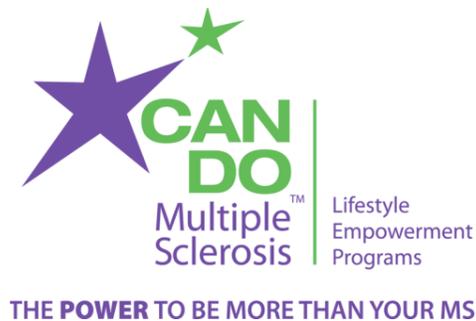


## Can Do Multiple Sclerosis



- Positioning/Brand Strategy Development
- New Name and Tagline
- Message Platform
- Marketing Plan
- Creative Platform

### **The Challenge**

Can Do Multiple Sclerosis, formerly known as The Heuga Center for Multiple Sclerosis, is a Colorado-based, national nonprofit dedicated to helping people living with multiple sclerosis and their families live their best life with MS. Founded in 1984, The Heuga Center's education model reflects the 'can do' attitude and principles of founder Jimmie Heuga, a former Olympic skier who contracted MS and galvanized medical professionals into understanding the importance of exercise and an active lifestyle for individuals living with this condition. Today, through a range of interactive and experiential programs offered in multiple formats, the most popular of which is their intensive, five-day CAN DO seminar, the organization empowers people and families living with MS to transform and improve the quality of their lives.

In 2008, the organization established the goal to serve more people living with MS and to expand its impact nationally. However, to achieve this, the organization felt that it needed to clarify and strengthen its overall brand image and consider a new name that better identified and differentiated what the

organization does to the target audiences served. Despite a 25-year track record, the organization felt that its brand did not do a strong enough job positioning the organization's:

1. Unique approach to helping people living with MS improve their lives
2. Unique history, philosophy and beliefs about what is possible with MS
3. Unique impact its programs have on the lives of those served

Moreover, The Heuga Center wanted to establish a 'leadership' brand that would enhance partnership strategies within the MS community, strengthen its reputation within the medical profession and clearly establish the organization as more than just another 'health and wellness' program for people living with MS.

### **The Solution**

Our first step was to utilize research to accurately assess and harness the organization's existing strengths and assets, while at the same time, identify key opportunities that a new brand position could adequately address. Through a range of assessments involving a wide range of constituents, including staff, board, past Can Do seminar participants, non-participants, physicians, allied health professionals and partner organizations within the MS community, we were able to identify some key brand challenges, including:

- Name identification. Although Jimmie Heuga was somewhat of a celebrity in Olympic and skiing circles in the 60's, 70's and 80's, in today's world his name and beliefs were much less well known to the general community. In addition, the fact that the Center was based in Colorado caused people to think it was a regional charity with limited reach.
- Low brand clarity. As a result of word of mouth from those that attended The Heuga Center's programs, the organization was well known for 'changing lives'—but there was much confusion about 'how' the organization did it. *Was this a boot camp? A wellness spa? A ski program for people with MS?* Like any leading provider of education or knowledge, their 'education approach' had to be 'demystified' and 'amplified' as part of the brand strategy.

At the same time, the organization had a range of salient attributes that would serve as the foundation for the brand, including:

- Trend-setting beliefs. Although 'The Heuga Center' name caused confusion, the organization's visionary founder, Jimmie Heuga, and his 'Can Do' beliefs and philosophies were critical to organization's brand.
- High emotional value. Staff members, participants and industry peers consistently stated that the organization's programs were 'life-changing' for people living with MS and their support partners.
- A deeper, richer experience. The organization offered far more than 'health and wellness', providing

a fuller, more holistic and more customized approach to helping people and their support partners overcome the barriers of living with MS. Repeatedly, people stated that they learned ‘what they ‘CAN DO’ vs. what they can’t.

### **The New Brand Platform and Identity**

With these insights in tow, we worked to develop a new brand positioning platform that would position the organization as a leader within its category with a unique approach to enhancing life with MS that goes far beyond ‘health and wellness’. Focusing on its deeper, multi-disciplinary approach, the newly branded organization would be repositioned as **an innovative provider of lifestyle empowerment programs for people with MS and their support partners**. This better encompasses the breadth and depth of the organization’s approach and impact.

The organizations’s new tagline would amplify the empowering and transformative impact of the brand:

***The Power To Be More Than Your MS.***

The new name and logo identity would amplify and incorporate the philosophies and beliefs of the organizational founder while also underscoring the core philosophy and belief behind its programs today: **Can Do Multiple Sclerosis**. The logo’s five-pointed star reflects the multi-faceted approach to its lifestyle empowerment programs: physical, intellectual, social, interpersonal, and spiritual.

### **Brand Training, Marketing Plan, Creative Platform and Website**

With the new brand platform, name, logo and tagline developed, Sector Brands then developed a **full message platform** to support the brand across multiple audiences, including prospective program participants, donors, event supporters, physicians and partners within the MS community. Messages focused more on ‘how’ the organization does its work, its ‘core philosophies’ and the benefits and impact. To help Board and staff members ‘live’ their new brand, we conducted **formal message training**.

In addition, Can Do MS also needed a **marketing and outreach plan** to better position its brand and program among industry partners, physicians and people living with MS and their support partners. Sector Brands developed a full plan helping the organization increase its exposure within and beyond the MS community.

And finally, Can Do MS needed a brand **new creative platform** that would capture the spirit, emotion and

lifestyle empowerment aspects of its new brand. Sector Brands developed a new 'I AM, I CAN, I WILL' campaign that was then incorporated into the organization's program promotions, development and event promotions. We then worked with a website team to develop new, brand-oriented web content for the Can Do MS website that reinforced the organization's unique Can Do philosophy and overall 'empowerment' experience.

### **The Results**

The new Can Do MS name and brand was quickly embraced by all of its stakeholders, elevating the organization with a clear and compelling value proposition so that it had a "seat at the table" in discussions involving national trends and innovative pathways to help people living with MS. Since the brand launch, staff members have indicated an increase in program inquiries as well as stronger interest in collaboration among industry partners.

**To witness the brand in action visit: [www.mscando.org](http://www.mscando.org)**