When I die, SAA will get a check.

Sound morbid? To me, it’s life affirming. It affirms that a solution to spondylitis is possible. My life has been one AS accommodation after another. Some minor adjustments, some major. You, my SAA community, have been there every step of the way. From diagnosis through progression, SAA’s community is engaged every day, all day.

SAA has earned an international reputation for getting things done. Thirty-four years ago our founders decided spondylitis needed to be taken seriously. The status quo wouldn’t cut it. They said, ‘Not on our watch.’ From its humble beginning as a patient support group, they grew SAA in leaps and bounds, and reignited spondylitis research in this country. Seeing the void in spondylitis research, they brought independent researchers into the same room to say, “Let’s work together on spondylitis.” Seeing a need for research funding, they went to SAA’s ever-generous membership to secure funding for pioneering research. And it paid off. Research that began thanks to SAA and our community produced results warranting NIH funding, turning into the first major, nationwide genetic study of ankylosing spondylitis.

Our founders left a legacy of creativity, a network of support, and a commitment to grit that lives on and shapes the work SAA does today. SAA is focused as ever on research, still spearheading novel research concepts, and still bringing the right people together to make things happen. We are also working hard to raise awareness, as we understand that effective awareness projects will lead to earlier diagnosis and improved outcomes. Treatments will improve as more lay people and medical professionals become aware of spondylitis.

Imagine if everyone knew about spondylitis. Imagine telling your Pilates teacher you have AS, and they knew what to do.

Your child’s soccer coach understood that there will be great days and flare days.

Imagine a spondylitis educational video playing in the waiting room of your doctor’s office.

Today’s SAA takes raising awareness to a whole new level. We have literally put spondylitis on the billboard in Times Square. We have traveled to Washington DC to speak to our elected representatives, delivered spondylitis educational materials to countless physicians, and so much more. Each year our community comes up with new and creative awareness projects, jumping into advocacy mode with gusto.

Together we are capitalizing on today’s changing technology to build on our foundation. In this issue of Spondylitis Plus is an article on This AS Life Live videos, which have already reached half a billion people.

In the past few years, electronic wallboards have been installed in the waiting rooms of 231,000 healthcare providers - and growing. And, 585 million patients are already exposed to the messages played on these screens. Nine hundred rheumatology offices around the country have these boards. This past year SAA has been collaborating with a company called Outcome Health to play accurate information on spondylitis on these boards. Our spondylitis poster has been shown 934,640 times. Our white board animation videos have played 239,911 times. We have three new live videos in production for these boards.

With your help, SAA will capitalize on whatever new methods of communication are developed. This check that SAA will receive on my behalf will ensure the continuation of all the things SAA does. “Please let me know at Legacy@spondylitis.org if you will join me in committing to a planned gift to say, “This is our watch.”