



## Welcome!

by Lori Hartwell, weKAN President

Dear Friend,

I am excited to introduce the first issue of the **weKAN Live & Give** newsletter.

The title of this newsletter represents the core belief system of the Renal Support Network (RSN) and the weKAN Patient Activists—we can *live*, and give!

As weKAN Patient Activists, we believe that it is important to provide hope, encouragement and support to our peers. We need to help one another get through the trials and tribulations kidney disease can often present as well as advocate for the best possible care.

Stories of hope, ways to better your life, and ideas on how to help fellow patients will be the main thrust of our newsletter. *Our* newsletter—because “you” becomes “we”—unites fellow patients in our desire to improve the lives of chronic kidney disease survivors.

In my 35 years of living with kidney disease, I know that experience is the best teacher. As I have visited over 500 dialysis facilities and given presentations

in over 40 states, it is evident to me that there is a plethora of talent within the renal patient community. We need you! It is weKAN’s goal to help patients *help* patients.

weKAN Patient Activists work to empower fellow patients to make informed decisions about their care, to

weKAN promotes self-advocacy and self-determination.

become involved in policies that impact their life, and to speak up. By educating patients on how to

become actively involved in decisions affecting their lives, weKAN promotes *self-advocacy* and *self-determination*.

weKAN Patient Activists are already making a difference. We are getting to know our elected officials and educating them about kidney disease and what patients need to ensure quality care. We are planning patient education meetings around the country as well as being invited to participate as speakers. In addition, there are many “behind the scenes” committees that make decisions about our care. Several weKAN Patient Activists are participating on some of these committees and providing the patient’s perspective.

weKAN is a *small* group of Patient Activists with *big* ideas! Our wish is to inspire you and give you the tools that will help you make a difference in your community. “An illness is too demanding when you don’t have hope.”

It has been a privilege to work with so many dedicated Patient Activists who are truly making a difference! A special thanks to Shari Gilford for all her hard work in creating the layout of this newsletter. ☺

Chronically Yours,

Lori Hartwell

President and Founder of Renal Support Network

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

write to RSN

e-mail [info@renalnetwork.org](mailto:info@renalnetwork.org)

go to [www.renalnetwork.org](http://www.renalnetwork.org)

(Click on *Your Thoughts* in the Patient Action Center)

## Pushing Your Comfort Zone

by Sharon Pahlka

It is easy to get stuck in our comfort zones and limit the amazing possibilities we have in our lives.

Recently, I had a major life transition that pushed me to try new things.

I have been a member of Toastmasters for quite some time. I have learned that it is one of the best ways to improve your ability to communicate well, lose your fears of public speaking, and learn skills that will help you be more successful in whatever path you’ve chosen in life.

(Visit [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org) for more information about this helpful organization.)

I never thought I would have the courage to put my new skills to work. After some encouragement from fellow Toastmasters, I decided to enter a speech contest—which scared me to death! But, in the end, it was a great learning experience and I learned a lot about myself and how much my speaking has improved.

The audience responded well to my presentation and the experience opened “doors” that I never expected. This made me realize I have a powerful message to share with others.

Purposely stepping out of my comfort zone taught me (and is still teaching me) to carry that fearlessness into other areas of my life and to experience new and wonderful things. Every time I go through new “doors,” unexpected possibilities open up for me. And even though I feel uncomfortable much of the time, I continue because I have seen the benefits.

So try pushing your comfort zone. It is a powerful way to live. ☺



Sharon Pahlka has lived with kidney disease for over 30 years, 19 years on dialysis and the last 11 with a transplant from her brother. She is a Life Coach and speaker, specializing in coaching people with chronic health challenges. (Go to [www.lifeisagift.com](http://www.lifeisagift.com).) Her volunteer work includes speaking in schools about kidney disease, facilitating pre-dialysis education classes, and working with people in need through a formal program associated with her church. She likes adventure and travel. She’s crazy about her 2-year-old grandson.

**weKAN Live & Give** is a publication of the Renal Support Network, a patient-run non-profit organization whose mission is to identify and meet the non-medical needs of those affected by chronic kidney disease.

**weKAN Patient Activists** serve to mobilize, educate, motivate, and empower fellow chronic kidney disease survivors to advocate for themselves and for one another. Together we can make a difference.

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