

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



PEP4U Now Listed on OC Nonprofit Central

OC Parkinson's Exercise Program becomes the first of its kind to be listed on the site.

Laguna Niguel, CA- January 4, 2021 - Parkinson's Exercise Program (PEP4U) is the very first non-profit 501(c)(3) gym for people with Parkinson's Disease (PWP) in South Orange County, California. [OC Nonprofit Central](#), powered by the Orange County Community Foundation, promotes nonprofits and helps donors learn more about community opportunities. This listing allows donors and interested individuals to learn more about PEP4U's mission, programs, success, and donation options. It is now the only Parkinson's-focused listing on OC Nonprofit Central, and hopes to increase awareness and resources to the people of South OC.

"Having PEP4U's profile listed in the OC Nonprofit Central is part of our program's long-term goal for growth - to expand to other parts of the county," says PEP4U steering committee member Kerry Keen. "This represents a very important next step of being able to provide classes free of charge to many more residents of Orange County who are fighting PD."

About PEP4U

PEP4U Gym is free for PWP and offers multiple weekly exercise classes led by professional instructors trained in Parkinson's Disease and movement disorders. The classes promote balance, coordination, strength, and overall movement as well as social support and educational programs. Recent research shows that regular, frequent, and vigorous exercise improves PWP's movement control and can slow progression of the disease--thus improving quality of life. PEP4U, a community-based volunteer organization, was created to address that need for Orange County's estimated 8,000 people with Parkinson's Disease (PD) by providing PD-specific programs. PEP4U was launched in April 2014 in Aliso Viejo; rapid growth soon required a move to the YMCA in Laguna Niguel where membership continues to increase. A 12 member steering committee of physical therapists, instructors, and other professionals provides guidance and support on a volunteer basis.

“PEP4U has been a new beginning for my wife and myself,” says PEP4U member and co-chair Ernest Seidel. “PEP4U has offered a road to better health physically, mentally and socially as well. We now have an extended family of friends that we can openly share our PD life with. We are no longer alone.”

A Year in Review: New Classes and Increased Grants Help Expand PEP4U

Since March 2020, due to COVID-19 precautions and restrictions, PEP4U pivoted to offering live online classes, as well as recordings of all classes that are cataloged and maintained on the pep4u.org website. Despite these challenges, PEP4U launched a variety of new classes and programs to offer diverse experiences to members. These new classes include Education Hour, HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training), Mindful Manageable Movements, BIG for LIFE class, and PEP4U PWR class. In addition to new exercise classes, PEP4U also worked to maintain the sense of community that is so integral to the program. Activities like Sip and Dip virtual paint night offered an opportunity for creativity and socialization for the PEP4U community.

PEP4U operates solely on donations from individuals and corporations as well as community grants. In 2020, PEP4U received grants from the city of Laguna Niguel and the Parkinson’s Foundation, helping to increase physical therapist staff, offer a greater variety of classes, purchase specialized gym equipment, and launch a newsletter to keep the community connected. PEP4U also saw an increase in donations from the community through the “Spring into Summer” and “Fall into Winter” fundraising events.

In December 2020, PEP4U was listed as one of the top 50 PD exercise programs by [Parkinson's Community Outreach at Stanford Medicine](#). The list recognized organizations and individuals who are working to improve the quality of life for people with PD.

Looking Ahead: Goals for the New Year

Currently serving approximately 200 members, PEP4U is working to realize its goals for increasing enrollment and awareness of Parkinson’s and its treatment options, as well as expanding to open satellite gyms in other parts of Orange County. In the new year, PEP4U plans to hire more physical therapists to help accommodate newly developed classes and growing class enrollment. Moving forward, PEP4U hopes to develop a caregivers support group led by an experienced program facilitator to provide support and resources to the community.

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