

Forty-six million Americans have doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Arthritis is one of the most common diseases in the United States and the leading cause of disability among people 15 years of age and over. By the year 2020, an estimated 60 million people in the US will be affected. North Carolina ranks ninth among the 50 states in estimated prevalence, and arthritis is the most common cause of chronic disease in the state.

The Arthritis Foundation is the only nationwide, not-for-profit health organization providing people with arthritis the resources to control and manage their disease. Through evidence-based exercise programs and educational resources, the Arthritis Foundation is providing help to those who are in need. The Arthritis Foundation Carolinas Chapter serves more than 1.8 million people in North Carolina who have arthritis. The Carolinas Chapter works in collaboration with the North Carolina Arthritis Program to increase awareness of arthritis in the state. The Chapter's main office is located in Charlotte with staff also located in the Triangle and Triad to serve those areas of the state. In addition to offering the Arthritis Foundation's aquatic, exercise, tai chi, and self-help programs, the Carolinas Chapter funds arthritis research.

Over the past 2 years the Arthritis Foundation Carolinas Chapter has funded over \$2 million dollars of research at institutions in the Carolinas. At Duke University, Arthritis

Foundation-funded researcher Kelly K. Anthony, PhD, and her colleagues are investigating the social and emotional impact of having juvenile arthritis. Juvenile arthritis affects over 300 000 children in the United States and is one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood, occurring nearly as often as insulin-dependent juvenile diabetes. The results of this study at Duke will assist in the development of an early intervention program for the families of children living with juvenile arthritis. It will also provide physicians a better understanding of how to care for children with the disease.

The Arthritis Foundation Carolinas Chapter raises funds for such research with the support of thousands of committed volunteers and sponsors who participate in chapter events such as the signature Arthritis Walks and the Jingle Bell Run. These events are held in cities across the Carolinas including Wilmington, Asheville, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham, Lenoir, and Charlotte. The money raised by these events supports research as well as public policy and public health initiatives, and the events focus on the importance of exercise in the management and treatment of arthritis. People with arthritis need to know they do not face this disease alone. For information or to get involved, call the Arthritis Foundation at 1-800-883-8806.

Gail Norman is president and CEO of the Arthritis Foundation Carolinas Chapter. She can be reached at gnorman@arthritis.org or 4530 Park Road, Suite 230, Charlotte, NC 28209.

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