Peer Connections Volunteer: MSFriends®

Overview:
MSFriends volunteers provide connection via one-on-one paired conversations over phone, video call, or email. Each paired relationship lasts for six months on a mutually agreed upon schedule. MSFriends volunteers guide solution-focused emotional support while also organizing the logistics of paired connections. These volunteers provide empathy and space for confidential conversations.

The National MS Society is committed to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything we do. We strive to create communities and connection opportunities where everyone feels empowered to bring their authentic selves so we can foster a sense of authenticity and belonging.

Staff Contact:
Peer Connections Resource Team (PeerConnections@nmss.org)

Key Responsibilities:
• Serve as a positive representative of and liaison to the Society within the community.
• Provide an authentically safe and inclusive space that aligns with the Society’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion principles, where participants can share their common lived experiences.
• Provide a safe, supportive space for participants to share their feelings.
• Connect over phone, email, or video call on a regular cadence/scheduled time with paired individual.
• Refer individuals to the MS Navigator program or crisis support resources as needed.
• Adherence, at all times, to the Society’s Inclusion Policy.
• Communicate regularly with Staff Partner and Peer Connections Resource Team consistently and respectfully.

Education and Support:
• Required MSFriends Volunteer orientation training, including modules focused on: Welcome to the Society, MSFriends: Someone to Listen, and Difficult Situations & Crisis Support.
• Participate in semi-annual MSFriends calls to learn recent best practices, program updates, and action items.
• Utilize resources provided on the Resources for Peer Connections Volunteer website.
• Optional peer support provided through Connections Volunteers Facebook group.

Qualifications:
• Be at least 18 years of age.
• Have a connection to MS (living with MS, spouse/support partner, parent, sibling or child w/MS).
• Has personal phone to use for making MSFriends calls.
• Has an active email address for communication with Peer Connections Resource Team and paired participants.
• Willingness to maintain a close working relationship with the Peer Connections Resource Team.
• Strong listening and communication skills; empathic listener and a desire to help others.
• Compassionate, caring, patient nature.
• Knowledgeable about Society resources.
• Ability to empower and motivate participants of the MSFriends program.
• Dedication to the mission of the National MS Society, and a desire to make a difference for those living with MS.
• Ability to calmly and effectively manage emergency situations.

**Time Commitment:**
• Uphold meeting cadence as agreed upon with Paired program participant. Typically, each paired relationship meets no more than one hour each week.
• Communication with MSFriends Paired participants when conversation schedule needs to be updated.

**Impact:**
• MSFriends empower individuals to address MS-related life changes by providing emotional support.
• MSFriends provide a connection for the National MS Society over the phone.
• MSFriends offer an opportunity for a potentially isolated individuals to build a relationship outside of their normal life circumstances.