



REBUILDING COMMUNICATION

# BUILDING Bridges



**Building Bridges** is the quarterly newsletter of the Aphasia Institute – 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.

## The Long, Challenging Road Back to the Dance Floor

In a room filled with colourful streamers and bright balloons, Tom's eyes are fixated on only one thing – the woman he has loved for more than four decades, his wife Barbara. He takes her hands and just as they have done throughout their 44-year marriage, they dance. Tom's eyes radiate with love and he smiles as he sits in his wheelchair while his wife swings his arms side to side in time to the romantic ballads playing at the Aphasia Institute's Valentine's Dance on February 14, 2013.

Getting Tom back on the dance floor wasn't easy after he suffered a massive stroke in November 2008. Tom was working from home after building a successful career in real estate for

36 years, when Barbara found him standing in the doorway of his office and could see something was wrong – he was having a stroke. He spent 20 months in hospitals and rehab, working to recover from the severe expressive aphasia and hemiparesis to his right side as a result of the stroke. Barbara was at Tom's side every day and knew that this man that was "the head of the family and that I used to cling to, and could command whatever room he walked into" now needed her support to recapture his zest for life.

**"We love to dance, we have been dancing together our whole lives and we will never stop!"** Barbara

A speech pathologist working with Tom recommended they visit the Aphasia Institute. "What a blessing that was," says Barbara. "There is so much to offer if you can get through those front doors and stay a while. The Aphasia Institute was full of warmth, full of hope."

Tom has had a busy social / education calendar since becoming a client at the Institute. In his weekly visits he participates in the conversation groups, exercise, and meditation programs. Recently, Tom and Barbara shared their incredible journey together through the "Life Story" program – an aphasia-friendly

book designed to help members reconnect with themselves and the people in their world by telling their "life story" through pictures and pictographs. Documenting their personal history together gave Tom and Barbara the opportunity to bond as a couple and make future memories.

It's been four years since Tom was wheeled through the doors of the Institute and Barbara says it's been empowering for him. "We're at the point where Tom can inspire other people because of the progress he's made. He has made tons of friends there, he has that way about him," gushes Barbara. "He draws people to him."

The Aphasia Institute's programs and events are designed to reveal the opportunities to move forward, build confidence, and embrace life in new ways for those with aphasia like Tom. So once again, Tom can be in command of his life just as he was before the stroke... even on the dance floor.

"Tom was a team leader, and he will be again," says Barbara. "He shows me patience – he never complains. I love him now more than before."



### Join our Conversation!



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## These Shoes Were Made for Walking... Join Us at Walk, Talk 'n Roll!

Lace up your shoes and get your water bottles ready because the Aphasia Institute's signature fundraiser "Walk, Talk 'n Roll" is ready to take its mark on Toronto's city streets on June 9, 2013. Being a champion is as easy as signing up as a participant, a sponsor, or a donor by visiting [www.aphasia.ca/walk-n-roll/](http://www.aphasia.ca/walk-n-roll/). The Institute's target for this year is to raise \$60,000 to support programs and research to help people with aphasia express themselves to the world around them.



## Twice the Thanks for Helping Us Double Our Annual Appeal Goal!

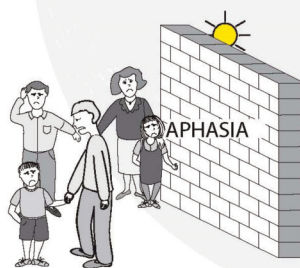
The Aphasia Institute's 2012 Annual Appeal was a resounding success raising 50% more than last year! More than 1,400 donors were touched by the motivational story of Luciano who suffered a stroke that resulted in severe aphasia, leaving him with the ability to communicate only using a few words and numbers. Luciano was able to turn his isolation into inspiration and gave a 15-minute speech through the Institute's "Toastmaster Program" that had everyone on their feet in applause. The generosity of donors ensures that people like Luciano will continue to experience the thrill of re-joining life's conversations. The Aphasia Institute extends its most heartfelt thanks to those who invest in our organization – we couldn't do this important work without you.

## Baking Benevolence

Special thanks to sponsors Longo's and What a Bagel at 808 York Mills Road, and the Real Canadian Superstore at 825 Don Mills Road, who contributed to the Aphasia Institute's delectable Bake Sale Fundraiser on February.



## Great Grant Opportunity Awarded to the Aphasia Institute



No Barriers



Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

Aphasia-friendly illustration sample

For more than 30 years, the Aphasia Institute has been developing programs and services to help people with aphasia regain their language and comprehension skills. One of its most innovative methods is through using pictographs to help members communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs, and wants. The Institute has created a database of thousands of pictographic images used in resources such as booklets and DVDs on topics ranging from daily living, speaking to medical professionals, dealing with accompanying medical conditions, and intimacy and relationships.

In July 2012, the Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded the Aphasia Institute a \$406,000 grant for a three-year project that will take the Institute's extensive pictograph collection and make it available electronically to users across the province, country and around the world. The project completion is slated for 2015.

"We are very excited to provide access to our valuable pictograph resource to individuals and organizations on a national and international level," says Aura Kagan, Aphasia Institute's Executive Director and Director of Applied Research and Education. "It is a great opportunity to share the work AI is doing to help people with aphasia re-join life's conversations."



**The Aphasia Institute** relies on the generosity of individual donors and volunteers to deliver life-changing programs.

For more information, visit [www.aphasia.ca](http://www.aphasia.ca)

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