



**The Victory Summit® Virtual Event:  
Our Voices, Our Stories: For People with Parkinson's,  
By People with Parkinson's  
"Welcome and Inspiration"  
Davis Phinney Foundation**

Polly Dawkins (Executive Director, Davis Phinney Foundation):

Morning everyone. And welcome to the Victory Summit, which we are calling Our Voices, Our Stories. I'm Polly Dawkins. And I am the executive director of the Davis Phinney Foundation. Today this event is incredibly special to us because we are turning over the microphone to our friends with Parkinson's. Most of the speakers and participants today are living with Parkinson's and they have designed the agenda and you all have given input into what today should look like. And here is the presentation of that. All right, Davis and Joe, welcome as our first speakers to greet our audience. Joe, I understand that you've prepared a written excerpt for us today. Do you wanna tell us a little bit about how you came to that and then share that with us?

Joe O'Connor (Ambassador, Davis Phinney Foundation):

Yes. Thank you very much Polly. I've been able to work with people in the organization, especially Wayne, I see Wayne is available today on poetry and that has given me the ability to spend more effort on the written word than I used to spend at all. And it's been really quite a wonderful experience. I just wanna introduce myself. It's been six years since I was diagnosed with and I always refer to it as small P Parkinson's. I don't use the word Parkinson's. I always use small P and although it affects me in ways I can't control and has challenged parts of my life, I never would've wished for this myself, but I figure I have two choices. I can choose to greet each obstacle with optimism and live the best life I can or I can let the obstacle overcome me. I of course choose the first. There is no rhyme or reason as to why anyone gets small P. You could be in great shape and you might get small P. You might be, you might not have any tremor at all as I am and still have small P and why do I always call it small P, because my name is Joe O'Connor. I'm a husband, a marathoner, an optimist, a stubborn, persistent, resilient man, and Parkinson's, whoop, small P is just a small part of who I am. Thank you.

Polly Dawkins:

Thanks, Joe. Davis, as we ask our audience to share who are, who are you? As Joe has pointed out, he's much more than his definition of small P, much more than Parkinson's. Davis, how would you define yourself? And audience, could you in the chat function, tell us who you are.

Davis Phinney (Founder, Davis Phinney Foundation):

I would define myself as a husband, a father, and a son, as well as a poet and a photographer. And what else? I, and a lover of life, someone who's grown to be an observer of people and a listener and an ambassador for everyone out there today. And that's me in a nutshell.



Polly Dawkins:

That's great, Joe, how do you react to that?

Joe O'Connor:

Well, it's interesting. Davis was a bike racer at the same time I was a bike racer. In fact, we're pretty much the same age. Davis was a great bike racer. I was somebody who sat at the back of the pack. Okay, wait a minute back of the pack. Sorry, folks, Parkinson's. But you know, I think what Davis is saying is very true. We can explore ourselves and get to know ourselves better and understand what's going on. And really one of the things that always attracted me to the foundation, why I'm so proud to be an ambassador is our message is live the best you can right now, not that we all would love to see a cure. We all would love to see that, but let's devote our efforts to living the best we can right now. And that to me is very, very powerful.

Davis Phinney:

Thank you, Joe.

Joe O'Connor:

Thank you, Davis.

Davis Phinney:

Well, and one more thing I should add, Joe, you threw in that you were a marathoner in a bike race. I'm an athlete for sure.

Joe O'Connor:

Well, the kind of athlete Davis is, is very successful and very good. I was a bike racer. That's all I'll say. And I run a lot of marathons, but I mean, Davis was in the tour de France and on the, what was it called, the old tour in Colorado Davis? The Coors...

Davis Phinney:

The Coors Classic.

Joe O'Connor:

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. So, I mean but I think that's the big message of the Foundation. I think that's the message that everyone should carry with them is Parkinson's is not all who you are. It is a part of you, but it is not all of you and you can choose your life. I run support groups and I've talked to many people, and they go, this isn't right. That isn't right. And I go, but you have this and you have that. And they go, yeah, yeah. And that's how you get back to being, as living that fullest life you possibly can.

Davis Phinney:

That's really well said, Joe. And I certainly believe that to be true, which in a sense it's easily said, and it can be harder to live that when you have a succession of, as I said on that tape

earlier, bad day, but destroy, but as long as you can get back to seeing your way, to finding some victories, then that's the thing that you have control over.

Joe O'Connor:

I absolutely agree with you, Davis. I think the other thing is that we have to count the victories as to what they are. If one day you can't get up out of bed, for some reason, and the next day you get outta bed, that's a victory. If one day you have to park your car close because you can't walk around the supermarket and the next day, you're able to walk across the parking lot. That's a victory. Not all victories are big things like winning the stage in the tour de France or running the Boston marathon, a lot of victories are small things that just keep piling up. I love that comment, I just saw in the chat. I have Parkinson's, Parkinson's doesn't have me. That's an excellent, excellent comment.

Davis Phinney:

Yeah. I agree with you, Joe in all that.

Joe O'Connor:

Absolutely.

Davis Phinney:

The thing is is that I don't have access or even close to those big victories, like the tour or even any bike race, but that's okay. Because as you say, I can define so many other small things as victories, and I really, that hits home. Joe, when you say that you can walk one day and call that victory.

Joe O'Connor:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I think, well, the other thing is that we discovered different things about ourselves. I know Davis, you and I are both part of Wayne's poetry group. And I mean, I discovered something about myself. I never thought I can write poetry. And it was like, wow, this was like a revelation to me. And I think that's great.

Polly Dawkins:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you both. We have so many amazing comments in the chat about how people define themselves. And a friend is a big theme throughout, I saw dog walker and jeweler and lover of nature and so many different topics. So, thank you all for your contributions and Joe and Davis for joining us to get this started and get people sort of the spark of curiosity in this conversation.

Joe O'Connor:

All right. Yeah.

Polly Dawkins:



Thank you.

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