



REBUILDING COMMUNICATION

BUILDING Bridges



Fall 2011

Building Bridges is the quarterly newsletter of the Aphasia Institute (AI) – a community-based centre of excellence that helps people with aphasia express themselves to the world around them. Aphasia affects more than 100,000 Canadians, depriving them of the ability to speak, read, write and understand the speech of others. Aphasia affects a person's language skills, not their inherent competence, but all too often, people with aphasia are discounted as incompetent because people lack the skills necessary to help them be understood. With ongoing support from donors, the Aphasia Institute's direct service and community outreach programs help people with aphasia and their families find new ways to re-join life's conversations.

CHANGING LIVES:

Home is where the heart is....

The Community Aphasia Program is designed to encourage community involvement and social exchange. One of the most popular programs is a book club during which members and facilitators work to build conversation skills by discussing a book. Recently, a group of members and facilitators discussed *The Wizard of Oz* and Dorothy's famous words: "There's no place like home."

During the discussion, one facilitator asked the members the question: "Where is home?" In spite of their significant language challenges, members articulated many thoughtful replies. Some mentioned their home countries, some said Canada, and one member pointed to her heart. The facilitator then asked a follow up question: "What makes a place a home?" In the end, members agreed that it was the people in a place that makes it a home – the community that is formed and the memories that are shared. Several members mentioned that the Aphasia Institute had become a "new home" for them. Welcome home, all.



RECLAIMING IDENTITY:

Garfield, Stroke Survivor

Garfield Alexander was a husband, a father, a talented cook and had many friends. He was a full-time employee with two jobs. In 2003, a stroke stripped him of these treasured aspects of his life. He lost his driver's license, he could not work, his wife returned to Jamaica with his children and he was confined to a long-term care facility, unable to make choices for himself.

He was, both literally and figuratively, robbed of his identity. "I felt like an ant," Garfield explained. "Small.... invisible."

Staff at the Aphasia Institute helped Garfield to communicate, found him a scooter to increase his mobility and helped him move to a more appropriate residence. They helped him to build confidence and to apply for a new identity card for adult citizens who don't drive but who require identification.

Today, Garfield proudly carries his Ontario identification card and shows it as a symbol of how far he has come. "I came here and I got my identity back," Garfield said.



TAVISTOCK AWARD

In September, the Aphasia Institute proudly became the first international recipient of the Robin Tavistock Award. This award is presented annually by the United Kingdom-based Tavistock Trust in honour of the 14th Duke of Bedford, Robin Tavistock, to a person, or group, who has made a significant contribution in the field of aphasia.



Aura Kagan, Executive Director, and Pat Arato, Founder, receiving the Tavistock Award

In presenting the award at the British Aphasiology Society Conference, the Duchess of Bedford recognized Pat Arato, the founder of the original Aphasia Centre, and Aura Kagan, Executive Director, for combining innovative service delivery with education and research to give hope to people with aphasia and their families.

IN MEMORIAM: Oscar Arato

(December 11, 1933 – September 22, 2011)

On September 26, the Aphasia Institute dedicated its 2011 Annual General Meeting to Oscar Arato, for whom the original Aphasia Centre was first formed. Oscar passed away on September 22, 2011.

The staff and volunteers at the Aphasia Institute extend sympathies to Oscar's family in Canada and Australia.



BAC – British Aphasiology Society Conference

Dr. Aura Kagan, Executive Director of the Aphasia Institute, presented a keynote address at the British Aphasiology Society Conference, titled "Demonstrating the value of aphasia interventions: Contribution of the Assessment for Living with Aphasia". In her presentation, she discussed a new tool developed by the research team at the Aphasia Institute – The Assessment for Living with Aphasia (ALA). The ALA is a comprehensive assessment package that helps to better assess the impact of aphasia and identify the factors that affect the quality of life and exacerbate or reduce disability.

"Dr. Kagan's presentation the Assessment for Living with Aphasia tool struck a chord with conference attendees from around the world," said Christos Salis, Chair of the British Aphasiology Society Conference and Lecturer in the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Services at Reading University in the UK. "This powerful new tool provides clinicians for the first time with a holistic understanding of the impact of aphasia on the patient's quality of life."



Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Minister of Transportation

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2010-2011 Annual General Meeting took place at the Aphasia Institute on September 26, 2010. The Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Minister of Transportation and candidate in the provincial election for Don Valley West welcomed the more than 120 members and guests in attendance. Margaret Bonnell, member of the Aphasia Institute acted as MC. Alain Favrod spoke of his experience as an AI volunteer, and Garfield Alexander (see first page) shared his journey of recovery from a stroke with the audience. Dr. Dale Corbett, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ottawa, spoke of his research into restoring upper arm mobility following a stroke.



Our Membership fully engaging in our Annual General Meeting



Dr. Dale Corbett, Scientific Director & CEO, Heart & Stroke Foundation Centre for Stroke Recovery

The Aphasia Institute relies on the generosity of individual donors and volunteers to deliver life-changing programs. For more information about the Aphasia Institute, please visit our website at www.aphasia.ca.



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