



# Keep Smiling

A NEWSLETTER FOR KIDS ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



Monkeys, horses, cats, and pigs have all been trained to perform helpful tasks! They can be trained to pick things up off the floor, bring things (such as shoes or a purse), give support while walking with their owners, open and close doors, and be loving companions.

Did you know that some animals can be wonderful helpers? Dogs are perhaps the best-known animal helpers. You have probably seen guide dogs for people who are blind, but some people with MS also have trained service animals that help them every day.

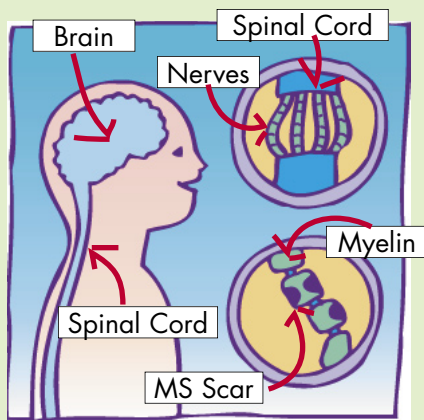
Some people with MS have monkeys as helpers. A special type of small monkey called a capuchin monkey can be trained to help its owner do many tasks.

# MS

**Multiple sclerosis** (MS for short) is a disease that affects the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord).

The brain is like a computer that tells the body what to do. The spinal cord is like a thick wire attached to the computer. Messages travel from the brain, along the spinal cord, to the other parts of the body.

When a person has MS,



the covering (myelin) that protects the nerves gets damaged. Scars form where the myelin is damaged. As messages travel from the brain, they sometimes get stuck or slowed down by these scars. When this happens,

the other parts of the body can't always do what the brain is telling them to do.

Sometimes people with MS have trouble seeing. Sometimes their arms and legs feel weak, or their skin feels "tingly" (like pins and needles). Sometimes they lose their balance, or sometimes it's hard to walk. MS problems like these are called "symptoms." Symptoms of MS can come and go...we don't know exactly why. Sometimes you don't even notice the symptoms. At other times they are pretty obvious. It's hard for a person with MS to know from one day to the next how he or she will feel. That is why we say that MS is unpredictable.

**Interesting Fact:**  
Multiple means many.  
Sclerosis means scars.  
So, multiple sclerosis means "many scars."

Keep S'myelin Readers:  
**WE WANT YOU!**

We love to publish your pictures, stories, poems, and interviews about MS. Please send us your work! Tell us how your family learns about MS together, how you feel about having MS in your family, what advice you would give other kids about having a mom or dad with MS, how you help your mom or dad, and whom you talk with about MS.



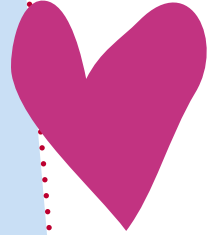
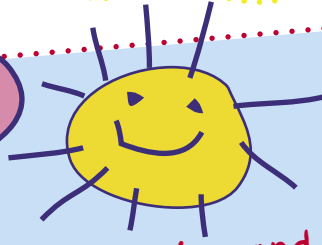
Send your stories and pictures to:  
**KEEP S'MYELIN,**  
National MS Society  
700 Broadway,  
Suite 810,  
Denver, CO 80203  
or e-mail them to  
[keepsmylein@nmss.org](mailto:keepsmylein@nmss.org).





## READER-SUBMITTED STORIES

### Why We Love Our Mom



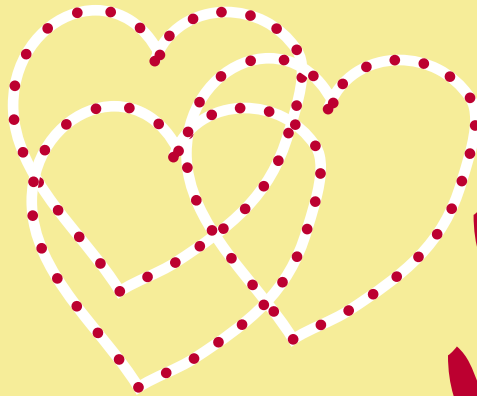
**Hi!** Our names are Jimmy and Ariana. We are nine and ten years old. Our mom has MS. She has a very good sense of humor and she tries to make everything fair. Also, she does a lot for us. One great thing about her is that when we see her smile, she makes our day go great! The other great thing about her is that even though she has MS, she still does everything with us and there is nothing to stop her from doing anything. No matter what happens, we will always love our mom!

JIMMY ARIANA

### My Mom Loves Us

by Nicholas

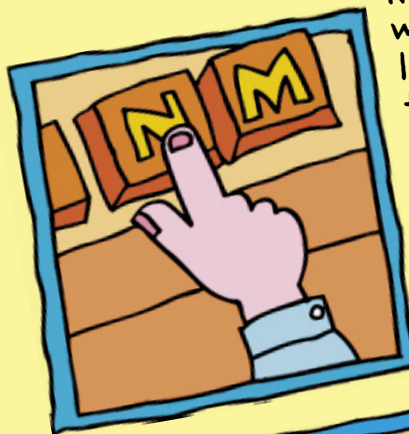
She is a hero because she does a lot for us!  
She makes sure we get up on time to catch the bus.  
She cleans the house and all of our mess  
Even though she has MS.  
She takes a shot every day  
Just so we can go and play.  
She also volunteers her time  
And doesn't even make a dime!  
And after doing all this stuff  
She even has some time for us.  
She is my kind of hero  
And could never be a zero!



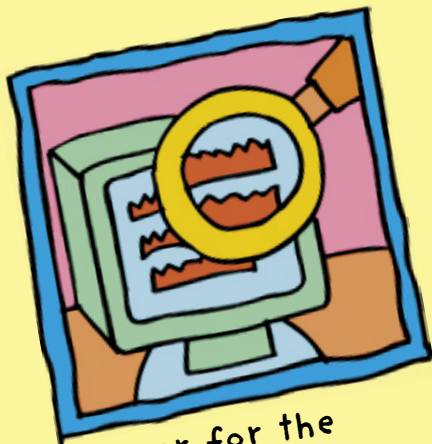
# Gadgets and ★ Devices

## That Make Life Easier

There are many gadgets and devices that can make life easier for a person with a disability. Here are some examples of things that help people continue to do the things they like to do, even though they may have to do them in a different way.



A computer keyboard with extra large keys, for someone who has trouble seeing or whose hands are not very steady.



An enlarger for the computer screen for someone who has blurry vision.



Wooden blocks to put under the feet of a couch or chair to raise it and make it easier for a person to sit down and stand up.



A shower stool with a padded seat so a person can sit down while taking a shower.



Can you think of a gadget that might make life easier or safer for someone with MS?



Here are some cool inventions by kids who have a mom or dad with MS.

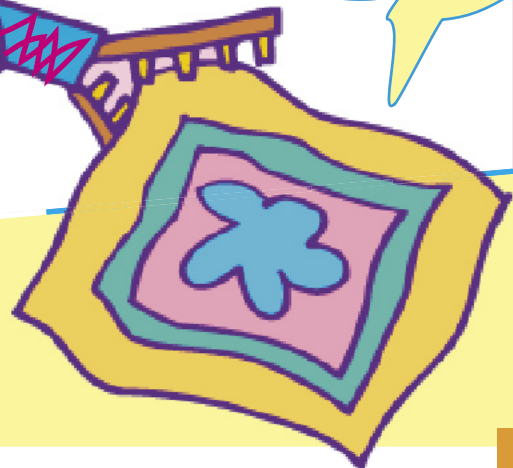
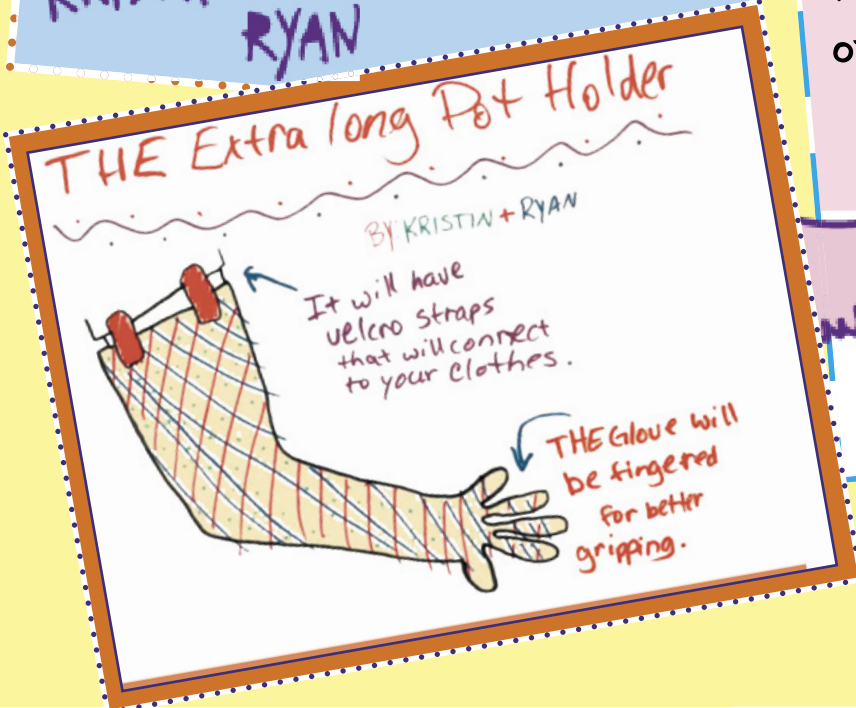
When our Mom cooks she sometimes burns herself because her arms are numb. Here is a pot holder that would cover her whole arm. It would have velcro straps so it would not slip off. Most pot holders are like mittens. It would be easier for my mom to hold hot things if it had fingers.

KRISTIN AND RYAN

When my mom doesn't feel well, she has trouble moving and can't reach her blanket and pull it up over her feet. The Blanket Grabber solves this problem! It can grab other things too.

HEATHER

Here's another invention by Heather. It's a "Blanket Grabber".





# Kelsey's Tale



My name is Kelsey. I am eleven years old and my dad has MS. My dad was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000. The first six months were really hard. My dad is an anesthesiologist (a doctor) and he had to quit his job because of his double vision. He couldn't drive or walk straight. Now that the years have passed, he is doing better and can join in family activities. He became the head of an MS discussion group in our town. Every other week I tag along. It is nice to know all the different ways you can be affected by MS. (See if there is an MS discussion group for your relative to go to!)



My dad can't work, so he does volunteer work. He got a puppy and is training her to be a search and rescue dog. MS is one of the sad things in our lives, but be thankful that scientists are finding ways to help and cure MS.

Kelsey

Where do cowboy boots go in the summer?

Boot camp

JOKES

What kind of mail is hard to read at night?

Blackmail

MICHAEL CRYSTAL AND BENJAMIN  
**S'MYELIN KIDS**







PARENTS' PULL OUT

WHAT IS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

Occupational therapists (OTs) are rehabilitation professionals who analyze how MS affects the way an individual performs daily tasks. The therapist and the individual with MS work together to develop new ways of performing daily activities that enhance independence, quality of life, and safety.



OTs:

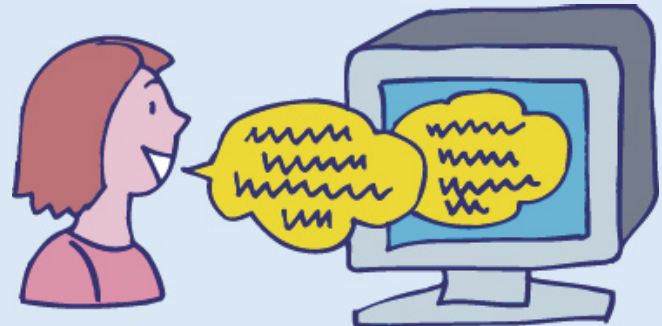
- Teach ways to adapt equipment or use special equipment and devices to perform daily activities such as writing, cooking or personal care.
- Assess and treat arm and hand function to improve the individual's ability to perform daily tasks.
- Suggest ways to modify the home or workplace to improve accessibility

- and safety and enhance independence.
- Suggest ways to modify activities and plan tasks so as to manage fatigue and conserve energy.
- Assess needs for mobility aids.
- Refer individuals to resources that may help to support and enhance work, family, and community life.

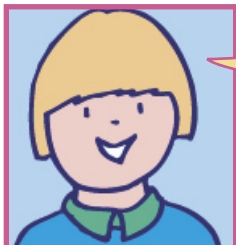


# DOING THINGS

**W**e all like to do things the way we are used to doing them—that's simply human nature. When MS interferes with a person's ability to carry out important activities at home or at work, anger, frustration, and sadness are common reactions.



**G**iven how strong those feelings can sometimes be, a person may need to take some time to get used to the idea of having to do things differently before being able to think creatively about making the necessary changes. In other words, he or she may need to grieve over any changes or losses that the MS has caused before beginning to do things differently.



KEEP S'MYELIN is available on line at [www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org)  
You can e-mail us at: [keepsmyelin@nmss.org](mailto:keepsmyelin@nmss.org)

# D I F F E R E N T L Y

**S**ometimes parents with MS worry about how their children will feel about mom or dad having to do things differently—for example, using a mobility aid to get around or hand controls to drive a car or voice-activated computer software to do office work or send e-mails. Younger kids tend to be more flexible than adults; they aren't as uncomfortable with new technology or new ways of doing things as adults tend to be.

**A**s you read this issue of *Keep S'myelin* with your children, keep some paper and crayons handy! Share with them some of those pesky tasks that you're finding a bit more challenging and ask them to put on their thinking caps.

**P**erhaps together you can come up with some new strategies or 'inventions' to help you accomplish those tasks. In addition to providing time for some fun and creative problem-solving, this will give your kids a better understanding of what makes some of those tasks more difficult or more time-consuming for you.



How can you subscribe to *Keep S'myelin*?

Call 1-800-FIGHT-MS  
1-800-344-4867



You will be connected to your chapter. Ask them to add your name to the *Keep S'myelin* mailing list. **IT'S FREE!** *Keep S'myelin* is published quarterly by the National MS Society. **Past issues are also available at your chapter.**



PARENTS' PULL OUT

# RESOURCES



## for Animal Helpers

**Assistance Dogs International** ([www.adionline.org](http://www.adionline.org)) is a coalition of not-for-profit organizations that train and place assistance dogs. Members subscribe to the organization's ethics and standards.

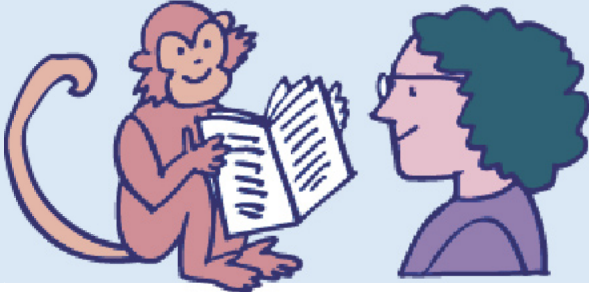


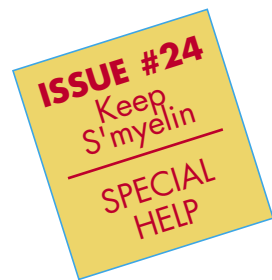
**International Association of Assistance Dog Partners** ([www.iaadp.org](http://www.iaadp.org)) provides education to anyone involved with service dogs and links to user groups as well as links to user groups and important educational services, including a picture gallery showing assistance animals at work. Does not list trainers.

**American Dog Trainers Network** ([www.inch.com/~dogs/training.html](http://www.inch.com/~dogs/training.html)) lists service dog trainers by state.



**Monkey Helpers** ([www.monkeyhelpers.org](http://www.monkeyhelpers.org)) provides information about capuchin monkey as helpers for people with disabilities.





Contact your National MS Society chapter at 1-800-FIGHTMS (1-800-344-4867).



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**Keep S'myelin** is a quarterly publication for children with parents or other relatives with multiple sclerosis. It is produced by the **National Multiple Sclerosis Society**. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is proud to be a source of information about multiple sclerosis. Our comments are based on professional advice, published experience and expert opinion, but do not represent therapeutic recommendations or prescriptions. For specific information and advice, consult a qualified physician.

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*The mission of the  
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end the devastating effects  
of multiple sclerosis.*