

MSA Spotlight:

Dian DeCasper



by Joy Blackburn, MSA Staff Writer



When we're looking to feel uplifted, we might seek out some beautiful, Colorado nature. Maybe we'll listen to music, read a blog, do some yoga, or curl up with a pet. Church can be a great place to feel uplifted. Less great, but ever-present, is the refrigerator (yeah, you caught me). Everyone has their list of favorites. For many of us, high on that list of uplifting things, is a name: Dian DeCasper.

Dian's story is one of strength, perseverance and kindness. She is singularly self-reliant, but is the first to reach out to help someone else. Even while starting this interview, as she grudgingly voices a hint of self-praise, she shares it with all her MS brethren: "We don't think about ourselves," she shrugs, as if to say there's no story here. Boy, is she wrong.

Dian has been a member of the MSA for so long that she stopped counting years. "A really long time," she says with a laugh. During that "really long time," she's gotten dozens of others motivated and involved in MSA-sponsored social events, bocce ball games, and swim classes. "That's my passion," she says. "It's important to keep on going; to get out there and be with people." She's so well known around the YMCA pool, that her swim friends call her "The Mayor."

Dian's life was first touched by MS when her mother was diagnosed at the age of 48. The youngest of seven children, Dian watched as, over the next 20 years, her mother simply gave in to the disease. She saw her mom grow increasingly tired and depressed, until she passed at 68.

Dian's own symptoms began presenting in her early twenties. She was diagnosed at 24 — half the age her mother had been. None of her other

siblings were affected, but Dian didn't cry foul or

Dian DeCasper on living with MS: "I refer to it as a male. I know, it sounds odd, but it honestly makes "him" easier to handle. I can yell at him, tell him to knock it off or whatever. I refuse to let him win."



My two sons mean the world to me. They are the world to me. I get great support from my family.

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demand their pity. She knew she couldn't change where her future was leading, she could only change how she faced it. Now a single mother towing a toddler and an infant, Dian set out to make the most of every day.

"I was an audio-visual technician at the Air Force Academy," she says wistfully. "I loved that job." Then she adds, "But I loved my job before that, which was working as a waitress. If you love what you do, it isn't work." She recommends anyone stay employed as long as they possibly can. "It's more than the paycheck. There's meaning in working alongside others, in doing your part for a bigger purpose."

Dian clicked with Nikki Pfeiffer the first day the two women met. "I try to make the best of things, but then here came Nikki! The help she's giving everyone is awesome, and all she wants is to do more." When Dian and Nikki work together, they can be unstoppable.

These days Dian doesn't experience many MS flair-ups. "I don't feel like I'm dealing with MS anymore," she says, "only with what it's left behind." While MS may have put a crimp in her physical abilities, Dian's mind is as strong and optimistic as ever. "I'm actually thankful for MS," she tells me. "I've met a lot of fantastic people, and our paths would have never crossed otherwise."

Can you think of a better word to describe Dian's amazing, enduring attitude toward life than "Uplifting?" We certainly can't. ✨



Physical activity and social interaction have been Dian's secret



weapons against MS. She particularly enjoys bocce ball tournaments and swim group.

Dian was a recent spokesperson for the Colorado Springs Therapeutic Recreation Program. Through the TRP, she participates in swimming and adaptive water skiing.

