

# #50MillionFaces



Nicole Whitmore, Ann Romney, and Nancy Frates at the World Medical Innovation Forum



## MICHELLE LEMAY RONDEAU

I was diagnosed with MS in 2003, and have experienced hospitalization, medications, and health challenges along the way. Unsure of what the future would hold, my husband, Chris, and I had a beautiful girl and boy, Belle and Beau. Most recently, my wonderful doctor at BWH has given me great news—my MS can be categorized as benign, and I can expect to remain relapse free for the long term. My first thought was to flee the building, never looking back at the doors of the MS Center. Then I heard about the work of Ann Romney. I was inspired to become that kind of patient—one who does not run away but who gets involved and fights for the cause. Thank you!



## PATRICK O'KEEFE

I am a 33 year old who has been able to fend off a primary brain tumor since being diagnosed in 2006. I have undergone three successful brain tumor resection surgeries, a few rounds of oral chemotherapy, and one round of proton therapy. I am one of the lucky ones who has had great care and a treatable form of this disease. I am married and am the father of a beautiful 8-month-old daughter. My wife and I are very grateful for the care I have received and still receive today, and we're confident that we have a very long and healthy future ahead of us. However, not everyone has the ability to say this. My biggest challenge is to manage my anxieties so that they don't affect my job, my family, and my friendships. We need to get beyond just treatments and find a cure once and for all.



## MONIQUE ALLEN BATISTE

I was diagnosed with MS in 2001. I was never afraid, only anxious. I wanted to know what would happen to my kids and how long I would live. I started seeing one of the most amazing neurologists in the world and started this beautiful journey. I have learned to appreciate the smallest things and my faith increased. I have the best support system in the world, and will continue to fight and pray for a cure for this devastating disease.



## BRUCE BALLARD

I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2012, although I started experiencing symptoms a few years before that. I still work at a job I love; it's intellectually challenging and emotionally gratifying. I recently married the man I love, and we have a great life together. I still work out at the gym, write and publish, and play a musical instrument. Parkinson's disease has thrown me obstacles (for example, I'm typing this with only one hand), but my life is fulfilling. For people newly diagnosed with Parkinson's, please stay active. Life can still be good.



## NANCY FRATES

My name is Nancy, and my son Pete is one of the 50 million faces of neurologic disease. We were just an everyday family until March 13th, 2012—the date we were first given the diagnosis that our 27-year-old son had ALS. I felt devastated, panicked, dazed, and completely at a loss for words. We live a life of clichés right now. Our life changed in a minute. We live every day to the fullest. We don't take anything for granted. Today, our spirits are high, our hope is renewed, and the promise of this center's important work fuels us to battle on.



## RYAN MOFFETT

It was so difficult watching the decline of my father's health as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's slowly took control of his body and mind. With each noticeable change, I was reminded of how much I loved that man. Then, two days following my father's funeral, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I was scared. As

an artist, my first reaction was to express how I felt through my art. I soon discovered peace as I learned more about the disease and the wonderful research that is being done. I hold on to hope that my disease will not define who I am, and that someday, through my artwork and other efforts to raise awareness and funds for research, MS and other neurologic diseases will be cured.



## HOWARD WEINER, MD

Here's my mother and me in the Colorado Rockies just before she developed Alzheimer's disease. After she developed Alzheimer's, her mind became clouded. All she knew was that she had a brain disease and that her son was a brain doctor. She said to me, "Howie, can't you help with this?" Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do at that time. But now we can do something through the work we're doing at the center so others won't have to experience what she went through. I am proud to be the co-director of the center with my colleague and dear friend, Dr. Dennis Selkoe. The center brings hope to all who are suffering from brain diseases.

The Ann Romney Center for Neurologic Diseases recognizes the benefit of bringing together voices from the broad community of patients and loved ones who are affected by neurologic diseases. Through our #50MillionFaces website, a social media campaign has emerged through which stakeholders are raising awareness, sharing stories, inspiring hope, and encouraging empowerment. Nearly 600 people have shared personal stories about their experiences with MS, Alzheimer's disease, ALS, Parkinson's disease, and brain tumors since the site launched in April 2015.

To join our community and share your story, please visit [50millionfaces.org](http://50millionfaces.org).