



The Punch Line

Steady Hands

Ten caregivers/corner persons of Rock Steady Boxing of Michiana members met on October 10 to further our mission. They launched an important support group, aptly named “**Steady Hands**”.

When Rock Steady Boxing of Michiana got off the ground nearly ten years ago, founders intentionally chose “Michiana Partners for Parkinson’s” as our official, legal name. The vision during our formation in 2016 was that RSB would be our lead activity, for sure, but that there are other important services we could and should offer and provide to the greater Parkinson’s community in Michiana.

Over the years, true to this vision, we have offered exposure to various pharmaceutical companies. We have supported the formation of multiple support groups throughout the greater Michiana area. We have fostered Parkinson’s awareness before numerous service clubs, professional organizations, support groups and news media. These initiatives have touched folks in the community who are not necessarily part of our boxing community. All these efforts help our boxers, to be sure. But they serve a larger purpose, which is “Partnering for Parkinson’s”.

The purpose of **Steady Hands**? “To provide a safe space for caregivers of Parkinson’s Disease patients to share feelings, exchange tips, and find support.” Ideas discussed at the inaugural meeting include inviting guest speakers, holding roundtable discussions about issues and problems, inviting demonstrations of adaptive equipment, and visiting equipment providers on field trips.

The **Steady Hands** group meets on the second Friday of each month from 1:30-3:00pm. Initially, meetings will be held at the South Bend gym, but sessions are open to members’ families from both gyms. Participation is encouraged by male or female caregivers of our active or inactive boxers.

After all, “caregivers have their own issues.” We salute our supporters.

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Rock Steady Boxing of Michiana Grows

South Bend

Our first gym opened in May 2016 at 50680 State Road 933 in South Bend. Ours was the 129th location of Rock Steady Boxing in the US. We started operation there with just three boxers. The gym moved in May 2024 a few doors south to 50770, our current location.

Classes are held every Tuesday and Thursday at 6pm and Saturday morning at 9:30am, coached by Dennis Wolf, Mike Hoover, Gary Jerzak, Shona Marscola and Emily Matz.

In the nearly 10 years of operation, South Bend's membership roster has grown to 40. Members' average age is 70.8 and includes just 6 ladies.

Elkhart

Our first expansion was in 2018, when we located our second gym in Osceola. At the time, this east location was the 583rd RSB location in the US. A few years later we relocated to Mishawaka. Then in 2023, that gym relocated to Elkhart, where we currently share space with Refiner's Fire Crossfit gym at 2510 Benham Avenue.

Classes in Elkhart are held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 10:30 and are coached by Gail Books, Charlie Books, Kirsten Marker, Mike Petersen and Mike Hoover.

Elkhart currently has 38 active members, with attendance averaging 20-22 each day, plus caregivers. The Elkhart members' average age is 70.1 and includes 12 females, 26 males.

The Future?

Both Michiana locations are alive with positivity. Visitors to both gyms come away impressed with the high fives, the fist-bumps, the smiles, the encouragement. And speaking of visitors, forty-nine prospects have visited our locations to-date in 2025; 25 in South Bend and 24 in Elkhart. Twenty-eight of those prospects have joined us. A few have dropped for various reasons, and a few are still in the process of becoming members.

Our growth demonstrates that there is a real need for what we do – and that what we do is working.

Our needs? We need larger spaces to meet the growing demand. Watch this space for developing announcements. And of course, to support more members we need *more coaches and more volunteers*. **Onward! Upward!**

Rock Steady Boxing of Michiana

50770-A State Road 933
South Bend
and
2510 Benham Avenue
Elkhart
(574) 286-6731



RockSteadyBoxingMichiana.com

We Remember



Gwen Oldfield

11/8/1951 – 11/13/2025

Member Spotlight



Esther Jones

“Connections”. A powerful response from a petite woman when asked, “What’s the best thing about Rock Steady Boxing?”

Esther Jones, a dedicated long-time member, was born in 1954 in Ludington, Michigan, the sixth of eight siblings. With three sisters who were musicians, Esther once dreamed of becoming a harpist.

After high school, she married Charlie and earned an associate degree from Andrews University. She worked at Clark Equipment in Buchanan before opening her own tailoring and alterations business. Remarkably, Esther had learned to sew on a treadle sewing machine at age seven, as she had to sew to avoid wearing her brother’s hand-me-downs. (A treadle sewing machine is powered mechanically by the operator’s foot rather than an electric motor). As an adult, she honed her tailoring skills under several European tailors and eventually tailored for local dry cleaners.

Demonstrating her determination, Esther began studying the harp in 2009 at the young age of 55. She and her teacher traveled to a harp factory in Chicago, where she purchased her first harp. Now on her third harp, she still performs occasionally, especially at nursing homes “because they can’t hear very well.”

In 2011, Esther returned to Andrews University, this time working in the Physical Therapy Department office alongside students.

Diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in October 2015, Esther’s neurologist introduced her to Rock Steady Boxing, which she joined in January 2017, a month after retiring. She has also taken part in the BIG program.

Esther is an avid researcher of her condition, maintaining an extensive library, reading numerous books, attending seminars, and participating in Zoom meetings every Tuesday.

Regarding Rock Steady Boxing, she says, “There’s nothing like it. It’s been a real blessing for Charlie and me.” Her advice to fellow Parkinson’s patients: “1, Connect with a doctor who believes in long survival (20 years) for PD patients. And 2, Connect with all the reading material you can. Connect with knowledge. Knowledge is Power.”

Esther Jones – a connected fighter



Esther Jones

Welcome New Members

South Bend

Mattie Taylor

Bob Heiderman

Jim Vella

Ginny Spencer

Elkhart

Bob Collins

Barbara Lilley

Jan Beadle-Blonde

John Serge

Bill Shaw

Jon Nelson

Diane Reed