

ms connection

delaware chapter



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Sussex County MS Shore Group and Shore Group Two **The strength of the group**

In Kent and Sussex County, the support groups for Delawareans with multiple sclerosis have been evolving since 1959, when the Sussex County MS Shore Group was first created. In the early years, the group members met in various locations to talk about their disease.



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One of the early organizers was Laura Morris. As a Services assistant for the Delaware Chapter from 1991 to 2000, Morris traveled throughout the state on chapter business while running the MS office in the Beebe Medical Center in Lewes.



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Running the monthly meeting of the Sussex County MS Shore Group was facilitator Betty Mann-Beebe. Married to

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MS Bike to the Bay **A tale of two cyclists**

Celebrating their first wedding anniversary this past March 18, Kevin Byrne and Brie Stoianoff planned a number of events—including attending the MS 150 Bike to the Bay 2006 Awards & 2007 Kick-off!

The March 7 event was almost snowed out, but Byrne and Stoianoff arrived in good spirits, as you can see in their photograph here.

“I do all that I can,” begins Byrne, “because I want to show my support for



everyone who has MS as well as my appreciation to the MS Society. I know that this is a very big effort for the MS

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Society in terms of raising money and awareness. So, I do as much as I can to help."

A diagnosis

A West Point graduate, Kevin Byrne was stationed in Korea in 1999 when he began to experience unusual numbness, tingling, and loss of feeling.

"I was a pilot on flight status," explains Byrne, "so I received medical attention quickly.

After an MRI, MS was suspected. I did some research and got some support from the National MS Society while still in Korea. That's why I feel I owe them so much, for what everyone's done for me from the very beginning.

"The army sent me to Hawaii for a spinal tap and some other tests," adds Byrne. "MS was confirmed within a month or so."

With his medical retirement in progress, Byrne was sent to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. "You know all we're hearing about Walter Reed now?" reminds Byrne. "Well, I was there.

"It took me a couple years to recover from some of the effects of my initial attack. The physical limitations of MS don't heal. It was all emotionally

overwhelming, the fact that the MS is always there and never goes away. Plus, eventually, I had to get a new job and find a new place to live."

By 2003, the retired captain not only had his new job and place to live but also felt strong enough to participate in the MS Bike Tour in New York City and western Pennsylvania. "I'd always been interested in biking," notes Byrne. "It was a hobby of mine

since I was a kid.

It just seemed the natural progression. That the MS Society has the Bike Tour

increased my interest even more."

Training is done mostly indoors. Working on a stationary bike gives Byrne a sense of control over his body while getting a good workout. "It's actually easier to ride in the Bike Tour," admits Byrne, "because there, I allow myself to coast or stretch out when I need to."

A biking partner

In June 2004, Byrne met Brie Stoianoff and recognized her as a possible biking partner. "My first date with Kevin," begins Stoianoff, "we went mountain biking—he fell off the trail and broke a rib! I helped him home, all dirty and sweaty and bloody—and his family was there! So, I met his family looking like I fell off the mountain. Two weeks later, Kevin asked 'Will you join me in the Bike to the Bay?'

I was a pilot on flight status, so I received medical attention quickly.

—Kevin Byrne

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"The 2004 MS 150 Bike to the Bay was the first event we rode in together," continues Stoianoff. "In that first year, we raised more than \$4,100. And we have ridden in the event ever since."

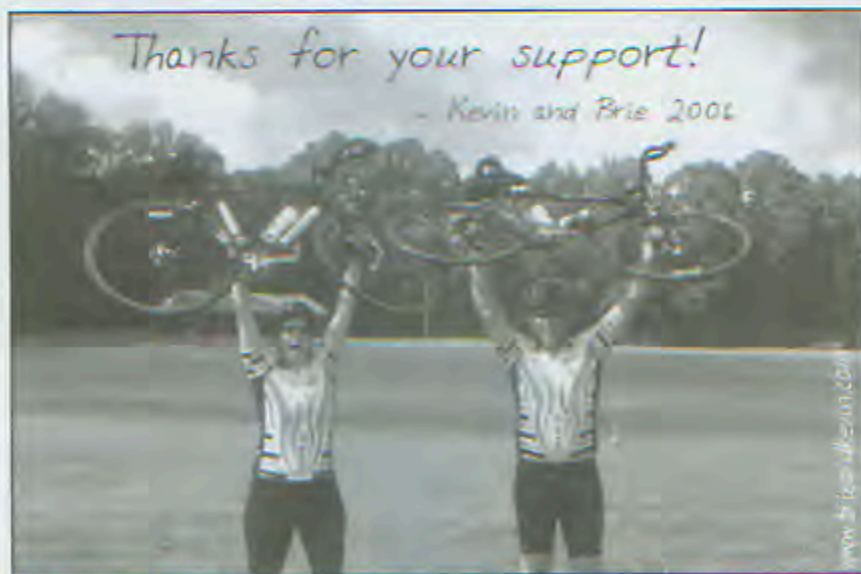
When it became obvious to the biking partners that their relationship was getting serious, Stoianoff spent a full year talking to anyone who could give her the facts about MS and its effect on people.

"I'm a scientist," admits Stoianoff, who is the manager of Training Systems at AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals. "I need a lot of facts. I wanted to know how MS would affect me as well as Kevin. And MS has a whole lot of unknowns."

"I grew up in Northern Idaho," adds Stoianoff, "an area of the country that, as it turns out, has the second highest rate of MS in the country. Since I started reaching out to friends

and family for Bike to the Bay, I learned that two friends from my childhood had been diagnosed with MS. Before I met Kevin, I didn't think anyone I knew had MS."

In addition to participating in the MS Bike to the Bay, Stoianoff volunteers at the Delaware Chapter whenever she can.



Stoianoff and Byrne send an official "thank you" to everyone who supports them in the MS Bike Tour. Pictured is the cover of last year's thank you.

and branding effort in Delaware.

"I like an issue that everybody can get behind," notes Stoianoff. "It's more about community service. I believe everybody needs to find their passion and a way to give back to the community. Because the MS cause is so near and dear to me, it's a logical place to put my efforts."

For example, as a member of the Marketing Committee, Stoianoff had recently completed months of work on the MS Society's new logo