

## ***Courage allows author to share message of helping***

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By Lori Geller FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In 1991, after learning that she had multiple sclerosis, Jackie Waldman thought her life was over. Twelve years later, her will to survive has made her stronger. Her Saturday appearance in Columbus is part of a 60-city speaking tour to share her message of hope.

Waldman, author of the *Courage To Give* books, is an "ambassador" for the national Multiple Sclerosis Society and has appeared on Oprah and National Public Radio.

"I feel blessed that I've been given this opportunity to share the courage-to-give message," Waldman said in a telephone interview earlier this week. "I hope people will walk away wanting to find their own courage and what I am discovering daily: The more we do for others, the better we feel."

Waldman's speech is sponsored by Biogen. The company operates MS ActiveSource, which provides 24-hour patient support by telephone and on the Internet.

Area physicians also will answer questions about MS during the three-hour program. Waldman said she found her "calling in life" after watching *Schindler's List*, the Academy Award-winning movie about the Holocaust. She was inspired by Oskar Schindler's ability to help others.

"I thought true survival was getting my legs back," she said. "After watching this movie, I realized that true survival is the survival of our spirit and not whether our bodies function properly."

In 1995, as part of the National Random Acts of Kindness Month, Waldman and a friend helped organize a week's observance in Dallas, where she lives.

"It was a miracle. We had an army of volunteers and speakers promoting kindness at rallies, schools and interfaith services," she said. "The Dallas Police Department even passed out 'kindness citations.' "

Waldman has written a series of *The Courage To Give* books. Each one profiles individuals who have found the courage to overcome difficulties and transform others' lives. Waldman's new book, *People With MS With the Courage To Give*, will be available later this month. All proceeds will benefit the National MS Society.

"The courage to give begins with ourselves," she said. "It takes courage to put our own challenges aside, but the reward of helping others is far greater than anything."

MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system. The disease can affect each person differently and cause loss of balance, slurred speech, blurred vision, extreme fatigue, paralysis and blindness. These problems can be permanent or they may come and go.

Robbie Baker, vice president of the MS Society Buckeye Chapter, said Ohio has one of the highest rates (1 in 1,000) for the disease.

"An event like this especially helps newly diagnosed patients gain perspective on life by showing them that they aren't really alone," Baker said.

Waldman said diet and exercise are essential to her physical and spiritual health. She also takes medication to slow the disease's progression.

After Waldman's talk, the audience can meet with her and receive a free copy of the first *Courage To Give* book.

"Having MS is truly a blessing because it made me realize that everything goes back to perspective," Waldman said. "My disease is a part of me, but it isn't who I am. My life is much bigger than MS."

For more information, visit [www.couragetogive.com](http://www.couragetogive.com).



Jackie Waldman says having MS helped her gain perspective.

Jackie Waldman, author of *The Courage To Give* book series, will speak about multiple sclerosis during a seminar from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Columbus, 350 N. High St. Her talk, directed toward MS patients and advocates, is open to the public. Those attending will receive a free copy of *The Courage To Give*. The event is free, but registration is suggested by calling 1-800-522-5185.

