

PHI would like to extend our warmest welcome to our newest members from Polio Outreach of Washington. Following the example of the Michigan Polio Network, POOW recently made the decision to cease operations, donating their remaining assets to PHI to meet legal requirements in exchange for PHI extending one-year memberships to their remaining active members.

While PHI is pleased to offer our services to our newest members, we were also glad to hear that some of the local chapters will continue to meet and provide support informally. PHI heard from the leaders of two of those groups.

Rhonda Whitehead ♦ Everett

For 23 years I have had the honor, privilege, and joy of being a leader of a post-polio support group, and it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. What can be more fulfilling than helping others improve their quality of life?

The continuing journey to reach that goal, as we move through various stages of growth and development, is both complex and rewarding for me and for the members of our group.

Recently, rather than wanting more education on polio and post-polio syndrome, we are needing to be reminded of solutions to significant problems we are still experiencing. The reassurance that there is ongoing research being conducted for the benefit of all polio survivors across the world gives great comfort to us.

Our group's membership has gone from around 43 people per meeting to around 29. I try to give assurance that no matter what changes occur in our group, we can always continue to stay in touch and give and receive support and friendship to each other.

I have found that most of the polio survivors that I have come to know are caring, accomplished individuals dedicated to accepting, learning, and adapting to whatever is needed for them to meet their physical, emotional and mental polio needs, thus improving their quality of life!

Marlys Tron ♦ Tacoma

I have chaired the Tacoma, Washington/Pierce County Post-Polio Support Group for approximately 18 years. This continues to be something I enjoy thanks to some good help.

Currently we average 15-18 in attendance and meet ten months out of the year. We have an occasional speaker, a small spring raffle, group discussions and/or a "fun" event periodically like a white elephant exchange or Bingo for a small prize.

A newsletter is sent to members twice annually announcing programs and volunteers for refreshments on non-potluck gatherings.

Distance, age and reliance on public transportation have prevented some people from attending. Also, some simply feel they know enough about polio.

Over the years, our group has had some deaths with few new attendees. As with most polio groups, we are an older group; anyone younger than 70 is rare. In the future, this group will obviously become smaller, but we will adjust to changes as needed. ■