

NATIONAL SPASMODIC DYSPHONIA ASSOCIATION

THE 2022 MIDGE KOVACS ANNUAL AWARENESS AWARD Valley of the Sun Spasmodic Dysphonia Support Group

For their dedication in support group leadership and fundraising for the National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association

Since 1999, the National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association (NSDA), and now Dysphonia International, takes great pleasure in bestowing the **Midge Kovacs Annual Awareness Award**. Midge started one of the first spasmodic dysphonia (SD) support groups. She wrote a newsletter in order to share information about SD as well as experiences of people living with SD. She encouraged all of us with SD to think beyond our individual voice problems. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead)

In presenting the Midge Kovacs Annual Awareness Award, we honor the outstanding work of an NSDA support group. This presentation marks our 24th consecutive presentation. For their work in 2021 and several years prior to that, the award this year is given to **Esther Zack and Vicki Orazem** and the Valley of the Sun (AZ) group who have led this group for the past five years. Truly, this dynamic group follows in the footsteps of the late pioneering SD advocate, **Midge Kovacs**.

Before becoming Co-Leader of the AZ group, Vicki was a Virtual Support Group Leader for Montana. Because Vicki resides in Montana as well as Arizona, both states are represented. Both Vicki and Esther are active on Virtual Support Meetings and social media.

In Q1 2021 of *Voices of Support*, we named these ladies and their group as SD Champions. They have organized and been involved in three Walk events to benefit the NSDA. In 2019, they had their first Walk fundraiser in partnership with the Mayo Clinic in AZ. In addition, they participated in our Inaugural Walk for Talk (2020) and in our Second Annual Walk for Talk (2021), both from Montana (Vicki) and Arizona (Esther). Esther served on the Planning Committee of both the 2020 and 2021 Walk for Talk fundraisers. Each wore swag and sent photos with Vicki being out in the snow with her family and Esther out in the sunshine with group members.

The NSDA, and now Dysphonia International, is grateful for the experience, dedication and commitment shown by the two leaders of the Valley of the Sun SD Support Group. Esther and Vicki bring a unity of purpose from Arizona, Montana, and virtually. They exemplify these words: "You have the power to motivate and inspire. Let your enthusiasm shine." (Author, JD Crighton)