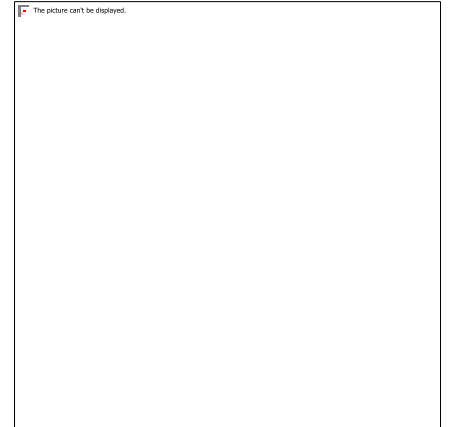


# Lupus Foundation of Minnesota marks 40 years' service

by [Access Press Staff](#) // December 9th, 2016

The year was 1976. Jimmy Carter was elected president, the United States was celebrating its Bicentennial, Rocky was in movie theaters, Viking I landed on Mars, Apple Computer Company was just getting its start, a postage stamp cost 13 cents, and a handful of dedicated individuals saw a need to support people with lupus in Minnesota.

One of the many disability service groups marking a major anniversary in 2016 is the Lupus Foundation of Minnesota. The foundation is celebrating its 40th year of working on behalf of those whose lives are impacted by lupus. As an independent, nonprofit charitable organization, the organization raises funds to support research focused on understanding the causes of lupus, and discovering improved treatments and a cure.



Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease where the immune system turns against parts of the body it is designed to protect. This leads to inflammation and can affect many different body systems, including joints, blood cells and organs.

Lupus can be difficult to diagnose and can range from mild to life-threatening in severity. With treatment and non-organ-threatening complications, 80 to 90 percent of those affected can look forward to a normal life span.

The Lupus Foundation of Minnesota has been based in Bloomington since 2004. It has a four-person staff and many dedicated volunteers. Its goal is to see a world without lupus.

The state group incorporated in 1976 as a Minnesota chapter of the Lupus Foundation of America. The first support group meeting was held in 1980. Eleven groups are now offered throughout the area, along with specialty groups.

The Lupus Foundation of Minnesota formally incorporated in 1998, breaking away from the national group. The first summer student fellowship was offered in 1981. In 2016 the foundation awarded its 123rd fellowship, cultivating a new generation of researchers and opening the door to new discoveries in lupus research.

One high point was the awarding of the first research grant, in 1995. Since then, more than \$2.3 million in total research spending has been paid out. It is hoped that the clinical research grants and the work they support will eventually contribute to finding the cure and more effective treatments for lupus.

Another way of raising awareness of lupus and the need for research is what is now the Lupus Walk for Hope. What was called the Twin Cities Walk-a-thon began in 1997, with a second walk

in Rochester two years later. 5K Runs began in 2009. This year the walk celebrated its 20th year in the Twin Cities, 16th year in Rochester, and sixth year in Duluth. All three locations raise funds for research and direct service to those with lupus.

The foundation has raised awareness in other ways over the years, with many eloquent volunteers speaking about their lives with lupus. People might remember bread sales to help the foundation, donating used goods for resale or playing in the golf tournament. All of that support helps the Lupus Foundation of Minnesota strive toward a vision of a world without lupus.

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*Access Press* is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at [access@accesspress.org](mailto:access@accesspress.org) or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, [www.mnddc.org](http://www.mnddc.org) or [www.mncdd.org](http://www.mncdd.org) and [www.partnersinpolicymaking.com](http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com).