patient and their family.

But there is hope beyond the diagnosis. Paula Limerick, a "boxer" at LifePlex Rock Steady Boxing tells her story: When I was diagnosed with Parkinson's, my dad told me that I could beat it. I told him that I didn't think I could beat it, but I was going to fight it with all that I had. I have tried to do just that for the past six years. I joined Rock Steady Boxing a few months after being diagnosed and it has been a huge, important part of that fight. Exercise is "medicine" for Parkinson's. The big movements, exercises, and workouts at Rock Steady help keep us moving, can improve many symptoms, and slow down the progression of Parkinson's Disease. Another very important part of Rock Steady Boxing is the camaraderie. We are a family. We support and encourage each other, and together we fight back against PD. If you visit Rock Steady you may hear us yell: "We are Rock Steady!" "We fight back!" "We will never give up!" I am grateful for Rock Steady and all who make it possible.

There is Hope and Help

There is reason to find celebration in programs like Rock Steady Boxing (RSB) that offer physical and functional strength, mental endurance, and important social support. RSB is not just boxing! And you don't need boxing experience! It's about movement and the benefits of slowing the disease and gaining control over the changes that occur over time. It's about "community", a currently popular term embracing friendship, encouragement, trust, and the value of having others who understand your trials to walk beside you through your journey. Alan Kurtz, "boxer", shares "RSB provides physical benefits but may be even more important as a support group of other Parkinson's patients."

The origins of the name come from the visionary. In 2006, Scott Newman, a young onset PD patient who wanted to challenge his disease, began a personal workout designed by a boxing trainer. Working with a coach on a modified boxing regimen to gain strength and agility, he noticed improvements in his health

and a reduction in Parkinson's symptoms. He achieved such individual improvement that he formed a nonprofit to help bring the program to others. Today there are over 850 certified affiliates around the world. Rock Steady Boxing LifePlex in Plymouth is one of them.

Rock Steady Boxing today is a non-contact fitness program designed specifically for people with Parkinson's. The regimen has expanded to a variety of activities to slow the progression of symptoms, relieve anxieties, and restore independence by improving muscular strength, agility, speed, endurance, accuracy, coordination, footwork, reaction time, flexibility, facial expression, and voice volume. The program is administered and led by certified RSB trainers and generally meets three times per week. Participants in the Plymouth program have realized the claimed benefits and more. Ed Milo says "I'm so glad to have found RSB. (I've) been with it six months now. Physically and mentally I've greatly improved and it's all about RSB." Another Boxer found "it motivates me to exercise which helps me with my balance and energy. Everyone is caring and supportive."

#### The Disease

Parkinson's, a neurodegenerative brain disorder, is classically characterized by affecting movement. Common early symptoms include tremors, rigidity and muscle stiffness, slowness of movement, poor balance, and shuffling gait. Depression and anxiety commonly accompany the diagnosis. There are other symptoms that may not be experienced in all people diagnosed with Parkinson's. It is important to see your doctor if you are having any of these symptoms for a correct diagnosis.

#### Benefits of exercise

Research from the Parkinson's Outcomes Project found that exercise could improve the quality of life of people with PD. It specifically recommends at least 2.5 hours of vigorous exercise per week, which can improve your balance, flexibility, and strength as well as improve neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the brain's own way to adapt to changes caused by illness, injury, or the environment. It is a natural re-education of the neurons to modify messages received by the brain. Learning new exercises, like learning a new language or trying new puzzles, are valuable techniques used by those who are aging as well as those with neurological conditions like Parkinson's. Being active is just as important as taking medication for patients with Parkinson's.

#### Be inspired. Get involved

If you have been diagnosed with Parkinson's, you qualify for the program. Discuss with your medical provider and ask him/her to refer you to RSB. More information about the program, research, and FAQ can be found at [rocksteadyboxing.org](http://rocksteadyboxing.org). To contact Rock Steady Boxing LifePlex call 574-936-2333. Come and observe a class and mention that you found interest in this article. There is no charge to observe a class. Classes are held Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. The cost to join the program is \$60 per month. Scholarships are available. A physician's referral is required. At RSB LifePlex Parkinson's disease is the opponent. You are the Boxer! Volunteers are in your corner!

Corner People are needed! These folks are volunteers who have a vital role in the success of the program. Every RSB program needs Corner People for moral and physical support. They help boxers who need assistance with stability, mobility, or with their exercise. Volunteers set up and tear down exercise stations and help maintain a safe area. Most importantly they understand the limitations some people may have when they start, but as a helper they reinforce the positivity of commitment and give encouragement. A corner person's commitment to the program and the Boxers is what works for your schedule. You need no specific training. "Come and observe. Come and volunteer".

Certified Instructors are always needed for sustainability of the program. A background in personal training, physical therapy, exercise science, or medicine is recommended. If interested find more information at [rocksteadyboxing.org](http://rocksteadyboxing.org) or call LifePlex / Fitness Forum at 574-936-2333.