



### **Paula McGinnis, Ambassador for MG in Southern IL and Hawaii**

As I viewed the clouds outside of the airplane window, after attending the 2017 National Myasthenia Gravis of America Conference, I had “I AM MG STRONG,” come into my thoughts. My thoughts were filled with the positive, not negative, impact that MG has had on my life and what has actually made me MG Strong. The primary conclusion is all about awareness.

I thought that I had my life all planned out, WRONG! Life can change in an instant from what we had planned or even dreamed about. Life can change drastically with the rare autoimmune disease, Myasthenia Gravis. I have learned that I AM MG STRONG, because when I am weak, I am strengthened by keeping my faith, perseverance and positive attitude through the adversities.

I was a happy, energetic mid-fifties year old, and I ran five to seven miles seven days a week, eating healthy including drinking plenty of water. I would often run extra or mow the lawn in the evening to destress from working in the medical field. I was a full time neurology RN, wife, mother, grandmother, and daughter caregiver of elderly parents.

Yes, I walk the shoes of Myasthenia Gravis, but it is not the end of the world. Through my persevering personality I stepped out of my comfort zone and decided to make a difference by becoming an advocate for MG in my region in 2014, where there had not been any awareness, and I began the Southern IL Walk. Now as an Ambassador I take bringing awareness anywhere my journey leads me, even on vacation. It is because I am MG strong that I took my awareness with me to Hawaii on vacation and began the first MG walk in the state of Hawaii in February 2017.

I am a person about the principle of things, and I never did like change, but the change made by having MG has made my mind MG Strong, even when my body is weak. I have learned to stand firm as my own advocate, persevere, and most of all continue the journey as an Ambassador for Myasthenia Gravis wherever my journey may lead me.

I am MG Strong because I have a very supportive family, friends, acquaintances, and a very supportive husband. I am thankful every day that my husband is my best friend, and I consider him my MG caregiver hero, if I need one. If anyone, in my life, truly understands MG and walks in the shoes with me, it is him. As I journey through life with MG I have realized the importance of the expression, “Take time to smell the roses.”

I continue to stay MG Strong because as an Ambassador it allows me to share awareness with others, who do not know about MG, and gives me the opportunity to let other MG patients know that they are not alone in the world with the rare neuromuscular disease.

*Paula*