



2023 LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP SUMMARY

MOTOR: Making Opportunities Together (for) Outreach and Research This year's theme acronym was chosen because we met in Detroit, the 'Motor City'. This was our first Leadership Workshop since our transition to Dysphonia International. This was our first in-person Leadership Workshop in four years. This was our 19th annual Leadership Program. "If the people really set their minds on anything, it is impossible to prevent their getting what they want." (**Henry Ford**) We work together in pursuit of our mission. We are mindful that our outreach is international and that we have expanded our mission to include related voice disorders. In doing so, we embrace the World Voice Day 2023 message: **YOUR VOICE MATTERS.**

Twenty-nine people attended our interactive three and one half-hours 2023 Leadership Workshop. They included: nine Board Members, two Regional Coordinators, 8 Support Group Leaders, six Area Contact Leaders, three Staff Members, and one Guest (who is now a support group co-leader!). Our participants represented 15 states across the US and one International Region – Canada. Portions of the workshop were recorded for later viewing. Members of the 2023 Planning Committee were Support Network Director, **Mary Bifaro**; Eastern Region & Canada Coordinator, **Carol Doles**; Executive Director, **Kimberly Kuman**; Program & Operations Manager, **Nicole Leitner**; and Project Advisor, **Nancy Panos**.

We were happy to host our support network leaders who continue to propel us forward. There were three goals of our workshop: (1) For leaders to have a deeper understanding of Vocal Cord Paralysis, (2) For leaders to become acquainted with resources available in our Leadership Library, (3) For leaders to expand their participation in our 2023 Walk for Talk. Our 2023 leadership workshop was well received according to the feedback and evaluation forms. We learned that our leaders continue to look for more information on potential meeting topics, research, and fundraising tips. Some of our Area Contact and Support Group Leaders are becoming further engaged with various projects, including our Guest Speaker Program to Speech Language Pathology Classes.

Support Network Director, **Mary Bifaro**, gave welcome and introductory remarks. A video and role-playing exercise on vocal cord paralysis were shown. Two Area Contact Leaders with Vocal Cord Paralysis – **Michelle Donovan** and **Meredith Sexton** – led the discussion. **Nancy Panos** led participants through stretching exercises during a break. **Nicole Leitner** presented on our Leadership Library. During breakout sessions, leaders worked on creating a Support Group Meeting Activity on 'Learning Coping Skills for: isolation from social interactions; being able to react in an emergency; emotions; career/employment; and family'. Each breakout group subsequently reported back to the full group. Executive Director, **Kimberly Kuman**, reviewed the three successful Walk for Talk events already held and the inspiring thank you videos which followed them. Plans are already underway for our 2023 **Walk for Talk** event to take place from October 12-15. Please stay tuned and plan to join us for this worldwide effort to raise awareness and funds to advance research for our Dysphonia International community.



Toni Gold



John Comer

Support Network Director, **Mary Bifaro** presented **The Midge Kovacs Annual Awareness Award** to Toni Gold and the **Greater Los Angeles Dysphonia Support Group**. New Vice President, **Susan Beck**, presented **The Dot Sowerby Pioneer Award** to Western Regional Coordinator, **John Comer**. Support Network Director, **Mary Bifaro**, gave out Certificates of Appreciation to attendees and delivered brief closing remarks.

Leaders were encouraged to continue to conduct and attend virtual and in-person meetings whenever possible. When providing support to the Dysphonia International community, we are helping ourselves. The support pillar of Dysphonia International, formerly NSDA, has always been constant. We want to bring hope to those we serve. Dysphonia International support network leaders motivate, inspire, challenge, encourage, and equip people with SD and related voice disorders through their important work. When they come together as leaders, there is power and strength in their unity, friendship, and fellowship. Our support leadership network continues to drive and shape our organization. They stand side by side with one hope and one dream – to help improve the lives of people with SD and related voice conditions. We appreciate the engagement and candor of our 2023 In-Person Leadership Workshop participants. We look back with gratitude, and we look forward in anticipation. Your voice matters! We are a community that cares about you and your voice! “The only true test of values, either of men or of things, is that of their ability to make the world a better place in which to live.” (**Henry Ford**)