

# (201)

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## ONE MORE CURL

COMPETITIVE BODYBUILDER  
AND HAIR STYLIST **KRISTEN REILLY**

**PLUS:** PINGPONG VS.  
PARKINSON'S DISEASE

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# PING OR PONG?

Producing an issue of *(201)* starts months, sometimes years in advance. But truth be told, even days before we go to the printer, we are still checking headlines, polishing photo captions and arguing over sentences.

Case in point: how to refer to the sport of table tennis.

NorthJersey.com writer Stephanie Noda contributed a heartwarming story to this issue about PingPongParkinson, a nonprofit that helps people with Parkinson's disease with mobility and flexibility through pingpong. The story set off a debate among our editors.

"Please hyphenate ping-pong," emailed Glenn Garvie, our vice president of production.

"Throughout the piece?" asked Cindy Schweich Handler, one of our editors.

"AP style: pingpong. A synonym for table tennis. The trademark name is Ping-Pong," I wrote.

"I'm really sorry about keeping this thread going, but the name of the organization is called Ping Pong Parkinson," wrote John Flynn, our creative director. "Does that matter?"

It does, in a way.

We as journalists have been taught not to use trademarks when a synonym would do better — we should say tissue instead of Kleenex; vacuum instead of Hoover — because if we use the trademark, we might risk it becoming part of the lexicon and a company losing it.

"Interesting," Garvie wrote back. "AP is pingpong. Trademark name is Ping-Pong. Merriam Webster has ping-pong."

"We could go with table tennis?" I suggested.

"For whatever it's worth," wrote Handler. "Just read this, and apparently table tennis and ping-pong are slightly different. "Playing style: Ping Pong uses sandpaper, which provides medium to slow speed and medium spin. Table tennis has a faster pace and a higher amount of spin. Table tennis has an offensive and defensive playing style. Ping Pong can mix both playing styles in a game."

Whoa!

In the end, Flynn made a call. "This puts the pingpong debate behind us," he wrote. "PingPongParkinson is their name, and we will use AP Style to address pingpong."

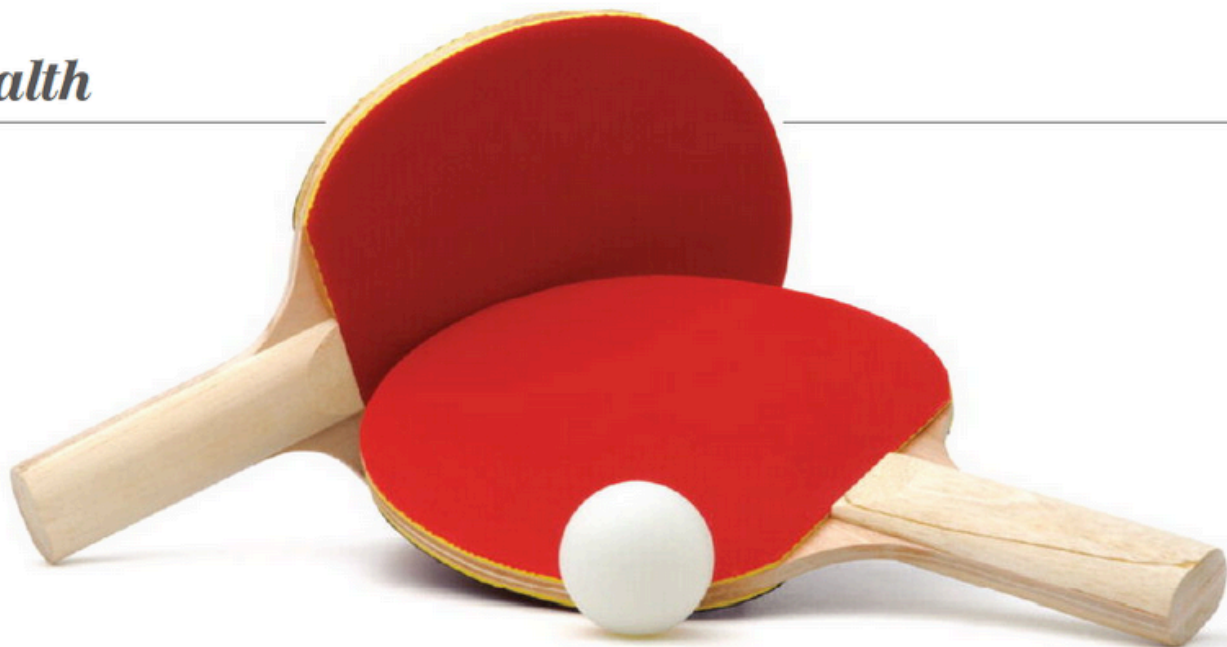
"Great," wrote Garvie. "Who knew pingpong would have so much back and forth?"

Hope you enjoy reading the issue as much as we enjoy making it. ■



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz".

Liz Johnson  
   
@sourcherryfarm



# PINGPONGPARKINSON RETURNS

Players once again improve mobility while having a ball

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE NODA

**J**ust when area Parkinson's disease patients were starting to experience how pingpong could help them in everyday life, the pandemic forced them to put down their paddles for more than a year.

In February 2020, PingPongParkinson, a nonprofit that aims to help people with Parkinson's disease regain mobility and flexibility through pingpong, had opened in Westwood; its inaugural meeting was held in partnership with HackensackUMC. After a few weeks, however, they were forced to stop meeting due to the pandemic, and later lost their venue completely when Wang Chen Table Tennis Club closed.

Now, the group is hoping to pick up where they left off at a new location in River Edge: Ready to Golf, an indoor golf range that recently installed 14 table tennis tables. After months of delays, the group is looking to start lessons in their new space near the end of January.

About 20 to 35 people with Parkinson's had played at the Westwood branch per week before they had to stop activities in March, says Dr. Elana Clar, a movement disorders neurologist from New Jersey Brain and Spine Center and an advisory

**"IN PARKINSON'S, EVERYTHING SLOWS DOWN AND STIFFENS UP. EVERYTHING THAT YOU DO, WHETHER IT'S HOW YOU SPEAK OR HOW YOU MOVE, IS SMALLER."**

**ELANA CLAR**, NEUROLOGIST, NEW JERSEY BRAIN AND SPINE

board member for PingPongParkinson. While she isn't sure how many of those players will shift over to the River Edge location, Clar is confident they'll see the same types of numbers again.

"We're so excited to relaunch because we feel like we never really got our footing," says Clar. "We were really only around for eight weeks until we had to stop."

Clar says that some of her patients who participated in the program noted significant improvement in their dexterity and fine motor skills. One participant, Linda Ferrari, a former Waldwick resident who also attended sessions in Westwood prior to the closure, ended up loving pingpong so much that during lockdown, her husband bought a net, and the two played pingpong on their dining room table.

Ferrari has moved to Toms River, and she

hopes PingPongParkinson's will venture south, too. "It helps from the perspective of a social atmosphere with people who are going through the same thing that I am," says Ferrari, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019. "It was also great exercise. It helped relieve some of the stress you go through with Parkinson's."

Going forward, Clar would like to put together a scientific study that analyzes the benefits that pingpong can have for those with Parkinson's disease. She says one hasn't been done yet, though a few case studies have come out in Japan. Those studies found improvement for patients.

"The question is, whatever deficits you incur as a result of the Parkinson's disease, can you combat that and get some of those skill sets back?" says Clar. "You're trying a new way of exercising; it's a new way of challenging the brain."



**NOT JUST TABLE TENNIS** (Clockwise from top left) Olympic and two-time World Cup table tennis champion Zoran Primorac from Croatia visits the facility and poses with Nenad Bach; a match being played; Nenad Bach, Dr. Elizabeth Kera, Dr. Elana Clar and Dr. Art Dubow; singing at the end of a session.

While COVID-19 shutting down the Westwood branch was tough, it did give the organization time to take a step back and create a more systematic program that can be expanded nationally more quickly, Clar says. Changes include participating in physical therapy and speech therapy before and after sessions to amplify voices and movement, and ending sessions with a song. "Basically, it makes everything exaggerated," says Clar. "In Parkinson's, everything slows down and stiffens up. Everything that you do, whether it's how you speak or how you move, is smaller."

Lawrence Wolfin, a River Vale resident who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2018, went to two sessions in Westwood before the pandemic. "I was a pretty good pingpong player as a kid, and I noticed I wasn't nearly as good presently," says Wolfin. "I was hoping to do it regularly to get better and to meet new people. With Parkinson's, no two cases are alike. You can talk to somebody and learn something, so it also becomes a social thing with the patients."

Once he heard the group would be restarting, he said he would be happy to rejoin. "I'm very optimistic that it will help," says Wolfin. "Anything they have something for Parkinson's that involves sports, most people want to go to

it." He says he's also taken part in Rock Steady Boxing, another Parkinson's therapy.

## MAKING MUSIC AGAIN

PingPongParkinson is the brainchild of Nenad Bach, a Croatian-American musician from Westchester County, New York, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease about a decade ago. Stiffness in his hands made it difficult for him to play his guitar, causing him to stop playing professionally. After six months of pingpong, however, mobility returned to his hands, and he was able to play the guitar again.

Bach started PingPongParkinson in 2017 in Pleasantville, New York, where it has bi-weekly meetings at the Westchester Table Tennis Club. "I didn't conquer the Parkinson's, but I conquered the fear," Bach says. He believes that table tennis is uniquely suited to help those with Parkinson's because it combines the need for coordination with a fast pace. "You have to make a decision in a split second," he says.

The accessibility is a factor, too, as those in their 90s can comfortably play. And it's easy to practice, says Bach. "There's also a social aspect to it," he says. "People are happy spinning a ball in the air. I'm 50% better when I play."

Dr. Elizabeth Kera, a neuropsychologist and

director of the division of psychology at Hackensack University Medical Center, agrees. She notes that not only does pingpong provide exercise, which is one of the most effective ways to improve physical symptoms of Parkinson's disease, but it helps relieve cognitive symptoms as well. "You have to think on your feet," says Kera. "You have to use visual attention, strategy formation, visual special skills and reaction time. It's really a kind of perfect rehabilitation."

During the pandemic, Bach found another way to continue his mission by partnering PingPongParkinson with Eleven Table Tennis VR and holding a PingPongParkinson Virtual Reality World Championship; players from all over the world could compete via VR headsets. The venture was a success, and a second PingPongParkinson Tournament was held a few months later. Bach wants to lobby for VR Table Tennis to become an Olympic sport.

"A number of people don't have tables or clubs, so it could be a great platform for research for scientists," he says. He hopes to create more branches while also working on research that studies the effects of pingpong on Parkinson's disease. ■

For information on how to get involved, visit [pingpongparkinson.org](http://pingpongparkinson.org).