

# Parkinson's Patients Build a Rock Steady Approach to their Future

By Scott R. Severns

I have worked with many Parkinson's patients and their families over the past 30 years. In the course of making legal plans for the disabling disease, asset protection planning, and qualifying for Medicaid and Medicare services, I have seen how the wonders of medical science have worked to stave off the most disabling aspects of the disease for much longer periods than in my early days as an elder law practitioner. I have taken great satisfaction in helping secure the financial future for people with this disease, but never before been able to contribute directly to the effort to slow the progression of the disabling effects of the disease. Until six years ago, I would never have thought of Parkinson's clients *boxing* their way to a better life. Now, as a member of the Board of Directors of Rock Steady Boxing (and an occasional boxer myself) I regularly see women and men literally fighting back against the disease and winning!

Rock Steady Boxing (RSB) is a first-of-its-kind, Indianapolis-based nonprofit gym founded in 2006 to provide an effective form of physical exercise to people who are living with Parkinson's. Though it may seem surprising, this non-contact boxing-inspired fitness routine is dramatically improving the ability of people with Parkinson's to live independent lives.

RSB was founded in 2006 by former Marion County (Indiana) prosecutor Scott C. Newman, who was diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's disease at age 40. A few years after his diagnosis, Newman began intense, one-on-one boxing training and witnessed the dramatic improvement in his physical health, agility and daily functioning through the intense and high energy workouts. Rock Steady's first home was in the donated corner of a corporate employee gym, and in 2011, moved to its own custom-built boxing gym. At this "home gym" in Indianapolis, 17 classes are offered each week, serving more than 160 people with PD. Rock Steady is primarily funded by individual donations and receives no government support. In the last year, RSB has established Affiliates in 11 states and three countries – Canada, Australia and Italy.

RSB enables people with Parkinson's disease to fight their disease by providing non-contact boxing-style fitness programs that improve their quality-of-life and sense of efficacy and self-worth. Recent studies also suggest that intense exercise programs may be "neuro-protective," actually working to delay the progression of symptoms. RSB provides encouragement through a "tough love" approach, inspiring maximum effort, speed, strength, balance and flexibility. Boxing works by moving your body in all planes of motion while continuously changing the routine as you progress through the workout. RSB classes have

proven that anyone, at any level of Parkinson's, can actually lessen their symptoms and lead a healthier/happier life.

Training classes, taught by Certified Personal Trainers, include an exercise program that attacks Parkinson's at its vulnerable neurological points. While focusing on overall fitness, strength training, reaction time and balance, workouts include: ring work, focus mitts, heavy bags, speed bags, double-ended bags, jump rope, core work, calisthenics and circuit weight training. No boxing experience is necessary and people of all ages are invited to participate. Boxers, both male and female, range in age from mid-30s to early 90s.

I am particularly interested in helping Rock Steady develop its train-the-trainer and affiliate programs, to make this revolutionary approach available to people with Parkinson's throughout the country and world. Already, people have come from as far as Italy and Australia to be trained as coaches for Parkinson's patients through the recently launched "Rock Steady Training Camp" – a three day training seminar that teaches other trainers how to use the Rock Steady method. The entire staff and board of Rock Steady are excited about the possibilities that an idea born in Indianapolis holds promise for people around the globe. I will keep our readers posted about our progress.

To learn more about how Rock Steady Boxing can help your mother, father or spouse fight back and win, visit the website: <http://www.rocksteadyboxing.org>.