

## Neuropsychology and Parkinson's

BY DR. RYAN JONES, PSYD

**W**hile Parkinson's disease (PD) is often recognized for its effects on movement, many people with PD also experience changes in thinking, mood, and behavior. These changes are common and can occur at any stage of the disease, sometimes even before movement problems begin. Understanding these changes can help you recognize them early and work with your healthcare team to manage them effectively.

50-70% of people with PD have some degree of cognitive impairment to warrant diagnosis of a cognitive disorder, such as mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. Cognitive changes in PD typically develop slowly. Some people experience only mild changes that don't significantly affect daily life, while others may develop more noticeable problems over time. PD can effect a number of thinking abilities, including processing speed/reaction time, attention, memory, language and comprehension, visuospatial processing (spatial awareness and depth perception, and executive functioning (plan, organize, and completing a task; judgement; and switching between activities).

Emotional and behavioral changes are among the most common non-motor symptoms of PD and can significantly impact quality of life. Depression affects 30-35% of people with PD and can occur at any stage, even before movement symptoms appear. Anxiety is also very common, affecting a similar percentage of people with PD. Apathy (lack of motivation or interest in activities), increased impulsivity (e.g. gambling, shopping, eating), and visual hallucinations can also occur with PD.

A neuropsychological evaluation is a comprehensive assessment of your cognitive abilities, mood, and behavior conducted by a specially trained psychologist. You will meet with the neuropsychologist for an initial intake to describe changes and obtain a thorough history. You will then complete cognitive tests, such as remembering stories, completing puzzles, etc. You don't need to study for these tests since they are a test of your innate cognitive abilities and not school/academic tests. Your performances are compared to similar aged individuals, which helps with determining if the cognitive changes observed are due to getting older, PD, or something else. You will also complete questionnaires to get a better understanding of the degree of mood and behavioral changes. The evaluation typically takes several hours and may be completed over several sessions.



A neuropsychological evaluation can identify subtle cognitive changes before they become noticeable in daily life. Early detection allows you and your healthcare team to plan ahead and implement strategies to maintain your independence and quality of life. The evaluation provides a detailed profile of your specific strengths and weaknesses. This personalized information helps you understand which abilities are affected and which remain strong, allowing you to use your strengths to compensate for areas of difficulty. Results can also inform treatment planning, including possible medication options for cognitive declines as well as addressing mood/behavioral changes and safety issues (e.g. driving, financial/medical decision-making, etc). Repeat evaluations over time can track how your cognitive abilities change, helping your healthcare team adjust treatment as needed and providing important information about disease progression. Understanding your specific cognitive profile helps family members and caregivers provide better support. They can learn which tasks might be challenging for you and how to assist in ways that maintain your dignity and independence.

Cognitive, behavioral, and mood changes are a common part of PD, but they don't affect everyone in the same way or to the same degree. By understanding these potential changes with a neuropsychological evaluation and working closely with your healthcare team, you can develop strategies to manage symptoms and maintain your quality of life. If you are interested in having a neuropsychological evaluation, you can talk with your treatment providers about submitting a referral.

## OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks is to educate, support research and improve the quality of life for people with Parkinson's disease.

### *To improve the quality of life*

PGO proudly sponsors multiple exercise and wellness classes for people with Parkinson's and their care partners. Wellness classes help those with PD stay mobile and independent through a variety of physical activities, exercises, and movements specifically designed to improve PD symptoms. PGO also promotes and encourages support groups that help families approach the mental and social aspects of the disease. The groups provide a sense of togetherness so they do not feel alone in their journey.

### *To provide education*

PGO provides education through one-on-one assistance by phone, email, or in-person. Group education is offered through support group meetings. Support group leaders will often have guest speakers from around the area such as healthcare professionals, social workers, wellness instructors, etc. speak on various topics relating to the disease. During Parkinson's Awareness Month in April, PGO hosts an annual resource fair where families may visit with local businesses and organizations to learn about available PD resources. In addition, PGO also partners with the Parkinson's Foundation Heartland Chapter and other organizations to co-host several learning events on different PD topics throughout the year.

### *To support our community*

For over 25 years, PGO has worked tirelessly to help people with Parkinson's disease. PGO and its supporters provided the vision to establish the first clinic for Parkinson's patients known as Parkinson's Clinic of the Ozarks in 2001. In 2015 the clinic moved to the West tower at Cox Medical Center South becoming part of the Jared Neuroscience Center. Through ongoing community collaborations, classes and education offered, PGO provides access to programs and services for the welfare of Parkinsonians, their care partners, families, and friends.

# SUPPORT GROUPS

## FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE & CARE PARTNERS

**Some people may have difficulty coping with Parkinson's disease.**

It may be hard for them to ask their doctor questions or talk about their problems with family or friends. Support groups can help keep people up to date about the latest changes and developments in the disease and aid in dealing with day-to-day activities. They also provide an opportunity to discuss experiences and feelings and to share solutions to common problems.

### **THE BODYSMITH**

1136 E. St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
417-865-0500

**Meetings:** Second Saturday of the month at 11 a.m.

### **JOPLIN MERCY**

100 Mercy Way,  
Conference Room 1  
Joplin, MO 65804  
417-556-2263

**Meetings:** Mondays at 3:30 p.m.

### **COXHEALTH PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP FOR SENIORS**

Meyer Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Hospital  
3535 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65807  
417-269-3616

This group is available for caregivers and those who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease that are age 65+.

**Meetings:** Third Wednesday of the month from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

### **FAIR ACRES FAMILY YMCA**

2600 Grand Ave.  
Carthage, MO 64836  
417-358-1070

**Meetings:** Third Wednesday of the month at 11:30 a.m.

### **WOMEN'S ONLY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP**

This group is for women caring for someone with Parkinson's disease. CoxHealth Advantage Care Clinic  
1819 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65807  
417-269-3616

**Meetings:** Fourth Tuesday of every month at 3 PM.

### **SHARLIN HEALTH & NEUROLOGY**

**Meetings:** Last Wednesday of the month at 12:30 PM.  
Email [valerie@sharlinfxmed.com](mailto:valerie@sharlinfxmed.com) for Zoom meeting link.

### **PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP - BRANSON WEST AREA**

11016 State Hwy 76, Ste 11  
Branson West, MO 65737  
785-643-7466

**Meetings:** First Thursday of the month at 12 p.m.

---

## ABOUT PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Nearly one million people in the U.S. are living with Parkinson's disease, and over 90,000 more are diagnosed each year. Many of these call the Ozarks home. Parkinson's disease is a slowly progressive neurological disease generally associated with tremor or trembling of the arms and legs, stiffness and rigidity of the muscles, slowness of the movement, and impaired balance and coordination. As these symptoms become more pronounced, patients may have difficulty walking or completing other simple tasks. This disease not only affects the patient, but also his or her family.



# Thank you for your donation!

Sincere appreciation for assisting Parkinson's Group in our mission to provide education, support research and improve the quality of life for people with Parkinson's Disease.



**Gifts to the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks are tax deductible. To learn more, visit us online at [parkinsonsgroup.org](http://parkinsonsgroup.org).**

## IN SUPPORT OF PGO

James Reed  
Marjorie Francis  
Harold & Judy Schupbach  
Dr. Bonnie Slavych  
Norma Blades

## SUPPORTING THE SUPPORT GROUPS

There are six in-person Parkinson's Support Groups in southwest Missouri. While PGO is heavily involved in promoting and encouraging these groups, we do not manage or oversee any of them. Support groups are headed by our gracious community partners such as The Bodysmith, CoxHealth, Fair Acres Family YMCA, Mercy Joplin, etc. Groups may be facilitated by one person or by many and leader(s) may be volunteers or employees of the business or organization hosting the group.

### So how does PGO help these support groups?

- **Promotion and guidance.** We strongly encourage families, whether newly diagnosed or several years into this journey, to attend a support group. It's important not to face the disease alone, especially when questions arise. All support groups are displayed on our website, Facebook page, and quarterly newsletter. Meeting date, time, location, and contact information are listed for each community partner.
- **Communication.** In addition to spreading the word about each support group, we also help share announcements or updates/changes to the meetings. While support group leaders will often contact members by phone or email, they'll also notify us of inclement weather postponements or holiday cancellations. This information is then posted on our Facebook page for PD families.
- **Bridging connections.** Support groups will usually have guest speakers from around the area such as healthcare professionals, social workers, wellness instructors, etc. speak on various topics relating to the disease. While this part is managed and arranged by the support group leaders, we're happy to connect them with potential businesses or organizations that have expressed interest in speaking with the PD community.

### How can I help the support groups?

- **Attend meetings regularly.** Consistent attendance boosts group morale and provides ongoing peer support. Sharing personal experiences and fostering connections can have a big impact.
- **Volunteer.** Offer to co-lead meetings, help with discussion topics, find guest speakers, or even promoting the group to others.
- **Check on members.** Reach out to fellow members outside of regular meetings to check on them, especially those who may be isolated.
- **Start a group.** If none exists in your area, reach out to local businesses and organizations that may be interested in co-creating a group or take the reins and start your own local PD support group.

## PARKINSON'S GROUP OF THE OZARKS

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dawn Davis, President  
June Kincheloe, Vice President  
Justin Milam, Treasurer  
Molly McGrady, Secretary  
Pat Austin  
Jeanne Carpenter  
Julie Cravey-Cassity  
Katherine Douglas-Johnson  
Tricia Holt  
Don Smillie  
Shauna Smith Yates  
Shawna Tindall

### ADVISORY MEMBERS

Dr. Ryan Jones  
Lisa Potthoff

### HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

Harry Beckett  
Joanne Bourbon  
Mel DeVries  
David Huff  
Dr. Mark D. McLean  
Dick Smith  
Charlene Stade

Our board of directors come from a variety of backgrounds, including medical, financial, education, legal, and wellness. Each member brings a unique set of skills that helps our organization achieve its mission.

## CONTACT PGO

417-814-6067  
[info@Parkinsonsgroup.org](mailto:info@Parkinsonsgroup.org)





# Cheers to 2026!

## THE NEWS YEAR BRINGS MUCH TO CELEBRATE AT THE BODYSMITH

BY SHAUNA SMITH-YATES, OWNER OF THE BODYSMITH

**T**his year we have much to celebrate at The Bodysmith. January marks 15 successful years of offering Pilates and fitness to the Springfield community, March of this year will mark 10 years of Rock Steady Boxing at The Bodysmith, and The Bodysmith now owns the building it has called home for the past 8 years.

The Bodysmith opened its original doors in January of 2011 downtown on Walnut Street. The beautiful historic building provided us with 2 floors and at the time an unfinished basement. Over the first two years, in addition to Pilates, we were able to add massage, Yoga, Kettlebells, and Tai Chi classes. Not long after, came an opportunity to add personal training and boxing for fitness. The unfinished basement was finished and provided a pretty cool looking backdrop for our own “fight club”. Many of our Pilates instructors enjoyed learning how to box, work the speed bag, and get a great strength and cardio workout that complemented the core work, flexibility, and mobility that Pilates provides.

One Sunday morning I was watching CBS with Jane Paullie. She had a moving story about her husband with Parkinson’s Disease and how a program called Rock Steady Boxing was helping him “fight back” against his symptoms and the disease’s progression. As Pilates Instructors with 500-hour certifications, we learn a lot about and have experience working with individuals with conditions and special populations. This program and her story moved me. I knew it was something we could, and needed, to bring to The Bodysmith.

Three of us instructors traveled to Indianapolis in March of 2016 for the coaches training. Before we even



returned, we had our first newly diagnosed client calling us wanting to sign up for the program. We were off and running building a community with Rock Steady Boxing at The Bodysmith.

In 2018 the building on Walnut Street sold and we needed to find a new home. Thanks to one of our Rock Steady boxers, Jim Morris, and his cornerman Neal Wood, we were able to secure our new space at 1136 E St Louis St. Jim and Neal made sure that the building was remodeled to exactly meet all of our unique needs. We soon added our popular Pilates for PD classes and with the help of the PGO our Rockin’ the Rhythm movement class as well as gained more coaches certified in Rock Steady Boxing.

This past year Morris Loan made it possible for us to secure our future on St. Louis Street. The Bodysmith was able to purchase the building from Morris Loan. We look forward to celebrating many more successful years at 1136 E St Louis St and continuing to offer our programs to our PD community.



# The Benefits of Yoga for People Living with Parkinson's Disease

BY DAWN DAVIS, REGISTERED YOGA INSTRUCTOR

**P**arkinson's disease is a progressive neurological disorder that affects movement, balance, coordination, and overall quality of life. While medications and medical treatments play an important role in managing symptoms, complementary therapies such as yoga have become increasingly valuable for individuals living with Parkinson's. Yoga offers a holistic approach that supports both the body and mind, helping people maintain strength, mobility, and emotional well-being.

One of the most important benefits of yoga for individuals with Parkinson's disease is improved balance and stability. Parkinson's often causes postural instability and increases the risk of falls. Many yoga poses focus on strengthening the core muscles and improving body awareness, which can help individuals feel more grounded and steady in their movements. Practicing balance poses in a safe, supportive environment can gradually build confidence and reduce fear of falling.

Yoga can also help improve flexibility and mobility. Parkinson's disease commonly causes muscle stiffness and rigidity, making everyday movements more difficult. Gentle stretching and controlled movements in yoga help loosen tight muscles and increase range of motion. Over time, participants often find that activities such as walking, turning, or reaching become easier and more comfortable.

Another significant benefit is increased strength. Certain yoga poses engage muscles throughout the body, particularly in the legs, back, and core. Building strength is essential for maintaining independence and supporting functional movement. Stronger muscles can help individuals perform daily activities such as standing up from a chair, climbing stairs, or maintaining good posture.

Beyond the physical benefits, yoga also supports mental and emotional health. Living with Parkinson's disease can bring feelings of stress, frustration, anxiety, or depression. Yoga incorporates breathing exercises and mindfulness

techniques that help calm the nervous system and promote relaxation. These practices encourage individuals to focus on the present moment, which can reduce stress and improve overall emotional well-being.

Yoga can also enhance cognitive focus and body awareness. Parkinson's disease may affect concentration and coordination, but yoga encourages intentional movement and mindful attention to the body. This mind-body connection can help individuals become more aware of how they move and adjust their posture or balance more effectively.

Another often overlooked benefit is the sense of community that yoga classes can provide. Participating in group yoga sessions designed for individuals with Parkinson's allows people to connect with others who share similar experiences. This supportive environment can reduce feelings of isolation and foster encouragement, motivation, and friendship.

Importantly, yoga can be adapted to meet the needs of individuals at different stages of Parkinson's disease. Chair yoga, modified poses, and slower-paced classes allow participants to practice safely while still receiving the benefits of movement and mindfulness. Instructors trained to work with neurological conditions can tailor exercises to accommodate tremors, balance challenges, or limited mobility.

Research continues to show that regular exercise is one of the most powerful tools for managing Parkinson's symptoms, and yoga is a gentle yet effective option for many individuals. By improving balance, flexibility, strength, mental clarity, and emotional well-being, yoga can help people living with Parkinson's maintain independence and enjoy a better quality of life.

While yoga is not a cure for Parkinson's disease, it can be an empowering and supportive practice that helps individuals move, breathe, and live with greater confidence and resilience.

# Helping Your Loved One with Parkinson's Be Heard

*Simple ways care partners can support stronger speech*

BY MOLLY MCGRADY, MHS, CCC-SLP

**M**any people living with Parkinson's experience changes in their speech. Their voice may become softer, words may sound mumbled, or they may speak more quickly than they realize. These changes are common and can be frustrating for both the person with Parkinson's and their family. The good news is that care partners play an important role in helping their loved one communicate more clearly and confidently.

---

*It may feel polite to nod along when you don't understand, but pretending can make communication harder over time.*

---

People with Parkinson's often do not realize how soft their voice has become. What feels like a normal volume to them may be difficult for others to hear. Gentle, specific reminders such as "Can you say that a little louder?" or "I didn't catch that," can make a meaningful difference. If speech feels rushed, encouraging them to slow down can improve clarity. Short, supportive cues work better than long explanations. Think of yourself as a coach offering encouragement, not criticism.

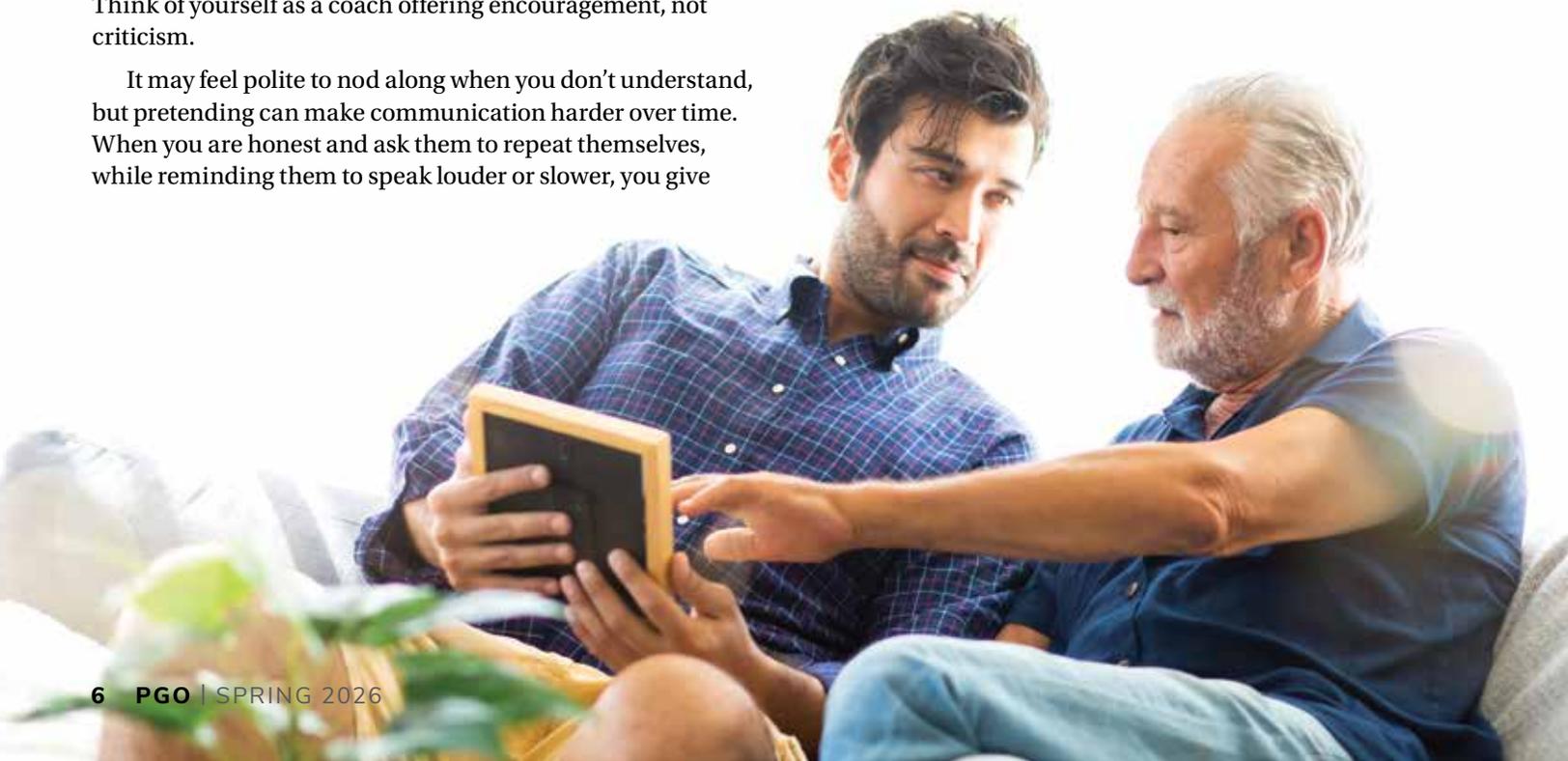
It may feel polite to nod along when you don't understand, but pretending can make communication harder over time. When you are honest and ask them to repeat themselves, while reminding them to speak louder or slower, you give

them a chance to practice important skills. Consistently feeling misunderstood can lead someone to speak less, which may increase frustration or isolation. Supportive, honest feedback helps keep communication strong.

Speech therapy can also make a significant difference. A speech-language pathologist can teach strategies to improve loudness and clarity. One well-known, research-supported program is **LSVT LOUD**, which focuses on training the voice to speak louder with intention. After therapy, continued practice is essential. The PGO-sponsored maintenance group, **LSVT LOUD for Life**, offers ongoing support to help individuals maintain their progress while staying connected with others.

Simple changes at home such as turning off background noise, making eye contact, and moving closer before speaking can also help. Most importantly, celebrate the effort. Comments like, "That was nice and loud," or "I heard you clearly," build confidence and motivation.

Communication is more than words, it is connection. With patience, gentle reminders, honest feedback, and encouragement to keep practicing, care partners can help their loved one stay heard, understood, and engaged in the conversations that matter most.



# FREE GROUP CLASSES & ACTIVITIES IN THE OZARKS

As part of our mission, PGO is proud to sponsor multiple exercise and wellness classes for people with Parkinson's.

## PD DANCE

**THURSDAYS AT 3 PM**

The Bodysmith  
1136 E. St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
417-865-0500

## YOGA FOR PARKINSON'S

**TUESDAYS AT 10:30 AM**

*Provided thanks to a community grant from the Parkinson's Foundation.*

King's Way United  
Methodist Church  
2401 S. Lone Pine Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65804  
417-209-5418



## PD SPEAK, SWALLOW & LEARN

**TUESDAYS AT 1:30 PM & 6 PM**

Virtual option available.  
MSU – Ann Kampeter Sciences Hall  
509 E. Cherry St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
501-412-5621

## PARKINSON'S EXERCISE THERAPY

**TUESDAYS AT 2 PM &  
SATURDAYS AT 10 AM**

F8 Training and Wellness Studio  
2048 S. Stewart Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65804  
417-720-1057

## PILATES

**WEDNESDAYS AT 12 PM & 1 PM**

A physical assessment is required to start this class so make sure to call before joining.

The Bodysmith  
1136 E St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
417-865-0500



## PARKINSON'S EXERCISE GROUP

**THURSDAYS AT 11 AM**

11016 E. St. Hwy 76 Ste. 10  
Branson West, MO 65737  
417-357-6134

## LOUD FOR LIFE SPEECH THERAPY

**THURSDAYS AT 4:00 PM**

*Completion of LSVT LOUD is required before joining.*

The Downtown Church  
314 E. Walnut St.  
Springfield MO 65804  
417-763-9722



## DRUMMING THERAPY & MUSIC THERAPY CLASSES

**THURSDAYS AT 10:30 AM  
& FRIDAYS AT 9:30 or 11:30 AM**

No musical experience necessary.

Caregivers welcome.

Center for Music Therapy & Wellness

Drury University - Springfield Hall  
Springfield, MO 65802  
417-873-7877

## PARKINSON'S INDOOR CYCLING

**FRIDAYS AT 12 PM**

Cox Meyer Center  
3545 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65807  
417-844-3443



## KARA DUNN MEMORIAL ROCK STEADY BOXING

Days and times vary. A physical assessment is required before joining. Visit [www.bodysmithpilates.com](http://www.bodysmithpilates.com) or call for more info.

The Bodysmith  
1136 E St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
417-865-0500





**Parkinson's Group**  
of the Ozarks

1136 E. St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806

**SAVE THE DATE**

# Parkinson's Resource Fair

Saturday April 18<sup>th</sup> 2026 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

**EMPOWER: ABILITIES**

1450 W. Cambridge St., Springfield, MO 65807

Visit with local businesses and organizations to learn about programs  
and services centered around Parkinson's disease in the Ozarks.

Free Resources • Health & Wellness • Education  
Support • Planning for the Future  
and Much More!

**50/50  
Raffle**

**FREE  
TO ATTEND!**

**Mini  
Learning  
Sessions**

**DOOR  
PRIZES!**

**FOOD  
TRUCK!**