Leaving A Legacy
by Richard Howard

In the past two and half years as a support group leader, I’ve met over a hundred people living with spondylitis. We’ve sat face to face and shared experiences, asked each other questions and shared tips on exercise, medications, relationships, work, school, etc. Some people were just diagnosed, some lived with spondylitis for several decades. Some people live nearby, some take a bus or car for hours, some travel from other states; one person joins us when he is in town from Europe. Only once had someone said that they had previously met another person with spondylitis prior to coming to an SAA support group meeting.

Gifts to the Spondylitis Association of America are used for spondylitis. If we don’t concentrate on spondylitis, who will?

SAA is the only spondylitis organization that, for 30 years, continually creates these opportunities to sit across from someone else who truly understands. This is just a part of the valuable work SAA does, which is broad in scope. Whether it’s research, support, education or advocacy - our bottom line is benefitting people living with spondylitis. SAA is continuously at the forefront of every major development in the quest for the cure and support of spondylitis. We support research for people with spondylitis and only for spondylitis. Spondylitis is a unique disease that requires undivided attention. Gifts to the Spondylitis Association of America are used for spondylitis. If we don’t concentrate on spondylitis, who will?

This past week I received a planned gift from someone I’ve never spoken with. He wouldn’t be considered a rich man, but what he accumulated over his lifetime was donated to the Spondylitis Association of America. The gift was in honor of his nephew. He did not ask for recognition for his gift. Spondylitis affects not just those living in pain. It affects loved ones. A planned gift is a value statement, an unconditional love statement. For me it’s a way of saying “I’ve lived my life with spondylitis and I want the work - to find a cure and to help others - to continue.” His gift is being put to excellent use. Because of the generosity of our donors, SAA is shortening the time it takes to make a diagnosis, supporting research, providing education to doctors and other medical professionals and providing accurate information to people living with the disease so they can make informed disease management choices.

Please let me know if you have decided to include the Spondylitis Association of America among your beneficiaries. I also welcome calls to share experiences living with spondylitis, one-on-one. (818) 892-1616 or legacy@spondylitis.org.

Please visit www.spondylitis.org/quest for more information.