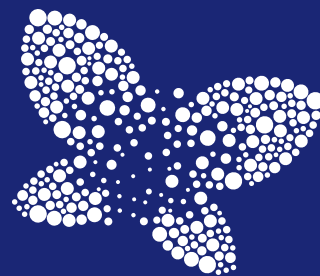


WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA'S KEYSTONE OF Hope



**MYASTHENIA
GRAVIS** Association
Of Western PA

FALL • 2026

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of MGA:

As we welcome the fall season, I'm reminded of how much strength, resilience, and compassion define the MG community. Every year brings new challenges for individuals living with myasthenia gravis, but it also brings new breakthroughs, new connections, and new reasons for hope.

During the past year, our team has expanded support services, strengthened partnerships with numerous healthcare providers, and continued advocating for improved access to specialized MG care. I'm especially proud of the growing participation in our support groups and educational programs. Your engagement is what keeps our organization vibrant and responsive.

This fall, we're focusing on deeper outreach, clearer pathways to care, and more opportunities for patients and families to share their experiences. Whether you've been part of MGA for decades or just recently joined us, please know that your voice matters and your presence enriches our mission.

Thank you for your trust, your courage, and your commitment to one another. I look forward to the opportunities that the coming months will bring us to connect and collaborate!

Jim Joyce, Executive Director
MGA of WPA

Strength,
resilience, and
compassion
continue to
define the MG
community.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR MGA ANNUAL MEETING AND EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

MGA's 71st Annual Meeting and Education Symposium is set for **Saturday, November 21, 2026** (12:00 PM to 3:00 PM) at CCAC Boyce Campus in Monroeville, PA. More details to follow.

Please Call 412-566-1545 or email mgaoffice@mgawpa.org for more information or to RSVP.

The program is free, but registration is required by November 20, 2026.



★ MGA IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

MGA invites you to participate in our in-person and virtual support meetings

The **in-person support group meetings** are held on the **third Saturday of each month** from 12:00 PM to 2:30 PM at Lighthouse Pointe Village (500 Chapel Harbor Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15238).

The **virtual support group meetings** are held via Zoom on the **second and fourth Tuesday** of each month from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Both the in-person and virtual support group meetings are meant to give patients and their family members a chance to interact with other individuals with Myasthenia Gravis in a safe and relaxed environment.

There is no charge to attend any of the support group meetings, but we ask that you please RSVP by phone - **412-566-1545** or by email - **mgaooffice@mgawpa.org**.

When considering a treatment,
it helps to know what to look for.

What could IMAAVY™ do for me?

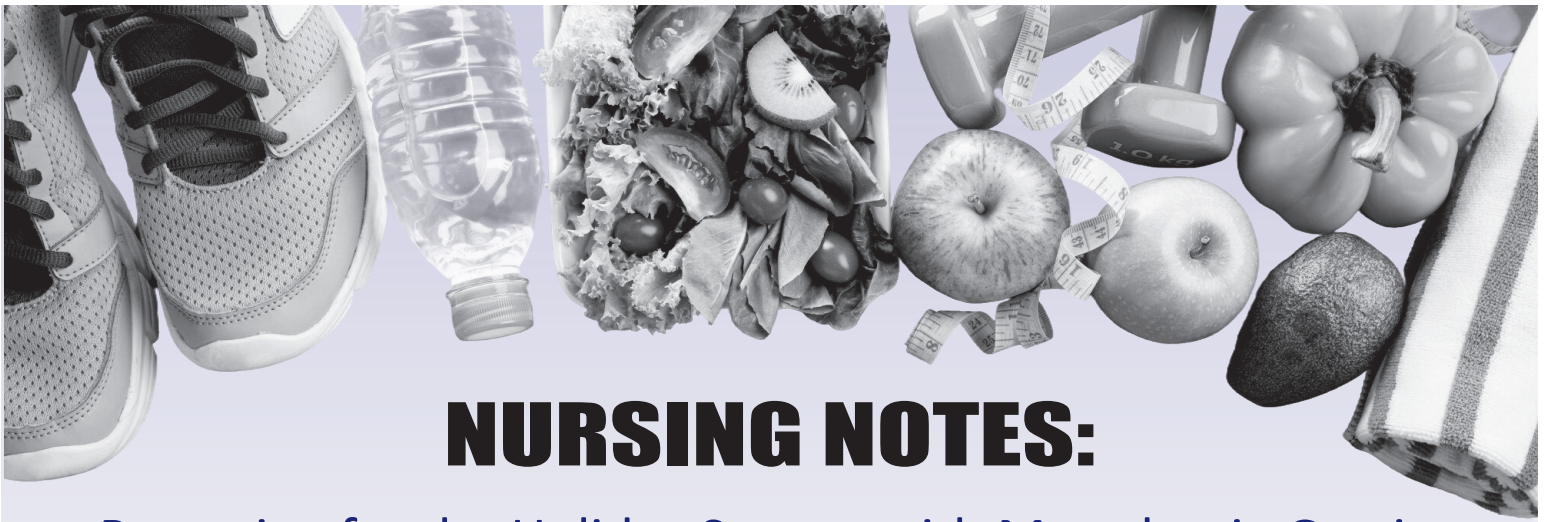


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NURSING NOTES:

Preparing for the Holiday Season with Myasthenia Gravis: Staying Steady Through Stress and Fatigue

For people living with myasthenia gravis, the holiday season can feel like a marathon. The season brings joy, connection, and celebration, but also crowded schedules, travel demands, rich meals, and emotional pressure. The key is protecting your energy and planning ahead so the holidays feel manageable rather than overwhelming.

A Smarter Pace for a Busy Season: MG symptoms often worsen with fatigue, stress, and illness, all of which tend to spike during the holidays. The most important strategy is pacing, not just slowing down, but intentionally shaping your days around what your body can realistically handle.

- **Energy budgeting:** Treat your energy like a limited resource. Prioritize the events and traditions that matter most and let the rest go.
- **Micro resting:** Short, frequent breaks can prevent muscle weakness from snowballing.
- **Boundary setting:** Saying “I can’t make it this year” or “I need to leave early” is not only okay – it’s essential.

Managing Holiday Stress: Stress is a major MG trigger, and the holidays can stir up plenty of it. A few simple habits can help keep your nervous system steady.

- **Breathing resets:** Slow, diaphragmatic breathing reduces tension and helps stabilize symptoms.
- **Expectation trimming:** You don’t need to recreate a perfect holiday. Focus on connection, not performance.
- **Delegation:** Let others handle cooking, hosting, or shopping. People often want to help more than you think.

Navigating Meals and Gatherings: Large meals and long social events can be draining. A few adjustments can make them easier.

- **Meal timing:** Eat smaller portions earlier in the day when your muscles are stronger.
- **Soft food planning:** If chewing fatigue is an issue, bring or request easier to eat options.
- **Exit strategies:** Plan ahead for when you’ll leave or rest so you don’t push past your limits.

Home Centered Holidays: If travel or big gatherings feel too demanding this year, consider celebrating in quieter ways.

- **Virtual visits:** A short video call can replace a long, exhausting trip.
- **Simplified traditions:** Choose one or two meaningful rituals instead of a full holiday schedule.
- **Rest first planning:** Build your holiday around rest, not around events.

The Real Gift – Listening to Your Body: The holidays can be wonderful, but they don’t have to be perfect. For people with MG, the most meaningful celebration is one that honors your health, your limits, and your peace of mind. When you give yourself permission to slow down, you often end up enjoying the season more — not less.



2026 MGA COMEDY FOR A CAUSE

“There is nothing in the world
so irresistibly contagious as
laughter and good humor.”

– Charles Dickens

**MGA is hosting the 2026 Comedy for a
Cause Fundraiser to benefit our free
patient support services!**

Don't miss this fun evening with delicious food
and great entertainment! The talent line up at
this year's show is sure to tickle your funny
bone. This year's event will take place at the
**Kennedy Township Volunteer Fire Department
Banquet Hall in McKees Rocks, PA on Saturday,
October 10, 2026.**

We've got a delicious dinner buffet, a wonderful
dessert table and of course our fabulous basket
raffle, silent auction and more. The event is
BYOB but water and pop will be provided to
attendees. Plus, the banquet hall features plenty
of free parking in their huge lot!

Reserved seat tickets for dinner and show are \$40.
VIP tickets are also available for \$50 and include a
pre-show wine and cheese reception. Buy tickets
online at www.slapstickproductions.com or call
the MGA Office at **412-566-1545**.



**MYASTHENIA
GRAVIS** Association
Of Western PA

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**MIKE JONES**
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Saturday • October 10

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5:30 VIP Reception • 6:30 General Admission • 7:00 Dinner • 7:30 Show

Tickets Call MGA Office: 412-566-1545
Email: mgaoffice@mgawpa.org
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**New research
may lead to future
treatment options
for generalized
myasthenia
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to learn more!



A caregiver's role is already demanding, but when supporting someone with a rare disease, advocacy becomes absolutely essential. Rare conditions often exist in the shadows of the healthcare system – overlooked, misunderstood, and under researched. That's exactly why caregivers must step forward as strong, informed voices for the person they support.

At the heart of advocacy is ensuring the individual is seen, heard, and taken seriously. Many people with rare diseases face long diagnostic journeys, frequent misinterpretations of symptoms, and limited treatment options. A caregiver who actively champions their needs helps bridge the gap between complex medical realities and a healthcare system that may not be prepared to navigate them. Advocacy can mean asking the extra question, pushing for a second opinion, or making sure specialists communicate with one another. It's about persistence in a space where persistence truly matters.

Advocacy also empowers the person with the rare disease. When caregivers help them understand their condition, navigate appointments, or access community resources, they reinforce dignity and autonomy. They become partners in decision making, not just helpers. And in many cases, caregivers are the ones who connect families to support groups, research foundations, or clinical trials – lifelines that can transform isolation into community.

Finally, caregiver advocacy strengthens the broader rare disease community. Every time a caregiver shares knowledge, raises awareness, or participates in research efforts, they contribute to a collective push for better treatments, better policies, and better understanding.

Being an advocate isn't an extra task. It's a vital part of caregiving in the rare disease world. It ensures that no one faces their condition alone, and that every voice, no matter how rare the disease, has the chance to be heard.



THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREGIVER ADVOCACY

“Advocacy isn't an extra task – it's the lifeline that ensures no one faces their condition alone.”

the Purple Party

MGA would like to thank everyone who helped to make the 2026 Purple Party a great success! This year's Purple Party raised over \$7,000 to support MGA's free patient support services.

A special thank you to **Jo Beth Barr** and **Jamie Stivers** from **Ooh La La Boutique and Spa** for hosting the **Purple Party** again this year!

Additional thanks to the sponsors, donors, volunteers, attendees, and everyone else who worked so hard on this event - we truly appreciate it! *See photos pictured right.*

We hope to see everyone next year at the 2027 Purple Party!



MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT



MGA partnered with Give an Hour, a national mental health organization with a focus on the rare disease community, to create a Mental Health Toolkit which is now available for people to access on the MGA website.

Julie Wells, Director of Strategic Relationships, at Give an Hour explains *“focusing on mental health is a part of focusing on overall health. We know the rare disease journey has emotional impacts that are felt by both patients and the care partners. We help organizations like MGA develop resources and opportunities to dig deeper into wellness practices.”*

You can access the Mental Health Toolkit by going to the “Services” section on the MGA website (www.mgawpa.org).



MG ILLUMINATE

MG Illuminate is an annual program held during the month of June in honor of Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month. For the last six years, MG Illuminate has illuminated landmarks across the country with this year’s illuminations done in partnership with different advocacy organizations to raise awareness about myasthenia gravis and to honor the strength of those impacted by the disease.

On June 2, 2026, MGA partnered with MG United to illuminate three Pittsburgh area buildings – the Gulf Tower, the Koppers Building, and One Oxford Center – as part of the MG Illumination celebration.

MGA was honored to be chosen to be part of the 2026 MG Illuminate program. Opportunities like this go a long way in raising awareness and educating people about myasthenia gravis.

Explore the only FDA-approved gMG treatment given 2x a year



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LEARN MORE**

gMG, generalized myasthenia gravis.

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A RECIPE from Donna's KITCHEN

A little over two years ago, MGA lost a beloved member of the MGA Family. Donna Kalisek passed away after a short ICU stay at Allegheny General Hospital. One of the things that Donna was best known for was creating delicious meals and desserts for all of her family, friends, and visitors to the MGA clinic. As a way to honor Donna, MGA will be publishing MG-friendly recipes in the Keystone of Hope newsletter as a way to continue to share Donna's kindness and generosity with others. We hope that you enjoy these recipes. If you have a favorite recipe that you would like to share in a future Keystone of Hope newsletter, please contact the MGA Office at 412-566-1545 or mgaoffice@mgawpa.org.



CREAMY MEDITERRANEAN CHICKPEA & SPINACH STEW

A Gentle, Energy Steady Recipe for People Living with Myasthenia Gravis

This dish is soft textured, high protein, anti-inflammatory, and easy to prepare—ideal for people managing myasthenia gravis who may experience chewing fatigue or fluctuating energy levels.

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS FOR PEOPLE WITH MG:

- **Soft textures** — reduces strain on facial and throat muscles.
- **Lean plant protein** — chickpeas provide steady energy without heaviness.

- **Anti inflammatory ingredients** — olive oil, spinach, garlic, and herbs support overall wellness.
- **Easy digestion** — warm stews are gentle on the GI system, which can be sensitive for some MG patients.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 3 cups fresh spinach (or 1 cup frozen)
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt (or dairy free alternative)
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Optional: soft cooked rice or quinoa for serving



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Warm olive oil in a pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook until soft.
2. Stir in paprika and oregano. Add chickpeas and broth.
3. Simmer 10 minutes until chickpeas are tender.
4. Add spinach and cook until wilted.
5. Remove from heat and stir in Greek yogurt for creaminess.
6. Season gently and serve over soft rice if desired.

NUTRITION & MG FRIENDLY BENEFITS:

- **Protein:** ~15–20g per serving
- **Fiber:** Supports digestion and satiety
- **Healthy fats:** Olive oil helps reduce inflammation
- **Soft consistency:** Easy to swallow and chew
- **Customizable:** Add blended vegetables for even smoother texture

TIPS FOR MG FRIENDLY MEAL PREP:

- Use pre chopped or frozen vegetables to reduce fatigue.
- Keep soft grains (rice, couscous, quinoa) ready in the fridge.
- Choose low sodium broth to support heart and respiratory health.
- Make a large batch—this stew reheats beautifully.

When considering a treatment,
it helps to know what to look for.

What could IMAAVY™ do for me?



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MGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECT NEW OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Each year at their May Board Meeting, the MGA Board of Directors elect new officers and executive committee members for the upcoming fiscal year (7/1/26 – 6/30/27). At the May 2026 Board Meeting, the following individuals were elected:

President – **Phyllis Mrosco**

Secretary – **Louise Vuono**

At-Large Member – **Mark Daday**

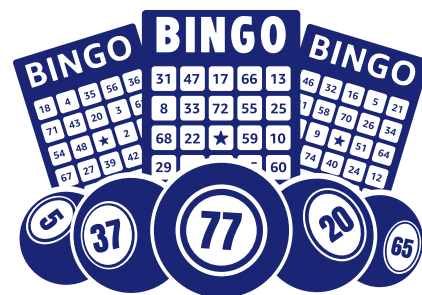
Vice-President – **Dr. George Small**

Treasurer – **Tom Golden**

At-Large Member – **Mitch Robbins**

MGA would like to express our heartfelt thanks to these individuals as well as to all of the members of the MGA Board of Directors for their dedication and commitment to our organization!

Interested in learning more about being a member of the MGA Board of Directors? Please call Jim Joyce at **412-566-1545** or email him at **jjoyce@mgawpa.org** to discuss potential opportunities.



SAVE THE DATE: MGA BINGO

MARCH 24, 2027

BELLA TERRA VINEYARDS
121 SUNNY LANE, HUNKER, PA 15639

Bingo prizes will include **Bella Terra wine** (donated by Bella Terra). Gift Baskets, 50/50 and silent auction will also be available!

More details to follow!

THE QUIET POWER OF JOURNALING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH A RARE DISEASE

Living with a rare disease often means navigating uncertainty, isolation, and a constant search for clarity. While medical care, community support, and advocacy all play vital roles; one surprisingly powerful tool is often overlooked: journaling. It's simple, accessible, and deeply personal — and for many people, it becomes a lifeline.

A space to process what others may not understand: Rare diseases can bring experiences that feel invisible to the outside world. Journaling offers a private place to express frustration, fear, hope, and resilience without needing to translate those feelings for others. It becomes a safe outlet where emotions can be acknowledged rather than carried alone.

Tracking symptoms and patterns that matter: Because rare diseases often involve complex or fluctuating symptoms, journaling can help people notice patterns that might otherwise go unseen. Recording daily experiences (pain levels, symptom triggers, medication effects, energy changes, etc.) can support more informed conversations with healthcare providers and lead to better care decisions.

A tool for reclaiming control: When so much feels unpredictable, writing things down can restore a sense of control. Journaling helps people articulate goals, celebrate small wins, and reflect on what's working and what isn't. It shifts the focus from what the disease takes away to what the individual can actively shape.

Strengthening mental well being: Research consistently shows that expressive writing reduces stress, improves mood, and supports emotional resilience. For those living with rare conditions, journaling can ease anxiety, help manage medical trauma, and provide a grounding ritual during difficult periods.

Building a personal record of strength: Over time, a journal becomes more than a collection of entries. It becomes a testament to perseverance. Looking back on past pages can remind someone how far they've come, how much they've learned, and how deeply they've endured.

Journaling doesn't require perfect grammar, long entries, or an expensive notebook. It simply asks for honesty and a few minutes of attention. For people living with a rare disease, that small daily act can offer clarity, comfort, and a powerful reminder: your story matters, and you are not alone.

MGA is excited to announce that journals are being provided by our friends at Amgen to individuals free of charge. If you are interested in receiving one of these journals, please contact the MGA Office at 412-566-1545 or mgaooffice@mgawpa.org.



“When life feels unpredictable, writing things down can restore a sense of control.”



FREE JOURNALS AVAILABLE

MGA is pleased to share that **Amgen** is providing journals free of charge for individuals in our community.



To request a journal, contact the MGA Office:

- 412-566-1545
- mgaooffice@mgawpa.org

Thank you to all of our generous donors!

The following donations were received between January 1, 2026 and June 30, 2026.

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Keystone of Hope is published twice a year by the Myasthenia Gravis Association of Western PA, and direct mailed to patients, donors and friends.

It is also available at www.mgawpa.org.

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from January 1, 2026 to June 30, 2026



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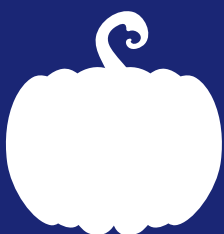
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**2026 MGA
COMEDY FOR A CAUSE
OCTOBER 10, 2026**

Kennedy Township Volunteer
Fire Department Banquet
Hall
MCKEES ROCKS, PA
[Details on Page 4](#)



NOVEMBER

**MGA ANNUAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 21, 2026**

CCAC Boyce Campus
MONROEVILLE, PA
[Details on Page 1](#)

Follow MGA on social media to keep
up-to-date with group meetings,
education programs, & fundraisers.

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DECEMBER

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SENT OUT**

DECEMBER 2026
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Myasthenia Gravis?

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for resources, events, and
ways to support our mission.