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*Living Well with Neuropathy*

P.O. Box 40874  
Austin, TX 78704

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**Update From the Board** *by Marshall Meringola, Board Member*



Summertime is here! A time where life slows down a bit, daylight stretches later into the evening, and it is always a good idea to be close to a pool. I'd like to take a moment to reflect on NATX's accomplishments from the first half of the year. We enjoyed a tremendously successful day of fundraising through the city-wide Amplify Austin campaign. Thank you so much to all those who made a contribution to us! Also, as many of you know, May 7-13 was Neuropathy Awareness Week, and NATX was honored to be the spotlight organization at both a Round Rock Express baseball game and a Kendra Scott shopping event.

This fall we look forward to a number of exciting events, including NATX's Health Fair, as well as our Fall Fundraiser at Top Golf, an excellent opportunity to invite your family, friends and colleagues to enjoy the fun of golf without the walking (great for those neuropathy patients out there who have trouble walking!)

Now, you may be asking, "How can I get involved?!" I'm glad you asked! We are actively seeking motivated individuals who are interested in the rewarding experience of serving on our Board of Directors to help guide the future of NATX. We are also always looking for volunteers to help with our ongoing organizational and community initiatives. If you or someone you know is interested in the opportunity to serve on our Board or volunteer, whatever your background, please contact NATX for more information at [info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org](mailto:info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org) or (512)553-9130!

*Our vision is that anyone in Texas afflicted with or affected by neuropathy receives the support and education they need to more effectively handle neuropathy and live to their fullest potential.*



*Living Well with Neuropathy*

**Member Spotlight**



**Bobby Rigney, NATX Member since 2015**

When asked about his journey with neuropathy, Bobby Rigney began: "Well, I was born in a log cabin that I built with my own two hands," explaining that no matter the details of his symptoms and diagnosis, his sense of humor has been crucial for him while accepting his new life with neuropathy. Bobby had been an avid runner for 30 years, and he remembers the day well– Texas Independence Day– March 2, 2011 – that he developed back pain unlike any he had experienced before. The next day, his toes were tingling.

Guessing this numbness might be due to an electrolyte imbalance, Bobby consulted his urologist. Being advised that was unlikely, he sought his PCP who immediately diagnosed him with spinal stenosis.

After being referred to a physiatrist, a chiropractor, and a neurologist who diagnosed his neuropathy with an EMG, Bobby opted for lumbar decompression surgery. Before the surgery, however, his doctor found a benign sheath tumor around a nerve in his vertebrae from an MRI scan. In removing the tumor, Bobby suffered some damage to his L5 nerve root which lost the signal from his vertebrae to his left foot. His neuropathy symptoms worsened, and although his foot was numb, he was still able to feel burning pain. Throughout all the back-and-forth with all his various healthcare providers, Bobby made sure to always keep his PCP, the "quarterback" of his healthcare team, informed.

While it was a struggle to adjust to his new, slower pace of life, Bobby was particularly grateful to his physical therapists for helping him confront his new limitations and develop a strategy to cope. Also in one of his sessions, Bobby experienced the undoubtable connection between his mind and his physical symptoms and has since committed to practicing gratefulness and a positive spirit. He notes that it's important to "know who your cheerleaders are and to let them know that you are thankful for them. To stay positive is to be grateful– they reinforce each other. All this ties into being self-aware, and as humans, we all want to understand, and to be understood."

Bobby commits to staying active and being very involved in his community, explaining, "We have to come to grips with our neuropathy in a practical way, and the most practical way is to get engaged with a group that understands." He has a near perfect attendance at the Austin-West support group meetings and regularly participates in NATX's Tai Chi classes, which have significantly helped his proprioception (position sense) and overall health. Quoting Woody Allen, Bobby stresses that "Eighty percent of success is showing up." He shares, "You really have got to have a community for support, and for me, I try to come to every Neuropathy Alliance meeting that I can. It's just something that I need to do for myself– I get more out of it than I can give back. It's a social support, it's a technical support, and it's just plain community and fellowship. I support Neuropathy Alliance because it supports me and my health. It helps me learn to live the way I want to become."

**This newsletter is sponsored by:**



## Upcoming Events this Fall



Photo from Can Stock Photo/ ayzek

### Neuropathy Alliance of Texas Health Fair Saturday, September 30

NATX will be hosting a health fair to provide an educational opportunity for neuropathy patients and caregivers to learn about their healthcare options and services to improve quality of life. Please stay tuned for more details later this summer!

*We are currently seeking sponsors and vendors to showcase their local services!* If you are a healthcare professional or an

organization that offers services for neuropathy patients, please contact us for information about renting a booth: [info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org](mailto:info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org) or (512)553-9130.



### Top Golf Fundraiser

**Sunday, November 5, 12–4 PM**

Build a team and come have fun with us late fall to help support NATX! Please stay tuned for more information. **Sponsorships available!**



### Do you tweet? Please follow us! @neuropathytx

We have set up a new Twitter account and are excited to regularly share neuropathy news and interesting articles with you to help you learn more about your condition and ways to help improve your daily living. [twitter.com/neuropathytx](https://twitter.com/neuropathytx)



### Tai Chi Research Project Complete!

In partnership with the Dell Jewish Community Center and thanks to a grant from St. David's Foundation Health's Angels in 2016, NATX has concluded research on the benefits of Tai Chi as an alternative treatment for neuropathy patients.

**Purpose:** To determine the effects of Tai Chi on chronic health conditions and how participation in Tai Chi impacts the ability and willingness of participants to manage their health.

**Findings:** 63 participants (age range=53-91) completed a twice weekly 12 week Tai Chi class. Participants' single leg balance was significantly improved, and 31.3% reported their conditions getting

better at the end of the study versus 18.8% at the beginning. Patient Activation Measure (PAM) scores improved significantly, which means participants were more confident and willing to take on the role of managing their health and health care.

**What is PAM and why is it important?** PAM is a scale that helps patients understand their illness, treatments and role in addressing their health. If you are an "activated" patient, you will tend to be engaged in more preventive and healthy behaviors. You will have gained the knowledge, skill and confidence to take on a leadership role in managing your own healthcare and to make more informed decisions.

Thank you to everyone who partnered with NATX in this research! If you have neuropathy, we encourage you to try Tai Chi as an affordable, alternative treatment that can have a powerful effect on your overall health and neuropathy symptoms.

## Supplements: Taking What Your Body Needs



Do you just guess what vitamins you think your body needs and take those pills accordingly? Did you know there is now a genetic test available that you can take to figure out exactly which nutrients *your* body is deficient in?

For those of you who attended our support group meeting in Georgetown in May, you heard Chris McKee, CNC talk about "Nutrigenomics," a new technology that has opened up the world of nutrition for her clients. This technology helps individuals target which vitamins and minerals they might need to take or avoid based on each individual's circumstances. This could be an interesting opportunity, and to learn more, you can check out this article published by Environmental Health Perspectives: "Nutrigenomics: The Genome-Food Interface by M. Nathaniel Mead. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2137135/>

\*Please note that Neuropathy Alliance does not endorse any businesses, services or products. We only share information like this to help keep the neuropathy community informed of what opportunities are available. Not every pathway works for everyone.



## 10 Ways to Manage Your Diabetic Neuropathy

- 1. Control your blood sugar.** Eat a healthy diet and take your medications or insulin as directed by your doctor.
- 2. Wear shoes that fit you well.** Ask your podiatrist which shoes and socks work well for you.
- 3. Don't go barefoot... even at the beach.** If you get a cut and don't feel it, that can lead to a dangerous infection.
- 4. Keep your feet clean and check them daily.** Check for sores, cuts, blisters, calluses, ingrown toenails, toenail fungus, redness or signs of infections and treat them.
- 5. Exercise!** Improving your circulation can help keep your neuropathy symptoms at bay. Consult a physical therapist or trainer if you need safe exercise tips.
- 6. Make regular doctor visits.** Always update your doctor on any health or symptom changes.
- 7. Try acupuncture.** This ancient Chinese alternative treatment may not work for everyone, but it does help some neuropathy patients in the long-term.
- 8. Try capsaicin cream.** Capsaicin is what makes hot peppers hot and can serve as a pain reliever.
- 9. Consider Supplements.** Alpha lipoic acid is an antioxidant and can help control blood sugar.
- 10. If a doctor advertises a cure-all for your neuropathy, it's probably just a sales gimmick.** Often people suffering from severe pain fall victim to expensive or questionable treatments. Stay alert and protect yourself!

Source and to read more: "11 Ways Diabetics Can Manage Peripheral Neuropathy" by Vanessa Caceres; U.S. News, June 1 2017. <http://health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2017-06-01/11-ways-diabetics-can-manage-peripheral-neuropathy>

**We Need Your Help!** Please contact us at [info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org](mailto:info@neuropathyalliancetxt.org) if you can share any information with us about the following:



### 1. Young Adult Network

*Are you or someone you know between the ages of 18-45 living with neuropathy?* If so, we'd like to talk with you about ways that we can better support you! We need to know who you are before we can improve our outreach.

### 2. Local Resource List

*Do you have a favorite:*

- Acupuncturist
- Massage therapist
- Neurologist
- Nutritionist
- Pain management doctor
- Physical therapist
- Podiatrist

*Or is there something that you, as a patient or caregiver, need that you have trouble accessing?* We would like to compile a list of helpful local resources for our community.

### 3. Board Member Recruitment

*We are currently seeking leaders with an ambitious spirit to join our board, especially for folks with the following backgrounds:*

- Fundraising
- Media
- Marketing
- Social work
- Healthcare

*All nominations will be considered but are not guaranteed placement.*

## ~ Please Join Us in our Current Programs! ~

### Upcoming Support Group Meetings

*Please check our website soon for each meeting's topic!*

#### Austin West Location

Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church  
7127 Bee Cave Rd., Austin 78746

**August 12**  
**September 9**  
**October 14**  
**November 11**

#### Georgetown Location

Lake Aire Shopping Center  
2423 Williams Dr., Suite 101  
Georgetown 78628

**August 14**  
**September 11**  
**October 9**  
**November 13**

#### Austin/ Northwest Hills Location

Dell Jewish Community Center  
7300 Hart Ln., Austin 78731

**August 28**  
**September 25**  
**October 23**  
**November 27**

### Tai Chi Classes

The results of several clinical studies suggest that regular participation in Tai Chi can help with balance, circulation, muscle strength, stress release and general well-being. *Our classes are open to all levels of Tai Chi experience. Beginners and first-timers are welcome!*

**Southwest Austin**— Unity Church of Austin, 5501 West Highway 290, Austin 78735. Thursdays 10–11 AM. \$8 for walk-ins; \$50 for 12 weeks. Please visit our website to register.

**Georgetown**— 2423 Williams Dr., Georgetown 78628. Thursdays 9–10:30 AM. \$5/class. Please visit our website to register.

**Northwest Hills**—7300 Hart Ln., Austin 78731. Tuesdays and Fridays 9–10 AM, \$20/month. Please contact [annie.skilton@shalomaustin.org](mailto:annie.skilton@shalomaustin.org) to register.

*\*NATX encourages you to attend classes for a minimum of 12 weeks in order to experience a difference in your health.*