

2017 DAC Achievement Award Nomination Form

Nominee Information

Nominee Name: John Bowers

Nominee Address: [REDACTED]

Nominee Phone: [REDACTED]

Nominee Email: [REDACTED]

Nominator Information

Nominator Name: Andre McMahon

Nominator Address: [REDACTED]

Nominator Phone: [REDACTED]

Nominator Email: [REDACTED]

Nomination Category (please select one):

- ☒ Individual
☐ Organization
☐ City of Fresno Employee or Department

Nominated for:

- ☒ Improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities
☐ Advocacy for issues pertaining to individuals with disabilities
☐ Volunteerism that has a positive impact on individuals with disabilities
☒ Development of new programs or services impacting individuals with disabilities
☒ Customer service to individuals with disabilities that is above and beyond the standard
☒ Innovation or Entrepreneurship by an individual with a disability or that has a positive impact on individuals with disabilities

Nomination Statement

Give a brief description (300-500 words) of why you feel your nominee should receive this award. Attach two to six letters from people able to provide supporting testimony (peers, parents, students, clients, etc.), additional supporting materials, and photo of nominee (optional). Attach additional pages if necessary.

John Bowers is a leader first and foremost. As a trainer within the Central Valley for over 15+ years John has always made it a point to dedicate his time and efforts to improving the life of others. John is passionate, caring and most importantly driven to help everyone reach their goals. As the lead trainer for the Rock Steady program I have seen John not only connect with the community but also inspire others as well in the process. As John continues to make an impact I have no doubt that his overall body of work will leave a lasting legacy not only on the Central Valley but the nation as well. This is why I recommend John Bowers with the highest regards.

Respectfully,
Andre McMahon

Boxing boosts confidence for people fighting Parkinson's disease

BY CARMEN GEORGE

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[Link to Fresno Bee Video](#)



Coach John Bowers, right, demonstrates a move to Jesse Fabela, who has Parkinson's disease, left, during a session at Cen-Cal Fitness

As 82-year-old Marilyn Hanson swings at a hanging punching bag, her husband, Ron, sits nearby smiling at her with contentment. Boxing is something very new and different for this petite, soft-spoken woman. Her jabs don't pack much of a punch, but it's keeping her active, and that's what counts.

Hanson has Parkinson's disease, a nervous system disorder that affects mobility. To combat its effects, she and around 20 others with Parkinson's meet twice a week for a special Rock Steady Boxing class at Cen-Cal Fitness in Fresno that started in April.

“She was shuffling and walking with a cane, then we got one of those walkers,” her husband recalls. “She fell a couple times. Then we heard about this Parkinson’s group. ... I call it CrossFit for Parkinson’s.”

Ron Hanson says the boxing class has given Marilyn more confidence. Now she walks without assistance, even up and down stairs.

One of the newest members is former TV newscaster Bud Elliott, who retired from KSEE24 in 2014 after he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s.

“It’s a lot of fun and it seems to be a big help. It gets you in shape, in spite of everything,” Elliott says of the boxing. “It’s a good hour-and-a-half workout. They say one of the best therapies for Parkinson’s is physical fitness. A lot of walking, jogging, if you can do it, and stuff like this.”

The boxing is taught by coach John Bowers, who also incorporates stretching, weight training and fun exercises like bean bag tosses to improve hand-eye coordination. Participant Ken Rivera describes Bowers as “thoughtful, respectful, fun and knowledgeable,” but adds that he “doesn’t give us any mercy.”

“Nope, no way,” Bowers says with a smile as he carries weights around the gym.

Bowers describes Parkinson’s as interrupting signals being sent from the brain to the body. The boxing aims to improve that faltering communication.

Rivera is co-leader of the Greater Fresno Parkinson’s Support Group, which refers its members to the boxing class and a dance class taught by Kathy Page. Like many in the boxing class, the emotional support is just as important as the physical activity for participant Karen Shaver.

“When you are in a group like this, people die, and it’s hard,” Shaver says. “We encourage each other and support each other.”

One of Rivera’s first Parkinson’s symptoms was delayed speech several years ago. Medicine has helped give him back his voice, and the boxing is keeping him strong. It comes naturally to the athletic Rivera, who once served as a college sports on-field official and supervisor of the Mountain West Conference.

Rivera says boxing also helps release tense energy “stuffed inside ya,” but that the best part is the social group, “because you have 20 people who are in the same state, different levels.”

Rivera’s wife, Marcie Bero-Rivera, also participates in the boxing, as do many spouses of those with Parkinson’s. It’s been good for both of them. Rivera says it helps him remember that the glass remains “half-full, not half-empty.”