If you know someone living with MS who has a personal goal, dream or project that they would like to achieve and they just need a little bit more support to get started – now is the time to apply for an MS Go for Gold Scholarship.

There are 25 MS Go for Gold scholarships to be awarded valued up to $2,000 each, and recipients have the freedom to choose how to use the grant.

No project, dream, goal, business idea or hobby is too big or too small. People have applied for many different reasons; from needing equipment to help them clean their house so they can spend more time with their family, to funding a course to help kickstart their business idea, to purchasing craft supplies to start painting as a hobby. As Lydia, a past recipient of the MS Go for Gold Scholarship says, “the Go for Gold Scholarship doesn’t have to be for an extravagant dream. It can be for everyday wishes…. ……..my dream was to study Italian.”

We hear a lot from the MS community that they never applied for an MS Go for Gold Scholarship because they thought someone else may need this support more. Don’t let that be the case and encourage the person you care for to apply for an MS Go for Gold Scholarship today. We believe the whole MS community should be supported to apply and achieve their goals.

The application process has been simplified and is an easy-to-follow online application form. You even have the choice to start your application, save it and complete it at a later time.

Apply today at www.ms.org.au/go-for-gold-applications

Our team at MS is producing a series of resources to support you during these challenging times as we face COVID-19. More than ever, we are here so no one faces MS and this crisis alone. www.ms.org.au And don’t forget we are only a phone call away MS connect 1800 042 138.
Yasmine Gray’s passion for travel and her commitment to helping make travel accessible to all those with a disability led her to apply for an MS Limited “Go for Gold Scholarship” in 2014. She successfully applied for funding to allow her to purchase a personal travel scooter and to start a small internet business. Only six months after winning one of the MSL scholarships, she registered the business name “Getaboutable”. The company that she founded operates a website to allow people to post and share information about accessible travel, accommodation, leisure and adventure opportunities for people living with a disability. It empowers people with impaired mobility, vision and hearing and indeed the whole range of accessibility needs to participate in travel and leisure. The company also undertakes advocacy on behalf of people with accessibility needs and advises and assists travel service providers in developing and adapting their service offerings to tap into the growing and under-recognised market.

We asked Yasmine how she found out how to set up a web-based platform and how to set up her own company. Yasmine confessed, “I have no technical skills. I can’t believe I had the audacity to set up an internet-based company when I had no IT skills. In fact, I used the Go for Gold money and some of my own money to hire a website developer who developed the initial Getaboutable.com platform. Once the website developer was hired it took around four months to go out for testing and by the end of six months Getaboutable.com was live. When the business started getting some recognition and growing, I teamed up with two technical guys who now have equity in the company.”

On the business side, Yasmine did a lot of reading and sought legal and accounting advice about registering her business. She says, “it wasn’t really complicated. In fact, the hardest part was coming up with a name that could be used for both the company registration and the website that wasn’t already taken!” Although Yasmine now has two technical business partners, she still finds it fulfilling and rewarding to remain as engaged with the business as possible. As the Founding Director her role is to provide the strategic direction and look after the networking and business promotion. Yasmine emphasises that she works very closely with her co directors. “As in any start-up business, we work as a team to ensure that anything that needs to get done is done as best we can.”

We asked Yasmine about the amazing recognition that her business has achieved. The first award landed in 2017 when the Getaboutable website won an ACT Government Inclusion Award for Innovation in Web Design. In 2019 the company won the Australia-wide Microsoft “Artificial Intelligence for Accessibility Challenge” after presenting as finalists in Sydney. “That was incredibly exciting and opened a lot of doors for us.” At the end of 2019 they won the ACT Region Tourism Award for Specialised Tourism Services which in turn made Getaboutable a national finalist in the prestigious 2019 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. In 2020, Getaboutable has already won a Lux Travel and Tourism Award for their Accessible Directory.

Never content to rest on their laurels, towards the end of last year, Getaboutable applied for the right to initiate a Crowd Funding campaign as part of the Mill House Social Enterprise Accelerator Program to host an Asia Pacific Accessible Tourism Conference and Expo in Canberra. Having succeeded in raising the necessary funds, sadly this conference has had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 Virus. Yasmine found it difficult to estimate how much time she spends on this extraordinarily successful business. She confided, “I really only have a couple of hours of functional energy on any given day. So, I suppose I might spend 10 to 15 hours a week on the business. However, a core principal for me in designing the business was to build in provision for the fact that, like others with MS, I have peaks and troughs. This flexibility was built into my design for the business. In the end, I always have to have a contingency plan for the days when I just can’t function. That might even be the day when I am supposed to be leading a company presentation in Sydney for a major national award. I work when I can, and I take a back seat when I can’t.” Yasmine added, “A lot of my networking and social media is done when I’m in bed in my pyjamas. It feels like a hobby because I love what I do so much.”
Once she had won her first award, Yasmine recognised the need for business partners and fellow investors to build the business. To this end, she used the Canberra Innovation Network to pitch for her future co directors and tested them out on quite a few thorny problems before securing them as equity partners in the business. The company that Yasmine founded is classified as a “Social Enterprise” as it is operated for purpose, more than profit. However, the company needs to be sustainable and has begun to generate income. Yasmine hopes that her young collaborators will in due course be able to retire from their day jobs and work on this business full time.

We asked Yasmine what advice she would give someone considering applying for an MS Limited Go for Gold Scholarship. She enthused, “Absolutely, go for it. The Go for Gold scholarship gave me the confidence to pursue my dream. It was the first step. Realising that others could see merit in my idea was a big thrill. I wouldn’t have started the business without the scholarship. I’m very glad that I applied.”

Yasmine’s story wouldn’t be complete without acknowledging the challenges she has faced. She said, “my biggest challenge has been managing my energy levels and learning not to say ‘yes’ to every opportunity. There are many times when I struggle to get through the day. There are occasions when my hired carer fails to turn up. Those days are a disaster. I feel absolutely exhausted. Life is not perfect. I try to always have a contingency plan. If I have to do a presentation interstate I never know if I’m going to be OK after the stress of travel, or if my interim carer is going to turn up. So one of my co-directors often comes with me and is effectively my understudy. He has to be ready to step in and do the presentation if I’m incapacitated for any reason. Sometimes I need to get up at 5.30 am to do a media interview and still be functioning late the same day. Sometimes a critical business engagement conflicts with a non-negotiable specialist appointment. Sometimes I have to make really difficult choices between the business and my health, although my priority should be, and usually is, my health. If I don’t respect this priority, I always suffer the consequences.”

“I often feel frustrated by my limitations. I’ll never be able to work dependably again. That has been very hard for me to accept. But I think my story really illustrates what you can do if you’re prepared to be flexible and if you have a bit of drive and imagination. This business is something I really enjoy doing. I find it fulfilling and it keeps my mind active. And the beauty of it is that not only does it give me a reason for getting out of bed in the morning and remaining optimistic about life, but I can do a lot of what I need to do while I’m in bed!”

You can connect with the Getaboutable community at facebook.com/groups/getaboutable and keep up to date with developments in relation to the Asia Pacific Accessible Tourism and Expo at getaboutable.com/apatce.

You can find out more about the MS Limited Go for Gold scholarships at ms.org.au

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**MS Community Shops are Reopening**

We are pleased to confirm that our MS Community Shops are reopening from 15 June and our team at Tuggeranong can’t wait to welcome you back.

To protect the health of our customers and team members we have implemented a range of measures: we have installed screen guards; hand sanitiser will be available at the door, thorough and frequent cleaning practices will take place, and of course, we will follow social distancing guidelines.

Trading hours will vary, so before your visit our shop or bring donations, we suggest you call our shop on 02 6293 1351.

For more information, visit our website: www.ms.org.au/ms-community-shops

We look forward to seeing you at our shops.
2020 REGISTRATIONS ARE NOW OPEN!

Embark on an epic adventure this August! The MS Readathon inspires kids to read as much as they can, all for an incredible cause. The rules are simple. Read whatever you like, as much as you can, in August. This year’s MS Readathon will be a magical quest, and the adventure kicks off on 1 August and wraps up on 31 August. Children can register with their school (teachers, you can register your class) or individually.

Best of all, by joining our quest, not only will you awaken a love of reading, you will also be helping kids who have a parent with multiple sclerosis.

Register Now at www.msreadathon.org.au

A story of belonging, caring, and serving
That continues to live on today

I would like to share with you the story of my mother Alice. She was born in Cowes, a small community on Phillip Island.

Alice’s childhood years were the hard times of depression and war. In her small, isolated community everyone had to pull together to get by.

That spirit of belonging, caring, and serving became my mother’s guiding light for her whole life.

In 1946 Alice met Jack Robinson. They married in 1949 and had three children Neil, Barbara and Stuart. They remained together for forty-four years. Dad’s work took the family to Melbourne. Mum became involved in in the mother’s club at the local church. She was also active on the parents committees at our schools, as well as being the canteen manager.

Alice did have her challenges in life. Jack developed crippling arthritis and died way too soon in 1993. At about the same time my brother Stuart was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Mum cared for her loved ones without complaint. She was a quiet achiever, just did what had to be done. Mum was able to look after Stuart at home until she was well into her 70s. She had wonderful support and respite care provided by Multiple Sclerosis Limited (MS). They provided a home away from home, after Mum was not able to continue to look after Stuart. This was in the MS respite accommodation unit in Williamstown, Victoria.

Mum died in 2019. She will always be remembered for her life of service to others. Even though she is gone, her concern for others is still being expressed through her generous gift in her Will to Multiple Sclerosis Limited.

Our family has always been very grateful for the support and kindness of MS and the staff at Williamstown.

Mum’s gift towards the ongoing care for people living with MS will help to ensure that no-one needs to face this crippling disease alone.

Neil Robinson

For more information on how you can express your life values through a gift in your Will to MS, contact Laura Henschke or Michael Knox on 1800 443 867 or visit www.mymslegacy.org.au
Meditation Group

As we are all living in stressful times, some of us are stepping up our meditation practice and our online meditation sessions are proving popular. The Mindfulness Meditation Group is meeting weekly on Fridays at 3.30 pm by Zoom for about an hour to chat and then to do a guided meditation. (All suggestions welcome).

If you’re not receiving alerts and an invitation for the online Meditation Group meetings at the moment and would like to be advised when sessions are being scheduled, please contact: vanessa.fanning@gmail.com or Richard Wilmott lisnrich@gmail.com

Taking Control Group, People with MS Group & Virtual Coffee Group

In view of the pandemic, and our need for self-isolation, The Taking Control Group, the People with MS Support Group, & the Coffee Group have all teamed up to have a regular meeting by Zoom every Friday fortnight at 12.30 pm.

The meetings are informal and open to all people with MS and their families and partners. The Zoom meeting invitation is sent out to our normal mailing lists each fortnight but, as it is a recurring meeting, the link is the same.

The Zoom link is normally easy to use. If anyone would like to be added to the mailing list please contact vanessa.fanning@gmail.com or Mary Webb at denmar@netspeed.com.au. If you would like a practice run using Zoom please contact us. We are using a Professional version of Zoom which has higher security than the free online version. It’s just a way to stay in touch with each other, to catch up on news and information and to offer each other support.

Sometimes we will also have invited speakers. See you online!

First step to restarting our face to face activities

We are pleased to confirm that following the latest advice from government health authorities, MS has decided to reopen the MS Gym in Lidcombe and resume home visits for NDIS clients in VIC and NSW.

This is only a first step face-to-face and in the next few weeks we will finalise a staged plan to increasingly re-start other face-to-face services and activities across our states, as per the advice from the government health authorities. Our plans will be subject to change due to the evolving nature of the public health issue we are facing because of COVID-19.

We will keep you updated as our plans are finalised and slowly, as a society, we move towards resuming our regular activities across Australia.

Please note that all our other services, including wellbeing and education support, support coordination, MS advisory, employment support services, and peer support will remain available by phone or Telehealth.

We would like to thank you for your understanding during these challenging times. The health and wellbeing of all of our clients and staff have been at the forefront of our decisions.

In the meantime, don’t hesitate to contact us. Our team is here to ensure you stay connected and supported and we are only a phone call away (1800 042 138 or msconnect@ms.org.au).
‘Family members need support too’- MS Peer Support Telegroup for Family/Friends

Recognising yourself as a carer can be a big step. Family members can see themselves not as care providers, but view what they do as part of their normal role. While being a carer and supporting a person with MS can be very rewarding, as you focus on building your relationship and supporting the person you care most about, it’s also easy to forget your own needs. It is crucial for family members to also focus on their own wellbeing and self-care.

The MS Peer Support Telegroup connects family members to share information and support. David and Harpreet are the Peer Support Volunteers who facilitate this monthly meeting, and both support their wives with MS. David also provides one to one phone support. Peer support involves supporting other partners to identify their own needs for support and to help them to problem solve ways to take care of themselves.

"Self-care is vital for carers. If you are not looking after yourself, you cannot look after others. You have to maintain your own level of energy in order to help other people. The Family members telegroup is a great way to gather information and share support in a nonjudgmental way. It is a sounding board to share ideas and touch base with others who can relate to your situation"

The Family and Friends Wellbeing Telelink commences on the 22 July. This is a 6 week program on Wednesdays from 1.30pm to 3pm. Connecting up to 12 carers over the phone to share valuable information and support. Topics include carers need care too, planning for the unexpected, stronger boundaries stronger carers and accessing services and supports.

Carers/Family Selfcare Podcast will be available in mid-June on the MS website. David and Harpreet share their experience in supporting their wives with MS for over ten years. The MS Connect Social Work Advisor Catherine Smith provides professional insight into the ways carers can maintain their wellbeing and the range of services available for families. To access any of these programs please call MS Connect on 1800 042 138

MS Community Visitors Scheme

MS Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) was developed to meet the needs of Aged Care recipients who, for a variety of reasons, are isolated and whose quality of life may be improved by regular visiting. At this time, we also seek to coordinate virtual matches whereby visitors and recipients can connect via internet, phone or letter.

If you know of a family member or friend living in an Aged Care Home who might benefit from this service please contact us on 1800 042 138 or email CVSAdmin@ms.org.au

For more information and online referrals please visit our website www.ms.org.au and search CVS.

Upcoming highlights in the education calendar for July Webinars & Podcasts

Looking to keep moving and focused as the cold weather rolls in? How about Tai Chi by Webinar series? 6 weeks, 20 Jul to 24 Aug with Josephine Couper keeping things gentle and leaving you feeling fabulous. Click here to register (there is small contribution cost involved with this series)

We are continually updating the programs on offer with webinars planned on Bladder & Bowel Changes in MS with Fiona Easton, our MS Continence Advisor, and Maintaining Healthy Relationships presented by Helen Diamond. A Smoking with MS webinar is scheduled for Wednesday 29 July, 11.00am - 11.30am.

New Podcasts are being added to our growing Podcast Library which you can access here www.ms.org.au. Two new topics in our Podcast Library are Building Healthy Relationships and Building Your Resilience. For upcoming programs check out the website: www.ms.org.au
Our MS Peer Support program is a great way for people living with multiple sclerosis, carers, family and friends to connect with and support each other. It’s also a great way to make new friends!

We offer MS Peer Support through a variety of channels, and it’s completely free to participate.

Our current groups are listed below. If you can’t find a group that suits you, please contact MS Connect (Freecall 1800 042 138 or email msconnect@ms.org.au) to register your interest and discuss alternative options.

Where are our face-to-face Peer support groups?
*Please note due to the implications of COVID-19 Face-to-Face Peer Support Groups are cancelled until further notice, but we encourage you to contact MS Connect on 1800 042 138 between 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday or email msconnect@ms.org.au to join one of our groups online or over the phone.

MS Telegroups
Telegroups are an effective way of connecting people by phone who have a common need. Telegroups meet by telephone rather than in person.

Current Telegroups
- **Under 30s group** First Friday of every month - 12.30pm – 1.30pm
- **Men's support group** First Thursday of the month – 1.30pm - 2.30pm
  Last Tuesday of the month – 12.00pm – 1.00pm
- **Women's support group** Fourth Monday of the month – 12.30pm - 1.30pm
- **Women in 40 to 64 group** Third Tuesday of the month – 1.30pm - 2.30pm
- **Over 65's group** First Tuesday of the month – 10.30am – 11.30am
- **Family and friends telegroup** First Tuesday of the month – 7.30pm - 8.30pm
- **General support groups** Second Monday of the month – 7.00pm - 8.00pm
  Second Tuesday of the month – 7.00pm - 8.00pm
- **Mums with MS support group** Second Tuesday of the month – 1.00pm - 2.00pm
- **After hours group for working people** Second Wednesday of the month – 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Facebook MS Peer Support
Online MS Peer Support is a great way to make connections from the comfort of your own home, or on the go, no matter where you live. Online support leads to better self-care and a stronger sense of wellness. Plus, it’s a great way to make a new group of friends outside of your usual networks!

We have set up a number of private, supportive pages to provide Online MS Peer Support. Our role is purely to set up the page, then it is moderated by trained MS Peer Support volunteers. Our online communities are built on mutual respect and emotional support – they are not designed for medical advice.

Upcoming Programs for Your Calender
**Telelinks** are phone-based, short-term Peer Support programs facilitated by the MS Peer Support Coordinators. Six sessions weekly, and each session is 90 minutes long. Guest speakers on topics agreed by the members prompt discussion and learning. They’re really suitable when joining an ongoing group doesn’t suit your needs, or the whole idea is brand new.

- **Carer’s Telelink** Wednesdays 22 July to 26 August 1.00pm - 2.30pm
- **Taking Control of your MS** (for those that have been diagnosed over 3 years and are experiencing changes or navigating a relapse) Thursdays 6 August to 10 September 12.30pm - 2.00pm