

# STROKE MATTERS

WINTER 2021

Minnesota Stroke Association



Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance  
Minnesota Stroke Association  
2277 Highway 36 West, Suite 200  
Roseville, MN 55113-3830  
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

# Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

By David King



Dear Stroke Matters Readers,

I was looking back on last year's winter letter and marvelling at how positive I sounded in the face of the world changing events our world was experiencing. I came across as downright optimistic. And it got me thinking about optimism and hope and positivity and how those things can be hard to come by when life keeps throwing challenges and obstacles in your way.

Where do we find our reserves of hope when we can't find them in ourselves? Sometimes, if we're lucky, that hope comes from our loved ones. Frequently, we rely on close friends to keep us looking up.

Often, we need professional assistance in the form of doctors or therapists to help us find hope. Here at the Minnesota Stroke Association, we have our own reserve of hope: Resource Facilitation.

Resource Facilitation isn't therapy or treatment. Resource Facilitation isn't pre-recorded messages or a series of menu selections. Resource Facilitation is a real person who you talk to one-on-one about anything you need to help make life with a stroke a little more livable. You just pick up the phone and call 763-553-0088 and talk to a Facilitator who knows your area and can offer you help finding the things you need. Or, if you don't need something specific, can simply listen to your concerns or even your successes. Resource Facilitation is the Minnesota Stroke Association's reserve of hope for a better tomorrow. All you have to do is call and it's completely free.

But don't take my word for it. In this issue, we're sharing a few of our Resource Facilitation successes. They aren't big dramatic stories, but examples of how even the smallest thing can make a big difference. I hope you enjoy reading them and that if you haven't called Resource Facilitation, you now have a better understanding that it's a program that might help you or someone you know.

And, if you find our other programs helpful, we can always use your help in keeping them up and running. Please, consider donating to the Minnesota Stroke Association this year. Your dollars help us bring our education, outreach and advocacy to people across Minnesota. Your gifts improve the lives of thousands of people living with stroke's long-term effects. So, please, give what you can. Visit [strokemn.org](http://strokemn.org) to donate.

Thank you so much for reading,  
David King

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# After a stroke, what's next?

By Nancy Christensen, Administrative Assistant

## So, you've had a stroke. Now what?

Hopefully, 9-1-1 was called and you were taken to an emergency room where critical care procedures were put into place to help ensure the best possible outcomes. You most likely spent time in the hospital, and possibly a rehabilitation center, before returning home to begin navigating the challenges that come with surviving a stroke. Now, you have a hundred questions that need answers and an equal number of decisions to make. Who can you call for help?

The Minnesota Stroke Association Resource Facilitation program is the answer. Resource Facilitation is a FREE two-year phone-based service that provides assistance to survivors, family members and professionals. Our Facilitators help individuals make informed choices in finding information, services, and supports to meet their goals. If an individual wants to get back to work or school, Resource Facilitation can help create a map to that goal. If an individual needs help coordinating with providers and community resources, Resource Facilitation can arrange group phone calls and set up meetings to ensure collaboration.

Stroke survivors cover the entire spectrum of ages (not just the elderly have strokes), backgrounds, cultures

and identities across all of Minnesota and each has different challenges, barriers and needs. So, Resource Facilitation has two teams to cover the entire state: the Metro-Twin Cities Team and the Greater Minnesota Team. This division allows for quick responses from team members who understand the specific communities where support groups and instrumental resources such as social services, housing, transportation, and legal aid among others are available. Many of our staff members are bi-lingual and work with interpreters when needed.

Resource Facilitation is the leader in helping survivors navigate their journey with stroke. Our team of dedicated professionals is trained and willing to help. Many times, people are connected to us through hospitals, clinics, or rehabilitation centers but anyone can reach out to us at any time.

*The Minnesota Stroke Association's mission is to better serve our community by raising awareness about stroke and enhancing the quality of life for all people coping with its sudden and long-term effects.* If we can offer assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out and contact us at [www.strokemn.org](http://www.strokemn.org) or 763-553-0088. We are here to help!

## ACT FAST at the FIRST SIGN of STROKE



**ALWAYS CALL 911**

Minnesota  Stroke Association

# RESOURCE FACILITATION IS HERE FOR EVERYONE

*By Phil Gonzales,  
Public Awareness Associate*

The Minnesota Stroke Association and the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance merged operationally in 2010. At the time, Resource Facilitation was already a meaningful part of brain injury recovery for thousands of people across Minnesota. While Resource Facilitators had always had clients with stroke, the joining of the two organizations greatly increased Resource Facilitation's ability to reach out to the entire Minnesota stroke community.

So, what is Resource Facilitation and what are the benefits of being a part of this ground-breaking program?

"Resource Facilitation is a free proactive support program," says Wendy Hoffman, Resource Facilitation Manager for the Minnesota Stroke Association. "Which means we'll call you and check in with you. If you need us you can call any time, but we will make sure to check in with you over two years, every six months or so. And we're here for whatever you need."

And, by "whatever you need" Wendy means just that.

"So it might just be that you need somebody to talk to about what's going on," Wendy says. "And validation that you're not crazy. This is for real. And then it often will build from there. Maybe we find a doctor or a neuropsychologist to help figure out what you would need to be able to go back to work, or vocational rehab or you name it. There isn't really a limit on what we might help people with."

One of Wendy's favorite stories from her time as a Resource Facilitator involves a man who called in looking for help obtaining a fishing license. She'd been able to help him in the past and so it seemed natural for her to help with this.

"And it was important to him because he was disabled," she says, "he couldn't afford it. And you actually can get a discounted fishing license. And that was a pretty cool experience for me. So, we're there to help, whatever it might be: to validate your feelings or to get you connected to the right people. That's what we're there for."

And Resource Facilitation is there for family members as well as for employers or medical professionals. Anyone looking for resources to help navigate the world of stroke can call 763-553-0088 Monday through Friday and talk to one of our Resource Facilitators.

Of course, people come to Resource Facilitation in many different ways and at many different points during their recovery. And, stroke affects people of all ages and backgrounds. So, there are as many different ways to use Resource Facilitation as there are people who use it. What follows are a few stories from stroke survivors who have found success through Resource Facilitation.

## MARY

Mary knew enough to get herself to the hospital when one side of her body started losing strength. Her quick thinking allowed doctors to administer tPA and dissolve the blood clot lessening the long-term impact of her stroke. This was in the summer of 2020, in the midst of the world's first round of COVID. But stroke doesn't stop when the world does. Fortunately, Mary lives with her husband and had him with her during the beginnings of her recovery.

She also had Resource Facilitation, who contacted her a few weeks after her stroke.

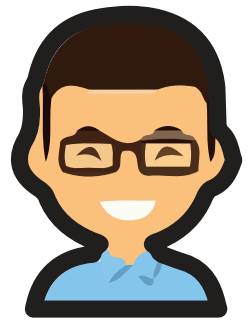
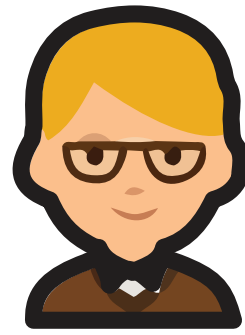
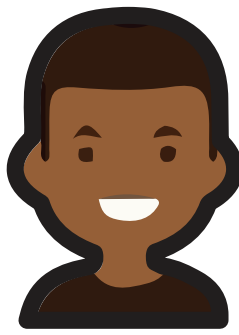
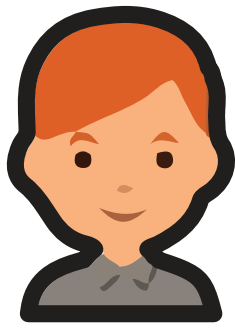
"It was so helpful," she says, "Just being able to go over a lot of the symptoms I was just having and reassuring me that these are normal and that the tiredness and weakness would get better. Having them call just brightened my day."

A lot of times, when talking to someone who has found Resource Facilitation to be beneficial, we'll ask for specific examples of ways in which they've received help. And, many times, the answers are very much like Mary's. She had already been set up with physical therapy through her doctor and didn't need help with the logistics of her situation. Instead, Mary's Resource Facilitator was there to ensure that Mary didn't slip through the cracks.

"She answered so many questions right at the beginning that were pertinent to my case," Mary says. "She checked in on me in the beginning and then called back to see if I was using any of the resources. Just her calling and being there to listen and to realize that what I was going through was pretty normal."

Today, Mary is doing much better and doesn't need as much intervention as a year ago, but she still looks forward to her Resource Facilitation calls and appreciates what this service was able to offer her.

"She was inspiring in helping me to feel better about the whole thing," she says. "And to not be so scared and to know I was going to get better. I'm really happy that you guys are there and that you reached out to me right away!"



## MICHAEL

Michael also has memory issues related to his stroke. Left unable to work after his third stroke, Michael struggled to navigate the bureaucracy of Social Security and disability access. He also had trouble communicating the severity of his disability to people at the National Guard. He couldn't remember from day to day who he had spoken with or what he was expected to do next.

"You know what's wrong with a stroke victim?" he says. "They have a bad memory. Mine's really bad. So I just remember some lady calling me up and asking me this or that and that's all I remember. I'm sure she knows everything!"

One issue Michael was having was getting Social Security Disability Insurance to help pay his rent. Although his family did what they could to help, Michael would miss appointments or paperwork. He had trouble tracking phone calls and would forget who he was speaking to in the middle of conversations. His Resource Facilitator kept careful notes on their meetings and was able to check in with Michael and make sure he had contacted the appropriate people. When calls were dropped or missed, his Resource Facilitator would help him to reschedule and then make sure the calls got through.

Resource Facilitation also helped him communicate to the National Guard the severity of his situation.

"The National Guard helped me quite a bit," Michael says. "They connected with her [his Resource Facilitator] and they coordinated to help my needs. When I first went into the National Guard they didn't realize how bad I actually was until I sat down and started talking to them. Once they realized how bad I was, they did whatever they could to help me out."

Even though Michael can't always recall the specifics of his calls with his Resource Facilitator, he remembers the feeling he gets from them and the assurance that his problems have findable solutions.

"I know they call me from time to time," he says. "Since I've had my stroke they've been calling. Whenever I've asked for help, I can't think of a time when they've said 'No, I can't do that!'"

## DAVE

Stroke can often have the adverse effect of impairing a survivor's short-term memory. Frequently, things a survivor experienced that day slip away into the vague recesses of their mind. Dave, who has experienced a number of strokes in his life, doesn't have many specific memories about his interactions with Resource Facilitation, his mind simply doesn't function that way anymore, but his emotional memories are strong enough that he wanted to share his appreciation for the program.

"I've had a number of strokes. I don't have the best memory. My Resource Facilitator would call on a regular basis and anything I had on my mind that I needed help with she'd try to help me out with and did."

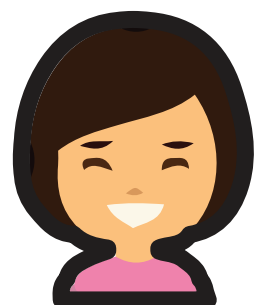
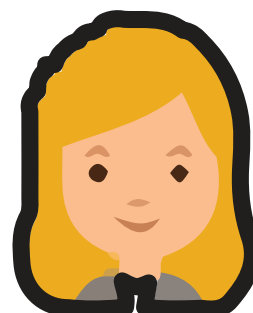
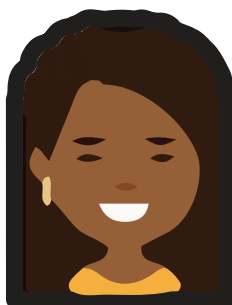
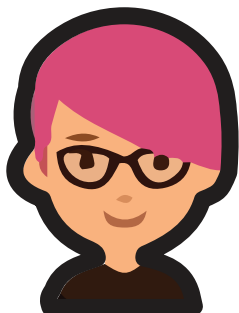
One thing Resource Facilitation was able to help Dave with was getting a shower installed in his home so he didn't have to worry about getting in and out of his tub with his mobility issues. After being told the shower wasn't going to happen by several companies, Dave's Resource Facilitator helped him find a contractor who would not only do the work but would save Dave several thousand dollars in the process. Dave said that the help was "a life saver" and invaluable.

"She's been very helpful and opened different doors I didn't know about," Dave says. "Anything that I had a problem with, she tried to help me."

Even if Dave has trouble remembering everything he and his Resource Facilitator have talked about, over the past year, he remembers the victories enough that he recently re-enrolled in the program.

"I'm staying in it as long as I can."

*continued on page 8*





## Support the Minnesota Stroke Association Today

Twenty months is a long time for any business to be disrupted, and for nearly two years we've seen every single business be hit hard by COVID-19. The nonprofit sector, particularly, was hit hard by the sudden loss of volunteers, donations and community outreach. However, stroke and brain injury doesn't stop when the world does and the needs of the stroke community have persisted. So, the Minnesota Stroke Association persisted as well.

Despite not being able to join each other face-to-face, Minnesota Stroke Association and Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance staff have continued to educate people about stroke, get people access to the services they need, answer questions, and offer people the opportunity to share their stroke experiences. Our Stroke Conference and Lunch and Learn seminars for professionals, and our free Brain Injury Basic classes and other educational opportunities were taken online.

Resource Facilitators, working from home, have been able to reach and assist more people due to clients being at home to answer

calls. Prioritizing mental health check-ins has ensured clients have the resources they need. Case Managers and Care Coordinators increased their "well-being" phone calls, checking to ensure that clients still have access to support services, adequate food and medication, and safe and secure housing. Public Policy continued its advocacy training, getting disability advocates ready to talk with their representatives in online forums and rallies.

This is what we do. And, we will continue doing it for as long as we are capable. Minnesota deserves an organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all people affected by stroke. But, we are struggling and you can help us.

Make a donation today at [strokemn.org/donate](https://strokemn.org/donate). Even if it's just a few dollars, it will help. Every gift counts and every person matters. Help make sure that no one slips through the cracks in 2022. Give what you can and thank you for your support.

***Thank you for your commitment to the Minnesota Stroke Association  
and for your continued support!***



# EXPERTISE LEADS TO ASSURANCE.

Comprehensive stroke center specializing in treatment, prevention, research and recovery.



## Hennepin Stroke Center

[hennepinhealthcare.org/stroke](http://hennepinhealthcare.org/stroke) | For more information 612-873-8712

## THOMAS AND THERESA

Often, the Resource Facilitator doesn't deal directly with the survivor and instead talks with a family member or other caregiver. In the case of stroke, this could be due to any number of reasons: distrust on the part of the survivor, difficulties in communicating over the phone, fatigue, and aphasia. But, Resource Facilitation is for everyone living with the long-term effects of stroke and provides support to caregivers and loved ones as well as survivors.

Thomas has had five strokes and suffers from brain bleeds. When Resource Facilitation first reached out, he was unwilling to talk to the Facilitator, so his wife Theresa stepped in to speak. She quickly developed a trusting relationship with her Facilitator who helped her find different ways to get resources Thomas might need and become someone she could lean on through the tough times in his recovery.

"Oh I think he's fantastic," Theresa says regarding her Facilitator. "He is the person who would call me, I wouldn't have to call him, and that's really helpful because sometimes it's hard to make that phone call. He's just so kind. And it was nice knowing I had him and his phone number to call. Because, after a stroke you're pretty much left on your own. They essentially send you home and just say 'Good luck!'"

Thomas' most recent stroke was in July and Theresa credits his improvement to the way he maintains his health between stroke events. Thomas used to be a marathon runner and she credits his commitment to fitness and his dedication to continue walking and lifting weights with his phenomenal recoveries.

"Thomas is pretty phenomenal," she says. "He went on a six mile bike ride. He gardens. He has a stroke and he keeps coming out of them. You just gotta keep your fingers crossed and wait for the next one. You never know when they're going to burst."

Over the course of the last two years, Theresa spoke to Resource Facilitation numerous times. They were able to listen to her express her joy at the good days Thomas had as well as the concern she had for his future. Mostly, she appreciated that someone was out there going out of their way to check in and make sure she and her husband had everything they needed.

"I think it's really important for us people that need somebody. It's really priceless, let's put it that way."

## ESTHER

Esther is a fiercely independent woman who had her stroke on New Year's Day in 2019. Not the kind of person to ask for help or lay her problems on anyone, her Resource Facilitator puzzled at times over what she might need to make her life easier. She had mobility and fatigue issues, but no close friends. She had a large family who were "enough to keep track of" and pooh poohed the idea of attending a support group. She didn't need other people unloading on her and she was very careful who she shared personal things with.

But, something was clearly missing. She felt isolated where she was living and wanted to get back to the part of town where the rest of her family lived. Still, most suggestions made by her Resource Facilitator seemed to be unneeded by Esther.

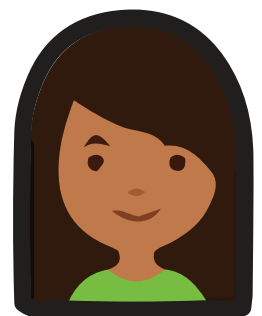
Then, one day after her two years in the program had ended, Resource Facilitation conducted a 30-month follow up and discovered that Esther had moved back to be close to her family. Her mood had increased, she felt happier than ever and her health had improved.

It wasn't until this call though, that Resource Facilitation learned just how much their calls had meant to her over the years.

"I thought they were very helpful," she says. "They gave me numbers to call when I had questions about medical appointments, which doctors I should see, they always called to check on me and that helped me deal with things when I would go into depression. Because I had someone to talk to who would have resources to help with whatever issues I had. They would call and they were understanding, helpful and very kind. Very useful."

There are times when a Resource Facilitator worries that they aren't doing enough to assist a stroke survivor. It's difficult to measure the effectiveness of a kind word, a sympathetic ear or the simple gesture of returning a phone call. But, Esther made it clear that her years with Resource Facilitation were noticed and important to her.

"I think it's a great program," she says. "Very helpful when you feel alone and like there's no one to talk to. To know that someone is out there. I always looked forward to their call."



## DENNIS

Dennis is new to Resource Facilitation and hasn't had cause to use it yet. So, why include his story if we don't even know how it might impact his life? Because many people in Resource Facilitation are where Dennis is right now: at a moment of balance in their recovery.

Dennis had two strokes in July and, while he was in acute recovery, he had a third stroke. After he reached a point where he was mobile enough to no longer need round-the-clock care, he was released to return to his own home. This was at the end of August and, fortunately for Dennis, he has a strong family support team.

"I have my mom and dad and siblings and my son," he says, referring to his adult son who moved in to help him out. "While I was in the clinic, they arranged the house for a wheelchair."

Since returning home, Dennis has been working on his mobility and getting back to a regular routine. He is doing outpatient PT and is on a lot of different meds. He has to keep track of paperwork, numerous medical appointments and his blood pressure and blood sugar. All of this is a lot for someone recovering from a single stroke, much less three.

Yet, Dennis feels he's doing okay right now with his family as support. And, honestly, we love to hear that. Dennis is still signed up for Resource Facilitation if he needs it.

"I think I signed up for it while I was in the recovery center," he says. "But, I don't know if I'll need it."

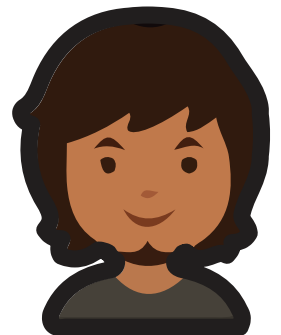
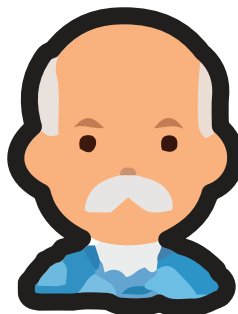
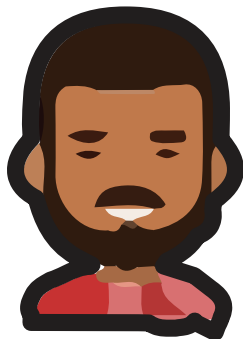
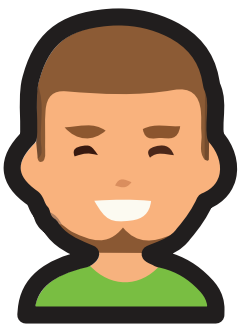
But, that's the point. No one knows when they'll need it. And, Resource Facilitation is excited to be there for when Dennis does need it, if he ever does. Because as we've seen, there are many different reasons someone might need to talk to a Facilitator: access to support, help finding a phone number, setting up a meeting or simply providing an ear.

"We're there to help," Wendy Hoffman says, "whatever it might be, to validate your feelings to get you connected to the right people. That's what we're there for."

*continue onto page 10  
to meet the Resource Facilitation Team*

**If you were hospitalized  
with a stroke, you were very  
likely referred to us by your  
hospital. Or, you might have  
received our information from  
a doctor or therapist. If you  
weren't referred to Resource  
Facilitation but you would like  
to become part of the program,  
just give us a call at  
**763-553-0088.****

**It's free, it's voluntary and it's  
there when you need it.  
Stroke changes lives and  
Resource Facilitation is here to  
help get you back on track.**



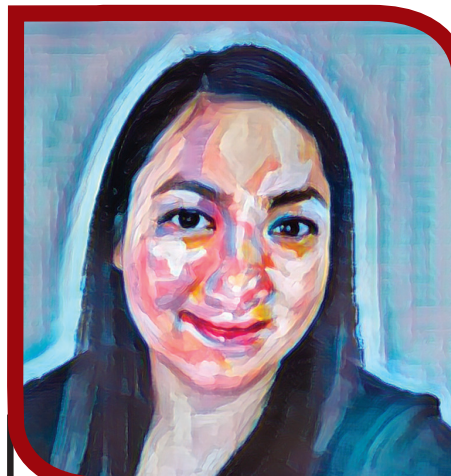
# MEET THE TEAM



Wendy H  
Employee since 2007



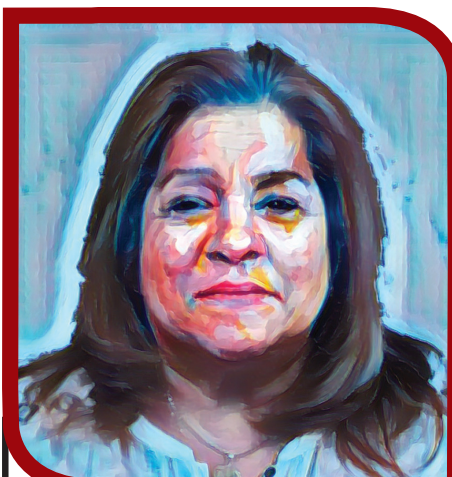
Carla B  
Employee since 2013



May D  
Employee since 2010



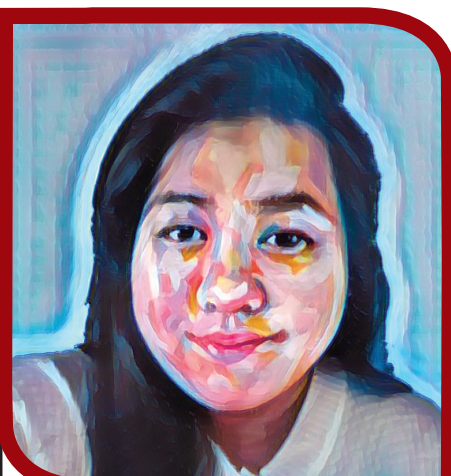
Jim R  
Employee since 2015



Cindy L  
Employee since 2019



Rebecca Z  
Employee since 2020



Cherish T  
Employee since 2021



PaChia  
Employee since 2021



Hannah  
Intern since 2021



# Your stroke-isn't- going-to- stop-me- partner >

After experiencing a stroke, we know you and your family want to get back to doing all the things you love in life. Our dedicated team of doctors, nurses, specialists and researchers will help you achieve your goals. We're proud to offer the highest level of care and rehabilitation services – and the latest technology.

Stroke support groups | Communication practice groups | NeuroWell  
Occupational, speech and physical therapy | Aquatic therapy  
ShareGivers (peer visit volunteers) | Volunteer opportunities



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