

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Rock Steady Boxing for people with Parkinson's is launching in Toronto!**

*People living with Parkinson's in the GTA are now able to benefit from training used by boxing pros and customized for all levels of Parkinson's disease. Rock Steady Boxing Toronto is the first Canadian affiliate of the acclaimed fitness program developed in Indianapolis.*

**Toronto, ON, February 29, 2016**—Rock Steady Boxing, a unique exercise program based on training used by boxing pros and adapted for people living with Parkinson's disease, is now available in Canada in the GTA.

Led by experienced boxing coaches and trainers, including two-time Olympic boxer and Commonwealth Games and Pan Am Games medalist Andrew Kooner, and professional boxer, trainer, and Registered Nurse, Lita Mae Button, the program involves exercises that fight back against Parkinson's symptoms. Stretching, running, balancing, and lots of non-contact boxing all reduce the impact of Parkinson's symptoms and improve strength, agility, balance, hand-eye coordination, speed of movement, and attitude.

Rock Steady Boxing offers a sense of community and fun to everyone involved in the program. "We're thrilled to be able to bring Rock Steady to Toronto and excited to be offering classes that help people fight back against Parkinson's," says Mary Neilans, Director at Rock Steady Boxing Toronto, who successfully completed the Rock Steady Boxing training certification in Indianapolis, along with Andrew and Lita Mae.

Rock Steady classes are geared to people at all stages of Parkinson's disease, with boxers including men and women ranging in age from under 30 to over 90. Toronto classes begin in April – Parkinson's Awareness Month – but registration has already begun and there is a growing waiting list. All boxers must schedule an appointment to attend an initial application and assessment.

The Rock Steady Boxing Method was developed in Indianapolis over the course of seven years. In 2012, the Training Camp was launched to share the Rock Steady Boxing Method with others who are fighting back against Parkinson's. Today, there are over 90 affiliates across the United States and Rock Steady Boxing Toronto is the first Canadian affiliate. All affiliate head coaches have completed the Rock Steady Boxing training and have been officially certified at the Rock Steady Boxing headquarters and training center in Indianapolis.

“We have always believed in the Rock Steady Boxing Method,” said Rock Steady Boxing, Inc. Executive Director Joyce Johnson. “When evidence began to emerge that our program had a very positive impact on the boxers, our mission became clear—to share our knowledge and experience with all people with Parkinson’s. That is why we decided to make our training available worldwide—to train as many as we can so together we can improve the care of people with Parkinson’s everywhere.”

The Rock Steady Boxing Toronto affiliate is made possible through the efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers and the newly formed Parkinson’s Resource Centre, a non-profit organization established to support and promote programs and services designed to improve the day-to-day quality of life of individuals and families living with Parkinson’s disease.

Archie Luz, owner of Undisputed Martial Arts and Fitness, is excited to support the Rock Steady Boxing program. “It gives people a way to fight back against Parkinson’s disease and we couldn’t be more excited to host the program at our club.”

Parkinson’s disease is a chronic, progressive neurological disorder. Over 100,000 people in Canada have Parkinson’s disease, and that number continues to grow each year, with up to 20 percent of people now being diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson’s Disease (under the age of 50). While there is no cure, exercise – particularly forced, intensive exercise – has been shown to slow the progression and impact of symptoms.

Numerous volunteers are needed to contribute their time and talents to assist with Rock Steady classes. If you are able to volunteer your time or donate funds to support the work of the Parkinson’s Resource Centre and the ongoing delivery of Rock Steady Boxing Toronto classes, or if you want to schedule an assessment to become a Rock Steady boxer, contact Mary Neilans.

For additional information about Rock Steady Boxing Toronto, visit [www.rocksteadyboxingtoronto.org](http://www.rocksteadyboxingtoronto.org)

Email: [Mary.Neilans@rocksteadyboxingtoronto.org](mailto:Mary.Neilans@rocksteadyboxingtoronto.org)

Phone: 647-618-3291

Facebook: Rock Steady Boxing Toronto

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