



# ARTHRITIS INTROSPECTIVE

UNITING PEOPLE WITH ARTHRITIS DURING THE PRIME OF LIFE

## *The Gathering*

Fall 2011

Issue 1 Vol. 5

### Season of Change

It's Back to School time already! Where has the year gone? So much has happened to Arthritis Introspective in 2011, it's been hard to keep up. But we know that you, our dedicated members, are anxiously awaiting news about your favorite (and most devoted) arthritis organization! So read on to find out about new volunteer opportunities, fundraisers, local events and see what's changing along with the season!

### The 2011 National Gathering

#### A time to Grow, Gain, Gather & Give

The 2011 Arthritis Introspective National Gathering (G4) held April 8-11<sup>th</sup> at the Courtyard Marriott in Downtown Tempe, AZ was a great success. With 85 AI members from across the



country coming together for a weekend of education, sharing and empowerment, it was amazing to see how we have grown. The weekend was filled with informative sessions on everything from dealing with Social Security to the rejuvenating powers of tea. It was truly a family affair, with many spouses, parents and even kiddos attending several of the sessions and group outings. We had several "able-bodied" spouses and parents attend the Caregiver sessions, sharing the fears and frustrations that come with loving and living with someone with arthritis.

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### Save the Date!

Plans are already well underway for The Gathering's fifth anniversary!

**The 2012 National Gathering will be held March 9-12, 2012 in Sugarland, TX.** As always, there will be a plethora of information, education and empowerment, along with many after hour laughs.

Early Bird Registration Fees remain a low \$40 (individual) and \$75 (couple); Registration will begin soon at [www.arthritisintrospective.org](http://www.arthritisintrospective.org). Sugar Land Marriott Town Square hotel reservations are already available at [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com) or call 800-228-9290, for the AI group rate of \$99+ tax.

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As we all know, arthritis affects the entire family. And as you will see from the article by Scott Miller, it is just as important for the Caregivers (whether it be friends, significant others or family) to have their own support network, others who understand what it's like to feel helpless and frustrated when loving someone with this unpredictable disease.

Knowing part of what makes The Gathering so special is simply spending time getting to know others with the disease, we always leave plenty of time to socialize and see the amazing sites of Arizona. Before our Opening Ceremony on Friday evening, those who arrived early enjoyed a beautiful afternoon at Phoenix's South Mountain Park. Led by a park ranger, the group learned of native Arizona desert life, as well as testing out a few of the park's hand-pedaled, adaptive bicycles.

After a weekend full of information, fun-filled dinners and lingering, late-night talks, the weekend came to an official close Sunday afternoon. Those able to extend their stay, spent Monday sight-seeing, stopping for a picnic lunch at Montezuma's Castle and touring the grounds and sampling the selection of the Alcantara Winery, in the heart of Verde Valley, AZ.

Like many wines, saying good-bye is often bittersweet. As we said our final farewells, each of us left with a renewed sense of hope, new friendships and a new excitement about the year and the good times to come.

\*To enjoy photos of G4, visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ArthritisIntrospective](http://www.facebook.com/ArthritisIntrospective) or [www.arthritisintropsective.org](http://www.arthritisintropsective.org).

*"I was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis at the age of 41. It drastically changed my life. I became very isolated and depressed. Becoming a part of the Arthritis Introspective family has given me a more positive outlook on life and wonderful support system. I've also made amazing and lifelong friendships!"*  
Michelle, Houston TX, age 46



### Going Once, Going Twice... SOLD!

November 1<sup>st</sup> through November 15, 2011, Arthritis Introspective will be holding its first annual online auction to raise funds for the 2012 National Gathering. We will be auctioning everything from art and jewelry to sports and movie memorabilia. We already have quite an impressive array of items and are eagerly anticipating more. Our goal is to raise \$3,000 to help provide financial assistance to those interested in attending the 2012 event. If you have an item you would like to donate (donations are tax-deductible), please contact Scott Miller ([myaiphx@gmail.com](mailto:myaiphx@gmail.com)) or Michelle Obsheatz ([houstonai@yahoo.com](mailto:houstonai@yahoo.com)).

All donors will be recognized on both the Missionfish.org auction page and [www.arthritisintrospective.org](http://www.arthritisintrospective.org).

Remember, the auction begins November 1<sup>st</sup>. Help us make the Fifth Anniversary of the Gathering the best yet!



## How Can You Help?

*A Note from Kevin Purcell*  
President & Founder of AI

Dear Friends,

2011 has been an exciting year for our organization. We have celebrated many successes and tremendous growth. However, as Arthritis Introspective continues to grow, our workload grows as well. As a completely volunteer-run organization, our community is the key to our success. Since the 2011 Gathering, we have seen a significant increase in the number of people who want to start a local Support System in their community and have had many more people ask, "How can I help?"

Well, here is the answer. We have are looking for passionate, experienced people to help lead the various committees necessary to run a successful organization. If you have previous non-profit experience in business planning, fundraising, grant writing, marketing and communications, social media, community outreach, special events, etc., we need you. There are several Committee Chair positions open, along with needing committee members to assist those Chairs. We are also expanding our Board of Directors and have added two new Director-at-Large positions. You don't have to have arthritis to become a volunteer, just a desire to help improve the lives of people living with arthritis during the prime of life.

Visit [www.arthritisintrospective.org](http://www.arthritisintrospective.org) to submit an interest form and receive further information on volunteer opportunities, roles and responsibilities.

"If you want to truly understand something, try to change it." ~Kurt Lewin

*Kevin Purcell*

## I Don't Have Arthritis

A Husband's Story

By Scott Miller

I do not have arthritis. My wife, Carol, does. She was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA) when she was just 14-months-old. Carol



told me about her disease soon after we began dating 11 years ago. She was honest about her condition and while I knew it was a part of her life, I didn't truly understand it until the first time I saw the side effects of one of her medications. Yet, there was something about her and I fell in love with this woman who happened to have arthritis. I learned quickly and had to accept that if arthritis was part of her life, it would also be part of mine.

Carol attended her first national Gathering in 2010. While she had gone to arthritis camp as a child, as an adult, she had little contact with others with arthritis. And I had none. So when Carol came home from G3 with a new-found network of support and an expanding group of friends, I was incredibly excited for her and soon began online friendships with several of these people as well.

When G4 came about, I knew that I wanted to meet some of these people and share the experience with Carol. I was excited and also a bit nervous. I was looking forward to meeting all the people I knew from online and from Carol's stories, yet I wasn't sure I would get anything more out of the event. I mean, I *don't* have arthritis.

I was wrong. The Able-Bodied/Caregiver sessions were fantastic. We, the "able-bodied," got to share our stories, fears and frustrations and we found

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A Husband's Story Con't. from Pg. 3...

audience of understanding and assurance that just because we didn't physically have the disease, we also felt the pain, along with guilt, fear, loss and helplessness—and that it's normal. It was also empowering to share my experiences with the friends, family and partners of those recently diagnosed. It felt good to know that sharing my story would help someone who has just started down this long road. Acknowledging our own feelings about the disease not only lightens some of the load, but helps us to communicate with our loved-one with the disease. We all know communication is the key to survival, but sometimes we just don't know how to begin.

However, what I remember the most is the people I met over the weekend; the kindness of new friends and the willingness of people to encourage and complement one another. Carol and I are still surprised by how many people said our boys were, "so well-behaved." Our kids? Who knew?

I think it's obvious that I will be joining Carol at the 2012 Gathering in Houston, TX. I am looking forward to participating in the Able-Bodied planning and programming and to catching up with old friends while making many new ones.

### Fall Fun and Fundraising!

Join the Arthritis Introspective—Phoenix group for a night of music, friends and fun!

#### Arthritis Introspective Phoenix presents an Acoustic Music Showcase, Reprise!

Saturday, September 10th · 7:30pm - 10:30pm.a

Fiddler's Dream

1702 East Glendale Ave, Phoenix, AZ

Tickets \$10 in advance. \$15 at the door.

All proceeds go toward the 2012 National Gathering.

Visit [www.arthritisintrospective.org](http://www.arthritisintrospective.org) for more information.

## Arthritis Introspective

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Become a member of Arthritis Introspective today! Visit us at: [www.arthritisintrospective.org](http://www.arthritisintrospective.org). to learn about upcoming AI events and find out if there is an AI Support System (AISS) in your area.

Want to form an AISS in your community? Visit the AI website to submit an interest form. Or e-mail Eastern US manager, Donna Fox ([donna@arthritisintrospective.org](mailto:donna@arthritisintrospective.org)) or Western US manager Haydee Sedlmeier ([haydee@arthritisintrospective.org](mailto:haydee@arthritisintrospective.org).)

A regional manager will follow up with you.



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