



Building Bridges

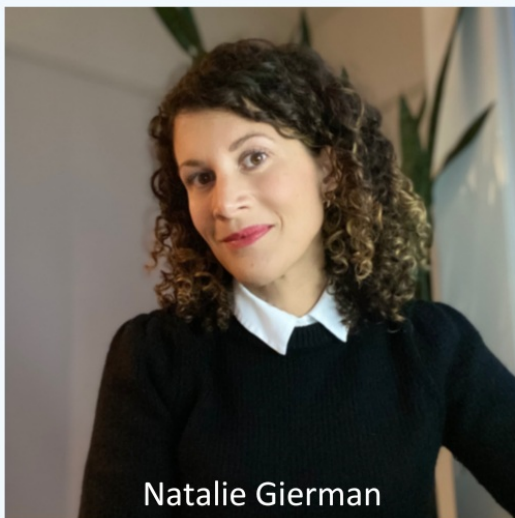
Building Bridges | Newsletter of the Aphasia Institute

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, and innovative education and training, the Aphasia Institute provides communications solutions to people with aphasia, their families and others impacted by aphasia.

A Conversation: How Members Shape Our Community

With a "member first" mindset, our members are our first priority, and they shape the entire Aphasia Institute community, through their contributions to every aspect of our operations from our training programs to our direct services.

Read this conversation between Natalie Gierman, our Executive Director, and Elyse Shumway, our Director of Clinical Services and Education, about how our members help shape and impact our community.



Natalie Gierman



Elyse Shumway

Natalie: Elyse, both of us have been staff of AI for nearly two years, but we both have prior connections spanning over two decades.

Elyse: Indeed, I have been involved with AI for over 20 years. I served on the Board of Directors when we were on Links Road, under Pat Arato's leadership. Then, I worked as a consultant in the areas of training, resources, and research. During those initial years, my interaction with our members and the Community Aphasia Program was limited. It has been a fascinating journey - becoming more deeply involved. What about you?

Natalie: It is great that you joined as our Director of Clinical Services and Education with such a deep history. I served on the Education and Training Advisory Committee and the Research and Ethics Committee for about four years before joining AI as an employee. Until then, I did not know a lot about our direct services either – theoretically I understood that we had a volunteer mediator model, but I did not have a lot of interaction with our members.

Camilla Todesco was the first member that I met through the Research and Ethics Committee. I learned a lot from her about living with aphasia and I will always be grateful for her openness to sharing her experiences and expertise. The term "members" was also intriguing, as other agencies often use "patients" or "clients."

Elyse: Yes, the term "members" reflects our focus on the Life Participation Model. It emphasizes that individuals with aphasia actively join our Aphasia Institute community – to enhance their lives in their other communities – generally after they have finished with structured care as patients in a hospital. We want to encourage and support them as they live their lives with their families and friends, engage in conversations, and participate in their chosen activities. This transition from a more passive role as patients into a more active role is reflected in their membership in our AI community.

Natalie: Our members really do play a significant role in shaping our organization. When members join us they bring their unique lived experience of aphasia and they also come from various backgrounds, with diverse experience and skills. They contribute both their expertise and lived experience to the Aphasia Institute - often serving on the Aphasia Institute Board of Directors, committees, and workgroups. They are voting members at our AGM.

Elyse: That's right. Our members are also involved in our Community Aphasia Program, sharing their recovery stories with new members, and encouraging them in their conversation groups. They also are key participants in various projects, such as our educational videos and most recently testing and commenting on the new 'aphasia friendly' portion of our website.

Natalie: These opportunities all are meaningful and enriching, for the members and our broader community. I feel that one of the most impactful roles is that of the member trainers in our healthcare provider training programs. Can you tell us more about this important role in training healthcare providers?

Elyse: Our healthcare provider training program, is focused on teaching our method called *Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia* (SCA™), and it benefits greatly from our 'member trainers'. They are very adept at introducing new people to the communication techniques that we have developed, and are continuing to develop, and making it a fun learning experience. They coach new learners, provide firsthand insight, and make the learning experience truly

engaging and relevant. We have a solid core of members who've been doing it for a long time and who mentor the newer member trainers, creating a dynamic training environment.

Natalie: That's impressive. How do trainees feel about learning from individuals living with aphasia?

Elyse: Our trainees tell us that they feel more confident in their communication skills and emphasize that there's no substitute for learning from someone with aphasia who knows what it means for a trainer to be effective.

Natalie: For members interested in becoming member trainers, how can they express their interest? I know there is training provided but are you looking for any particular skills or qualities?

Elyse: Members can inform one of our volunteers or speech-language pathologists of their interest. On occasion, we approach members who we believe are well-suited for specific roles. We look for qualities like a deep understanding of living with aphasia, confidence in using the Supported Conversation techniques themselves, and the ability to facilitate the learners in their efforts to try new skills.

Natalie: Thank you, Elyse. I hope this encourages more members to get involved when we seek their expertise in the future.

We Did It - Accreditation with Commendation



The hard work of the Aphasia Team, our staff, members, volunteers, and community partners has resulted in the Aphasia Institute being awarded **Accreditation with Commendation** by Accreditation Canada. This is our first attempt at being accredited, and it is exceptional to be awarded Accreditation with Commendation on a first attempt! There are three levels of accreditation: Accredited, Accreditation with Commendation and Accreditation with Exemplary Standing. Accreditation with Commendation means that through survey results, demonstrated evidence of required organizational practices and priority standards, we met 84-95% of all requirements for Governance, Leadership, Client Services, Infection Prevention and Control and within these categories many areas such as human resource practices, quality improvement, privacy and security and community engagement. This has been an incredible 3-year journey, and we could not have done it without the outstanding work of the Aphasia Team. We are grateful to all of you and to Accreditation Canada for making us even better as we continue on our journey to provide the best quality services for people with aphasia and their families.

Talk, Walk 'n Roll - Our Community Coming Together



After three years of virtual celebrations, our community of clients, staff, volunteers, and family came together **on June 11th, 2023** for our **26th Talk, Walk 'n Roll!** Talk, Walk 'n Roll is our yearly fundraising campaign, where we take part in the **Toronto Challenge** to make a difference in our community.

Together we raised over \$115,000 dollars!! Thanks to the tremendous fundraising efforts of our entire community. We are grateful to everyone who participated, fundraised and donated to our Talk, Walk 'n Roll this year. Our community's spirited engagement has made this our **MOST** successful fundraiser yet! Please click [here to look at some photos from the day.](#)

We thank everyone for their unwavering support.

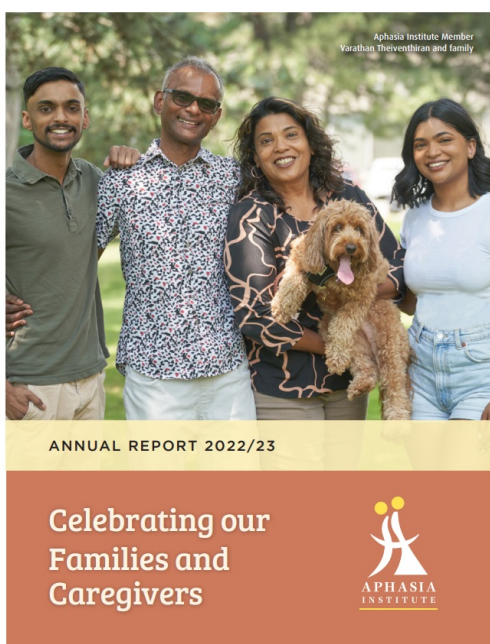


For this year's Talk, Walk 'n Roll, **Sharron and her husband Travis** shared their aphasia journey with us. We thank them for sharing their inspiring story.

With your support, we raised over \$115,000!

Annual Report 2022 / 2023

In this year's edition of our Annual Report, we invite you to explore stories of transformation and hope, including a heartfelt story from our Social Work Team on how we support families through change.



You will also learn about our successes and our preparations for formal accreditation. We have also been diligently working on the necessary revisions to bylaws in compliance with the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.

Our Annual Report 2022/2023 is now available on our website.

[READ THE FULL REPORT](#)

Annual General Meeting & Special Meeting



Life's a Conversation.

Annual General Meeting

September 27, 2023



Every year we hold our **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** to share our success stories with our Aphasia Institute community and include our stakeholders in important discussions. This year the AGM was held virtually, celebrating our caregivers and the role they play in the lives of our members with aphasia. We had an amazing turnout this year and we want to thank all of our stakeholders including our members, family members, staff, board members and volunteers who took the time to join us for the meeting!

The AGM was followed by a **Special Meeting**. The meeting was to address the new legislation called the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). Two special resolutions were approved changing our Articles of Amendment and By-law in line with ONCA.

Achievement Video

We have had a really exciting year, and we want to share our many successes with you. **Click on the image below to watch the video**, created by our talented volunteer, Naomi Geller.



Members Volunteering at The Daily Bread Food Bank



This year we awarded the **Pat Arato Community**



Partner Award to the **Daily Bread Food Bank** for helping our members living with aphasia give back and participate in something fulfilling and challenging. The group engagement offers our members a unique opportunity to volunteer – many of them would otherwise not be able to do so, due to their aphasia and physical challenges. If you are interested in volunteering please reach out to **Fatima** by calling **647-394-5282** or by email at fcabral@aphasia.ca.

New Resources

APHASIA COMMUNICATION FOR CAREGIVERS



Our team is excited to share with you a new resource that was created by Speech Language Pathologist, content creator, and illustrator, Graham Henderson. Graham has created a **comic book** titled, **“Aphasia Communication for Caregivers”** and was kind enough to allow the Aphasia Institute to share it with our members, their families and broader international audiences via our website.

Click on the image to download the “Aphasia Communication for caregivers”.

Annual Appeal 2023



Soon you will receive our **Annual Appeal 2023 package** in the mail or in your inbox.

This year you'll read the heartfelt story of our member **Jim and his wife Bessie** to see how the programs, tools, and research that you help fund is making a life-changing impact in both the lives of people living with aphasia and their caregivers, enabling conversation, comfort and connection.

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

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

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