

History of the Central Virginia Post-Polio Support Group

The Central Virginia Post-Polio Support Group was created because a polio survivor was having baffling symptoms and wondered if others like herself were experiencing similar problems. Thus began Margo Gathright-Dietrich's search for others who wanted information about these new problems.

Margo founded our support group with four others in July of 1986. They met at Dumbarton Library in Henrico County. In addition to the polio individuals, Sue Hirt, a retired physical therapist and Professor Emeritus of the Medical College of Virginia, was present at that first meeting. Sue had treated polio victims in the late 1940's and early '50's. She continued to be an invaluable source of information for those of us who were too young to remember the original bout with the polio virus.

From that first meeting, our support group grew quickly and met at various locations, including the Adult Day Care Center and the Center for Independent Living. The group met at Sheltering Arms Hospital for many years on the third Thursday evening of the month from 7:00 til 9.

On August 11, 1988, the group had its first election of officers: Margo Dietrich as president, Bill Pannell as vice pres., Pat Skiba as treasurer, Pat Poole as recording secy., Dorothy Cole as corresponding secy. Jack Wilson and Jean Watson were the Program Committee.

Our group made a decision to affiliate itself with Easter Seals Virginia from the beginning and continued to do so until we became a non-profit organization in Sept. of 2005. Lila Weisberg was the first director of Easter Seals to work with the support group. She retired in Sept. of 1988 and Jewel Cooke took over as Easter Seals Regional Director and became a member of our board.

Another board member we hold in high esteem was Charley Brower who was our representative with The March of Dimes and promoted our causes to them. Charley first attended our meetings in April of 1988.

The following is a time-line of events which creates the history of our support group.

March 21, 1989 – Approved the first set of By-Laws.

Saturday, May 19, 1990 – 1st annual Spring Social Dinner at the Richmond Marriott

Dr. Monmahon Khokhar, at the time with Sheltering Arms Hospital, was the first doctor to work with the group in regard to PPS. In July, 1990, he attended the Washington Rehabilitation Hospital PPS Clinic and reported back to the group. He began working on creating a PPS Clinic at Sheltering Arms.

Saturday, September 22, 1990 – Pat Poole hosted a covered dish picnic at her home for the group. This was repeated the following year.

December 2nd, 1990, Sunday afternoon – Held the 1st Annual Christmas Party from 2:30 -4:30

February 25, 1991 – First article about the support group was featured in the Richmond Times-Dispatch newspaper.

June, 1991 – Member of the group met with the Director of Sheltering Arms to discuss the possibilities of creating a post-polio clinic.

November – December 1991 – First issue of our newsletter was mailed. Sandra White was editor and there were 200 on the mailing list. We asked for suggestions for a name and by the next issue, Polio Deja View was suggested by Charles Hamilton of Richmond.

September, 1991 – Dr. Henry Holland attends his first meeting and presented his first program, "The Emotional Effects of Dealing with PPS" in March, 1992.

November, 1991 – Dr. Henry Stonnington, Medical Director and John Allred, Director of Sheltering Arms met with the group to explain their plan for the Post-Polio Clinic.

January 13, 1992 – Board members met with the Post-Polio Clinic team to discuss the final touches and express our concerns and wishes.

January, 1992 – Monthly meetings of the support group moved to Saturday afternoon from 2 til 4 in the afternoon.

March 26, 1992 – Opening of Sheltering Arms PPS Clinic. Approx. cost for an evaluation was \$900, including EMG. They saw 37 people the first year, then increased the days a week which the clinic was held to meet the demand.

April 11, 1992 – Covered dish lunch meeting from 1-3 at Jack and Karen Wilson's home in Darlington Heights, VA.

April 25, 1992 – Richmond Times-Dispatch runs an article on the opening of the PPS Clinic.

October, 1992 – Dr. Jane Wootton heads up the PPS Clinic.

January, 1993 – We temporarily move our Saturday meetings to The Rehabilitation Hospital of Virginia on Fitzhugh Ave. while remodeling is done at Sheltering Arms.

May, 1993 – First time that Dr. Lauro Halstead from National Rehab Hospital in DC spoke to our group. It was a monthly meeting and 76 attended.

February, 1994 – Peer counseling begins at the PPS Clinic.

April, 1994 – Hugh Gallagher, author of "FDR's Splendid Deception" speaks to our group.

August 25, 1994 – Another article is in the Times-Dispatch about our group.

January-February, 1995 – Ed Gates and Pat Poole co-chair the Newsletter Committee; eventually, Ed takes over as editor.

March, 1995 – After two years, our monthly meetings move back to Sheltering Arms.

April, 1995 – First meeting which focused on caregiver-partner PPS issues. Rev. Rose Young was the moderator.

March 30, 1996 – 1st Annual PPS Conference was held at Sheltering Arms. Dr. Lauro Halstead, Hugh Gallagher and Dr. Jane Wootton were the speakers at an all day conference. 150 attended.

September, 1996 – Carol Ranelli becomes editor of our newsletter.

August, 1997 – Dr. Henry Holland, then president of the group, had us divide into age groups according to when we had polio. Each group discussed their individual experiences. A lively and boisterous period followed; ie: the birth of the "PPS Toddlers". Later, he even wrote an article for the newsletter entitled "The Toddler Mystique".

September 25-27, 1998 – 1st Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals East in Caroline County, VA. Dr. Jane Wootton was our speaker on Saturday morning with a "Post-Polio Update." Dr. Rizwan Ali spoke in the afternoon on "Psychological Aspects of PPS." We also had vendors presenting their products in the gym. Cost was \$50 a

person for the weekend and \$15 for Saturday. The treasury subsidized the remaining costs. Thirty people attended for the weekend and three for Saturday only.

November 14, 1998 – 2nd PPS Conference was held at Sheltering Arms. Dr. Richard Bruno was our speaker for an afternoon conference.

December, 1998 – First CVPPSG webpage was designed on the Easter Seals website.

It was during this time that many members of the group would go out to dinner after the Saturday monthly meetings. It was a way to continue talking about PPS issues and just socialize with friends.

April, 1999 – Dave VanAken conducts his first “Caregiver/Partner session” during a monthly meeting.

September 24-26, 1999 – 2nd Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals East. Pam McMillan, counselor at Sheltering Arms spoke on “Dealing Psychologically with PPS.” She also conducted a Family Support Discussion with spouses. Cost was \$75 for the weekend, \$15 for Saturday. 20 attended.

January, 2000 – Started requesting \$10 dues to offset the cost of the newsletter, conferences and retreat.

February, 2000 – Marilyn Decker, Social Chairman, organized the first Brown Bag Auction to raise money for social events during the year.

April, 2000 – Reestablished the Peer Counseling group for the PPS Clinic. Eight members of our group participated.

August, 2000 – Our monthly meetings move to Children’s Hospital on Brook Rd, when Sheltering Arms Hospital building is sold.

September 22-24, 2000 – 3rd Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals. Sue Briggs, PT was to speak on the “Role of Physical Therapy in PPS” and Jann Hartman spoke on “Nutrition and PPS”. Cost was \$85 for the weekend and \$15 for Saturday. 15 attended.

October 7th, 2000 - Outgoing president, Henry Holland, was presented a plaque from the support group for his outstanding service and leadership during his terms as president.

March 24, 2001 – 3rd PPS Conference held at Children's Hospital from 1 til 5. "2001- A Brace & Pace Odyssey." Dr. Mary Ann Keenan, an orthopedic surgeon and head of the PPS Clinic at Moss Rehab in Philadelphia was our speaker, as was Dr. Jane Wootton. Cost was \$10. 51 attended.

September 21-23, 2001 - 4th Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals. Planned speaker could not attend, so Henry filled in. We also had small group discussions for PPSers and their caregivers. 22 attended.

November 3, 2001 - Charlie Brower was given a plaque for his years of work as liaison for March of Dimes on behalf of our support group.

September 20-22, 2002 – 5th Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals. Biggest attendance yet when 41 attended; people from six states attended. Commonwealth Medical Associates gave morning presentation on the latest assistive devices and equipment. We also had a panel discussion of Dr. Bruno's book "The Polio Paradox". Cost was \$75 for the weekend and \$25 for Saturday.

October, 2002 - Several members of our group took Jewel Cooke and her husband out to dinner as a thank you for her years of service to the group as Regional Director of Easter Seals Virginia. She is leaving Easter Seals for work at another non-profit organization.

September 19-21, 2003 - 6th Annual PPS Retreat was cancelled at the last minute due to Hurricane Isabel. Camp Easter sustained power outage and many trees were down.

October, 2003 – Dr. Jane Wootton retires from Sheltering Arms. Dr. Albert Jones will head up the PPS Clinic. Within a year, the PPS clinic is disbanded as an organized entity.

January, 2004 - After several months of work, our CVPPSG website was up and running. Eric Johnson, with University of Richmond, is our web master. He worked with the group to redesign our logo and will continue to maintain and up-date the website.

February 28th, 2004 - We begin to organize our "mid-month lunches".

September, 2004- 6th Annual PPS Retreat at Camp Easter Seals. Dr. Lauro Halstead was our first speaker, giving a PPS Up-date. Dr. Courtney Goodman, Pharmacist later spoke on PPS and Medications. 29 attended. This was our last retreat at Camp Easter Seals as it was sold within a year.

January, 2005 - The CVS 2004 Volunteer Challenge Grant selected us as an Outstanding Group. The original amount applied for was \$500, but CVS granted us \$1,000.

April, 2005 - President Carol Kennedy applied to the IRS for non-profit status. She had been working toward the final application for several months, both through the State Corporation Commission and the IRS.

September 24th - The application was received as APPROVED. We are now independent of Easter Seals Virginia.

October 1, 2005 - All day Post Polio Conference at Children's Hospital. Fifty attended. Speakers were Dr. Mary Ann Keenan who spoke on "Protecting Our Joints" as well as Sue Briggs, PT and Dr. Courtney Goodman who answered questions on medications.

March, 2006 – We receive authorization for Non-Profit Mailing status. Our first newsletter was mailed using our Non-Profit permit.

June, 2006 – Our Annual June Lunch will be a celebration of our 20th Anniversary!! We've come a long way in the past 20 years! Congratulations to our Support Group for a job well done.

This history was created by Carol Ranelli with the help of past newsletters and minutes from general and board meetings...plus the recollections of members.

Past Presidents

Margo Dietrich – Founder	1988 – 1989
Jean Watson	1989 – 1990
Mary Wilkinson	1990 – Feb. 1994 (resigned)
Carol Ranelli	Feb. 1994 – Sept. 1994
Henry Holland	1994 – 2000
Carol Kennedy	2000 - present