



## A STANDING OVATION FOR LUCIANO!

*Public speaking can be a nightmare for most of us.  
Can you imagine doing this with APHASIA?*



*It was an arduous journey  
from the onset of aphasia to  
getting a spontaneous  
standing ovation...*

Would you have the courage to give a speech to a room full of people? What if you had great difficulty in communicating your thoughts, as well as understanding what others were saying? What if you had severe aphasia and knew exactly what you wanted to say but the aphasia made this feel like an insurmountable obstacle?

Before you answer, please take a moment to picture this incredible scenario:

***It's a Friday morning and the Aphasia Institute's Toastmasters\* program is about to get underway. Luciano, a client with severe aphasia, is standing before an audience of 20, and just within his grasp is a personal milestone – public speaking!***

To understand any journey of courage and determination, it's important to know how it starts. Luciano's story begins like that of so many other Canadians. After coming to Canada from Italy as a young child, Luciano believed he had a life plan for success. He created a successful masonry company with his brother and was enjoying family life with his partner and three active teenagers, one of whom worked with him during the summer months.

Life was good, but it only takes a moment for everything to change—and Luciano's did. Abruptly. After a long recovery from knee surgery, Luciano suffered a devastating stroke, resulting in multiple surgeries... and aphasia. Luciano could now only communicate using just a few words and numbers, repeated over and over.

With aphasia, Luciano had now lost more than just the ability to formulate and speak the words he knew he wanted to say. He also lost the ability to engage in any kind of **conversational interaction**. So great was the resulting isolation that Luciano was left feeling alone and frustrated, not only with himself but also with people who did not understand his language disorder. His life had changed forever. He now lived in a very dark and lonely place.

In 2011, life thankfully changed again, this time in a positive way. Luciano was referred to the Aphasia Institute, and **for the first time since his stroke Luciano felt understood**. He started participating in conversation groups, fitness activities, and numerous client outings. He

*(Continue on back)*

*(Continued from front)*

no longer felt isolated. He had found a community that provided support and helped him develop new communication skills and the confidence to try new things at his own pace.

As part of his journey, Luciano developed a life storybook, which would become his Toastmasters speech. The life storybook detailed Luciano's experiences before and since his stroke—his beautiful, supportive family, the many activities that enriched his life, and his aspirations for the future. With the help of Janette, a speech-language pathology student who trained extensively in the Aphasia Institute's *Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia* (SCA™)\*\*, Luciano began to reveal more and more of his own story and his own identity. Through additional photos and with Janette's ability to support conversation, the two of them worked together to tell his story.

Luciano then took the next step and arrived at that incredible milestone. He presented his story to his Toastmasters peers in a 15-minute speech, **receiving a**

**standing ovation!** Luciano used pictographs and key words to indicate to the group that he felt “**empowered, confident, successful and proud.**”

Janette, a partner to Luciano along his journey, says:



***“Luciano knew what he wanted to say. My challenge was to find a way to help him express himself given his aphasia. We worked on using intonation, gesture, facial expressions, and visual aids, to ensure he was able to get the full extent of his message across.”***

Reaching this incredible milestone has helped Luciano to regain his dignity, and live his life to the fullest once again. What seemed insurmountable was made possible through the expertise and caring support from staff, volunteers and other clients at the Aphasia Institute.

Miracles like Luciano's are achieved at the Aphasia Institute all the time.

\* Toastmasters International (TI) is a non-profit educational organization that operates clubs worldwide for the purpose of helping members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills. As part of its innovative programming, the Aphasia Institute has worked with TI to provide an adapted version of the program for people with aphasia.

\*\* SCA™ is a methodology developed by the Aphasia Institute that includes a series of techniques to help people who 'know-more-than-they-can-say' improve their ability to communicate.

*Please help us to continue touching lives and rebuilding conversations for people with aphasia and their families.*

*Working together, we can break down the wall that is aphasia.*

**Thank you for your support!**

