

## Area Contact Leader Spotlight | SUE PAYNE

*Sue Payne from Georgia was our spotlight speaker at the Quarterly Meeting for Area Contact Leaders on November 9, 2022. She shared how she is open about her voice journey with others in order to raise awareness about voice conditions.*

Prior to losing my voice I was a Team Manager at State Farm Insurance. I loved coaching, training and developing my people. I was also in learning and development working with leaders to develop their people and reaching their goals.

I was first diagnosed in July 2017. We were getting ready to go on vacation. I woke up that morning and couldn't speak clearly. I went to an urgent care in NC and got some antibiotics for strep. From that day I have only had one day where I spoke "normally". From there I was put on short-term disability at work - can coach people and answer complaint calls when you can't speak. Now I am on long-term disability and Social Security disability. I was later sent to Dr. Garrett at Vanderbilt. I got a couple injections with no success and she said my case was very unusual. Then I saw a couple more laryngologists here at Emory. From there I had almost every muscle injected with various doses with no success and finally Dr. Klein said it was just not going to work for me. Towards the last time with Dr. Klein I told him about my headaches and neck pain. Dr. Jennah diagnosed me with cervical dystonia. I now get 250 units of botox in back of my neck, shoulders and right under my skull with success.



*Sue with her dogs, Chance and Cubbie*

I am now very active in the Facebook support groups as well as the Atlanta Support Group for SD. These support groups have been very helpful to me in my journey of dealing with SD and the loss of my job/career. I needed help finding out who I was. Along the way I found a horse rescue to be involved with that gave me a ton of pride and some amazing experiences. Horses don't care what you sound like.

Prior to 2020 I really was not connected to or knew much about Dysphonia International or at that time NSDA. Once I heard about the Walk for Talk I was hooked! If I had to sell something to earn an income I would be broke! But if I am passionate about it I am all in 100%!!

I have tried to think about what I do to raise the money I have... I think I am just being me.

I am being honest and putting a lot of videos out there so being vulnerable as well. I believe people want to help and want to support good causes but if they don't understand or don't feel a connection



*Sue with her parents and sister.*

they won't give. I also put Chance and Cubbie on there to draw my pet-lover friends in. My parents and sister have been amazing supporters throughout my journey. They have gone with me to appointments and seen me get injected. This year they even put a video out there in support of Walk For Talk.

I also encouraged people to check in with their work to see if they have a matching program. State Farm gives every employee \$4500 to use to match an employee's donation. I also went to businesses to ask for sponsorship. I asked two - Barker Lounge and Big Peach Running! I was in a financial meeting with my Edward Jones rep and he just said "here is \$500"!

When a person would donate I would also tag them in the "thank you" and put the NSDA and my link on the page. That way their friends would see the post and maybe donate.

So I guess what works for me is to just be authentic and let them into your daily world!!