



**National Gathering (G7)
Fast Facts:**

- 10 minutes from Tucson Intl. Airport
- Free Wi-Fi
- 32 restaurants, 4 museums Boutique Shops... All just steps away!



Reserve your room today: <http://www.arthritisintrospective.org/next-conference>

What

National Gathering Conference (G7)

Where

University Marriott
880 E Second Street
Tucson, AZ 85719

Fees

Registration - \$80
Rooms - \$75/night

We are pleased to announce our 7th Annual National Gathering in Tucson, AZ. Join us for a weekend packed full of... education, empowerment, motivating talks, relationship building, and fun!

It all started in 2007. We were a small group of friends who had the idea to travel and meet together to share a few days of mutual support and wellness education. We weren't all exactly the same: Our diagnoses ranged from Rheumatoid Arthritis, to Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, to Psoriatic Arthritis.

In some ways, though, we were the same. We were all young- and middle-aged adults. We had our respective daily struggles, and long-term struggles. Most importantly, we shared a common knowledge of what life is like living with a chronic disease. It's this mutual understanding that has welcomed so many wonderful people into our ever expanding circle of friends.

Today, we have nearly 1,000 participants in our community!

Our diversity has increased. We are no longer limited to members with arthritis – we are comprised of members with myriad rheumatic diseases. Our geography has expanded as well. But one thing has not changed: We still share a mutual understanding of the daily struggles that accompany our chronic disease.

And so we look forward to sharing together again this summer. We can't wait to see you in Tucson!



Arthritis Retrospective by Kevin Purcell



As we approach G7, I'd like to reflect on AI's beginnings. Most of us have experienced feelings that we don't belong, or that we're not understood. I know I have. My diagnosis was accompanied by an aggressive onset, and it was 15 years before I met anyone else my age with the same condition. I got enough confused looks and stares to last three lifetimes. The emotions I experienced as a result of being different were far worse than the challenge of managing doctors, medications, and physical pain. It wasn't until after I attended my first support group that I truly felt that I was not alone.



I learned how much it helped to know people like me, and I was inspired. I spent years volunteering for different organizations working on many projects, doing all I could to bring people together. The more I worked the more incredible people I met. It wasn't long before I knew dozens of people who understood the power of face to face, human connections. Although by this time I had all the caring, supportive people I needed in my life, including the love of my life who also has RA, I constantly dwelled on those who were still living the way I had been – alone and with little hope. I wanted to do so much more.

Six years ago, I received a letter that changed my life, in which my application for 501(c)(3) status was granted and I became the Founder of a nonprofit.

There are over one million charities in the U.S. – all one needs to start one is an idea to make the world a better place, a few friends to form a Board and a few hundred bucks to cover the filing fee. It is simple enough to get started.

It was not long before I saw the impact we were having on those we serve. Many of them were people who never thought they would meet others who understood. It is the best feeling in the world to see them finally find that.

It was also not long before we faced unexpected challenges. As much as I held to our program concepts, my attention was diverted to a dozen other organizational distractions – the kind that are unseen and unknown to almost everyone, without also having sat in the “big chair.” Most Founders have to learn much more than they expected, and despite of their good ideas, the 5-year failure rate for 501(c)(3) is epic - and even worse if you are committed to stay a 100% volunteer organization like us.

Not a day goes by when I don't think of how my life used to be. It's easy for me to volunteer when I think about those people Arthritis Introspective will help next. Today, as we celebrate six years, we look back with pride on the thousands of friendships we have helped create through national conferences and local events. All of us who have found others who understand the physical and emotional pain we live with; these are friendships that can last a lifetime.

“It wasn't until after I attended my first support group that I truly felt that I was not alone.”

Thank you to our G7 title sponsor!



Vectra DA is an advanced blood test for RA disease activity that sees beyond signs and symptoms.

Arthritis Introspective is thriving. We have beaten the odds and this year we realized the completion of two of our biggest projects ever: 1) The Arthritis Introspective Outreach Relations Specialist training program; and 2) This new website. They both solidify our commitment to our Mission for years to come.

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I cannot reminisce on our past without thanking our Founding Board Members Annette Beech, Donna Fox, Des Constantineau, Samantha Johnson, Dave Black and some of our Key Volunteers Peter Fischer and Becky Petelle who have given their time, expertise and passion to help lay the foundation that AI has been building upon. I want to express my heartfelt kudos to Haydee Sedlmeier, our Vice-President, who took the lead on both the AISS ORS Training Program and launching our new website. This beautiful new website would not have been possible without the generous financial support of Crescendo Bioscience. Thank you, Crescendo Bioscience, for believing in AI and for helping make 2013 our best year yet!



My Hip Revision Surgery by Becky Petelle



So much has happened before arriving at this point! I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA) at age 15. At the time, my knees and elbows really bothered me the most. Into my late teens, my right hip also began to bother me a lot. By the time I was a senior in college, the pain in my hip was pretty intense. The deterioration was severe, to the point that no cushion remained to prevent bone from rubbing on bone.

I was still quite young for hip surgery, so there was a lot of debate about what should be done. I decided, in the end, to elect for a total hip replacement. I had complete confidence in my surgeon, Dr. Glen Neale of Morrisville, Vermont. We scheduled my operation to happen following my fall semester final exams. I underwent the procedure and it was a great success. I spent four days in the hospital and a month recuperating before my last semester of college.

18 years later, I noticed some discomfort in the hip joint. It wasn't painful but I had trouble sitting in the chairs at work. I also experienced difficulty with some basic movements. A few good friends began nagging, as good friends do, so I decided to consult with my current surgeon, Dr. Russell Cohen in Tucson, Arizona. He performed some x-rays, which showed abnormal wear on the acetabular liner, which is the soft, cup component in the artificial hip that allows the metallic femoral head to move around without much friction.

My doctor informed me that I could wait for about a year or two if I so desired, but I decided that it was best to just take care of it. It is unusual for a surgeon to operate on a hip replacement performed by another doctor, but in my case this was not an issue for my doctor. Surgical techniques and tools have improved dramatically since my initial surgery.

On the day of my surgery, I was given a gown to wear with an access point for an air hose that enabled me to control my own personal temperature. It was wonderful to have my own little personal heater/air conditioner!

My hip revision surgery was a success - I was up and walking the same day. I was only in the hospital overnight. I had a physical therapy session to ensure I could handle the rigors of recovering at home without clinical oversight. And I did! Recovery went smoothly, and I returned to work just three weeks after the procedure.

- BP



We are just weeks away, register today!!!

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