

NETWORKING IS NEAT

by Toni Temple, Chair, Ohio Network for the Chemically Injured
Board Member, National Coalition for the Chemically Injured

We learn...we educate others
We meet the needs of others...our needs are met
We give support...we get support
We give recognition...we gain recognition
We give friendship...we find new friends

Networking is powerful. It is comprised of attitude, empathy, compassion and understanding. It emphatically calls for our awareness, inner-strength, attention, persistence and open communication. It takes time, diligence, responsibility, availability, reliability and certainly, a willingness to find solutions.

Networking accomplishes together what one cannot do alone. While one person can make a difference, look at the difference we can make together.

When the Ohio Network for the Chemically Injured was in its first stages of planning in the early 1990's, few people knew what Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) disability was. In a mode of "survival" and without realizing "networking" was taking place, steps were taken that accomplished the establishment of a support group for those who formerly had no recognition of a very serious illness.

One of the very first contacts our group made was with Environmental Health Watch in Cleveland. Bob Staib, former Director, spoke at our very first support group meeting at the Cuyahoga County Public Library in Berea and gave us the encouragement to persist, simply by "being there" for us and believing in us. Some attendees at the meeting sparked the "beginning" of our network...and so we grew.

So many have contributed to the support of this previously little-known disease. Some out of curiosity, some because they knew someone with similar symptoms, some because they recognized the symptoms as ones they were having. Others learned about us because we asked for special accommodations and talked about access issues, special needs and the ADA.

We grew because people cared and put us in touch with others who could assist us. We grew because while one person or agency came to our aid, another agency or person was watching...and then they wanted to help us too. They found out that it wasn't so terribly difficult to help us meet our needs. And we learned we could survive! By reaching out...

You may be thinking that networking is a lot of work...and it is. But the rewards are so satisfying...and it works! I encourage those of you who have not taken advantage of the tremendous possibilities it offers to put networking on your list of priorities.

A sincere thank you to all of the many organizations and businesses who networked with us. You have helped us make a difference and we hope we have helped you too. We have all grown in our awareness of disability issues as a result. A special thank you to Jeff Moyer who so kindly understood our plight and explained it so clearly in a song about disability for the upcoming "Healthier Hospitals on the Horizon Campaign." (The campaign deals with access issues for those with MCS in the hospital/medical setting.)



Watch for the first National
"Non-Scents Day"
Coming Soon!

Support Group Meetings

MCS welcomes new ideas, volunteers and speakers. Monthly meetings are held at Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church, 11680 Royalton Road, North Royalton on the first Saturday of the month at 1:00 p.m. Call Toni at 230-1985 for further information.

Alma Krekus, SIL Director of Advocacy, will speak at the June 7th meeting on "What is Advocacy & How Can It Help Those with MCS?"