



# Building Bridges

## Building Bridges | Newsletter of the Aphasia Institute

The Aphasia Institute is a Canadian community-based centre of excellence that is a world leader in developing and delivering programs that help people with aphasia, their families, health care professionals and other caregivers, learn how to communicate effectively and begin to navigate their own lives again. Through an integrated approach that includes direct service, ground-breaking research, inventive education and training, the Aphasia Institute provides innovative communications solutions to people with aphasia and their families.

## Celebrating the Legacy of Dr. Aura Kagan: Transforming the Aphasia Community



To our community,

Many of you will have already received an email from Silvia Gomes, our Board Chair, letting you know that Dr. Aura Kagan, the Executive Director of the Aphasia Institute since 1987, will be transitioning to a new role as Executive Advisor, Strategy, Applied Research and Education from April 1, 2023. Among other opportunities, this new role will enable Aura to focus on the research that has transformed the aphasia community, and we couldn't be more thrilled for her.

For over three and a half decades, Aura has been an inspiration to the aphasia community. Her visionary leadership and ground-breaking research have transformed the way we think about, and approach aphasia. Beginning with her initial observations of the magic created by our programs and motivated by daily contact with our clients and families living with aphasia, Aura's work on Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™) has revolutionized the way we communicate with individuals with aphasia, and improved the lives of countless people. Thanks to her tireless efforts, SCA™ is part of the *Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations* and is used in practices globally.

Aura's dedication to the field of aphasia has not gone unnoticed. As an American Speech and Hearing Association Fellow, she has received multiple awards for her contributions to the field of aphasia, including the Robin Tavistock Award in 2020. In their press release to announce the award, The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia stated, "To put it quite simply, Aura Kagan is one of Canada's National Treasures. The ripple effect of what Dr. Kagan has done, and is doing, will carry on forever."

As we celebrate Aura's many achievements, we want to express our gratitude for her unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life of people with, and affected by, aphasia, *one conversation at a time*. Her impact on the aphasia community is immeasurable, and we are honored to have worked alongside her and look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with her. Aura always credits the Aphasia Institute's clients, families, volunteers and staff for sharing their wisdom and experiences and feels privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute.

Join us in celebrating Aura's incredible contributions to the aphasia community, and help us continue to transform the lives of people with aphasia. Thank you for your support.

## New Executive Director: Natalie Gierman



We are pleased to announce that the current Director, Clinical Services and National/ Provincial Education Lead, **Natalie Gierman** MHSc. PMP, has agreed to assume the **Executive Director** role effective April 1st, 2023.

Natalie has over 18 years of experience in senior roles in the non-profit health sector and brings a deep knowledge of stroke systems of care. She is a long-

time dedicated aphasia champion including past service as a volunteer on the Aphasia Institute's Research and Ethics Committee. We look forward to the commitment, compassion, expertise and leadership abilities that she brings to her new role.

## Save the Date!

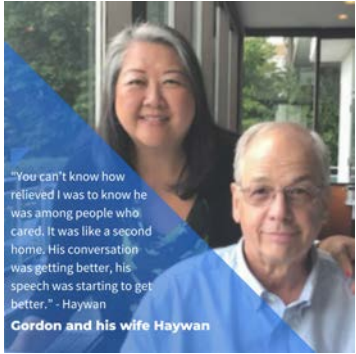


**On Sunday, June 11th**, our community of clients, staff, volunteers, and family will join together for our **26th Talk, Walk 'n Roll!**

Our Talk, Walk 'n Roll is a yearly fundraising campaign, where we take part in the **Toronto Challenge** to make a difference in our community. After three years of virtual participation, **this year's Talk, Walk 'n Roll will be an in-person event.**

The event takes place during **Aphasia Awareness Month** and **Seniors Month**. Join us! We need your support more than ever as we work to improve the quality of life for people with aphasia.

**Save the date in your calendars** and look soon for the official package in your inbox or mailbox.



For last year's Talk, Walk 'n Roll, **Gordon and his wife Haywan** shared their aphasia journey with us. We thank them for sharing their remarkable story.

***With your support,  
we raised over  
\$95,000!***

## Thank you for supporting our 2022 Annual Appeal campaign!



On behalf of our clients, volunteers, members, staff, and board of directors, we would like to thank all of you who gave so generously to our 2022 Annual Appeal.

***Thanks to you, we  
raised over \$47,000!***





Annual Report 2021/2022 is live on our website.  
Below are some highlights in the report:

- 133 volunteers provided 7,919 hours of support
- 849 Ontario health providers completed the FREE SCA™ eLearning module
- Over 250,000 views of awareness video with messages from people living with aphasia



## Memorial Service



We hosted a 1-hour virtual memorial service in November at which members of the community with aphasia, staff, volunteers, family members and alumni celebrated the lives and impact of the 15 members of our community who passed away over the past year.

Town Hall



Welcome to our Town Hall

Date November 15, 2022

In November, we offered an interactive on-line Town Hall meeting for our community. We created several small focus groups of members, to obtain feedback on preferences related to virtual and in-person programming, and to provide the opportunity to make suggestions for future program ideas and improvements.

Among the things that we learned through the discussions at the Town Hall and responses to a survey sent to members of the Aphasia Institute who could not attend, was that there is still a strong need for both on-line and in-person program options. The information gathered from these discussions and survey is guiding us as we continue developing our hybrid model of programming.

Free Resources

### HOW TO COMMUNICATE

with a person with aphasia:

- Imagine what they are trying to say, instead of focusing on mistakes
- Keep the place quiet, when talking with him/her
- Try to have only one conversation at a time, if other people are in the room

**Be prepared:**

- Marker
- Paper or Whiteboard (portable)

### QUICK TIPS\*

- A:** ask simple + direct questions
- P:** provide many ways to help talk
- H:** help communicate, if asked
- A:** acknowledge their frustration
- S:** speak clearly, slowly, and pause
- I:** if you don't understand, say so
- A:** allow extra time

\*Adapted from National Aphasia Association - "The Aphasia Companion Guide"

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Aphasia Institute  
**(416) 226-3636**  
[www.aphasia.ca](http://www.aphasia.ca)

**Life's a Conversation.**

This resource was developed by the Aphasia Institute. We gratefully acknowledge input from Aaron Cook, General Hospital nurse and reeducation unit staff, as well as from many family members of people with aphasia.

### Does your Family Member have APHASIA?

What to look for and What you can do

Your family member may know more than they can say!

### Does your family member have Aphasia?

**What to look for...**

- He/She can't speak, or their words don't make sense
- You aren't sure if he/she understands you
- He/She may not say 'Yes/No' correctly, even if they know what they want

**Aphasia may get better over time. Even if it does not, we know people can live successfully with Aphasia.**

**What YOU can do:**

- Ask a speech-language pathologist (SLP) about aphasia
- Show your family member you understand that he/she may 'know more than they can say'
- Keep talking with him/her. Include them in conversation.

### COMMUNICATION TIPS:

**Help them feel respected:**

- Speak to him/her directly, naturally, and kindly
- Make eye contact
- Don't shout. Be patient
- Use an adult tone of voice
- If you need to speak on their behalf, ask him/her if it's OK
- Acknowledge their frustration
- Say/show, "I know you know!"

**GETTING THE MESSAGE IN... Help him/her understand you:**

- Speak clearly & slowly. Pause frequently
- Use short sentences
- Write large key words
- Draw/point to pictures/things
- Use your hands - face to show what you mean
- One topic at a time
- Let him/her see your lips

### COMMUNICATION TIPS:

**GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT... Help him/her communicate:**

- Ask yes/no questions, one at a time
- Give him/her time to answer
- Don't complete their sentences (unless asked)
- Give him/her choices to point to (e.g. 'YES' / 'NO' / 'I')
- See if their face/actions are saying something
- If they say the wrong word, imagine what they may be trying to say

**Double-check:**

- Check what you think they have told you. (Say it again, or sum it up)
- Ask if they have more to tell you, before moving on
- Sometimes, you can ask, "Should we take a break? Can we try again later?"

A FREE pamphlet for families of people with aphasia was created specifically to address the early stage in their aphasia journey. The pamphlet provides short, practical tips on how to better communicate with a family member with aphasia. This pamphlet is now accompanied by a short, free explanatory video.

Click on the image (on the left) to watch the video and download the 'aphasia-friendly' resource and many more.

For past issues of Building Bridges, please [CLICK HERE](#)

For past issues of Annual and Financial Reports, please [CLICK HERE](#)

DONATE NOW

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