

CARE IN ACTION

MARCH OF DIMES CANADA NEWSLETTER



2019

THANK YOU!

Len Baker, President and CEO

Thank you for your support which is so important to helping us realize our vision for an inclusive society.

We work towards this vision through advocacy and services which promote inclusion, choice and control for people with disabilities where they live, work and play.

Our programs provide local services that meet consumer needs for inclusion; enhance quality of life for stroke survivors and caregivers; promote inclusion through assistive technology; and break down barriers to employment and career advancement. We are also improving access to supports and services.

On behalf of the people we serve, thank you.



ANNA BAUER ROSS



Anna Bauer-Ross

It's hard to keep up with Anna Bauer-Ross. Day-long walking tours around ancient temples in the steamy jungles of Thailand. Hiking the hot California desert in Joshua Tree National Park — Anna Bauer-Ross has definitely been on the move since we last spoke with her in 2013. She has been travelling the world, attending college and now university,

and generally living life to the full.

You may recall her story. Anna was vacationing in the Bahamas in 2008 with her two young daughters when she was struck by a massive brain stem stroke. She was only 36. Airlifted back to Toronto, doctors worked to save her life, but the stroke had caused a severe left side neuropathy and damaged her vocal cords. Undaunted, she began rehab in earnest, refusing to let stroke define her life.

A year after the stroke, Anna became interested in helping fellow stroke survivors and trained for March of Dimes Canada's Peers Fostering Hope Program, having experienced first-hand the immense benefits of peer support during her own recovery. "Working with survivors and their families in the immediate aftermath of a stroke was the most satisfying for me. A stroke is traumatic, and I knew what they were going through." She eventually joined the Board of Stroke Recovery Canada®, Toronto Central chapter, and also wrote for the newsletter.

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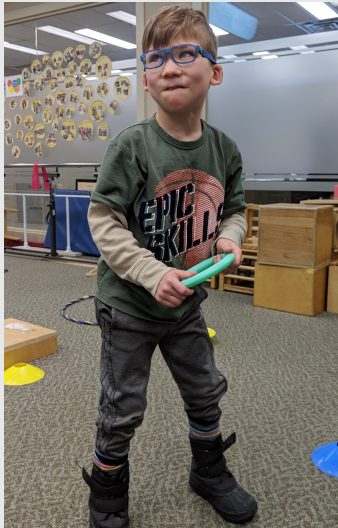


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RHETT



Rhett is an energetic and fun-loving boy who makes friends with ease, loves to play with his sisters, Rhea and Rowan, and works hard at becoming independent. Born with a brain malformation and diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Rhett was unable to stand

on his own when he first started Conductive Education® (CE) classes with March of Dimes Canada three and a half years ago. Since then, the transformation in Rhett has been remarkable.

His mom, Jennifer, recalls wincing in fear those first few weeks as she observed the conductor working with her son. “I couldn’t watch! I kept thinking - he can’t do that!” These days, it’s hard to keep up with this active nine-year-old. Rhett now walks independently, without any support or help. He loves to run and play and his communication skills have improved tremendously.

Most of all, CE has made him brave. “CE challenges him, and he enjoys the challenge,” says Jennifer. “He is treated like a regular nine-year-old, and that’s fantastic,” she adds. “Even the therapist at his school has remarked that Rhett’s progress is astonishing. We are so proud.”

Rhett attends regular sessions on Saturdays and Thursdays but has participated in all of the CE camps as well. Rhett loves school and he is currently in Grade 3. “As time passes, I can see that he’s becoming more and more independent. He’s very social. He likes to be in the thick of things with his friends, and it’s neat to see how the kids support each other in the group sessions. Our family is so grateful that March of Dimes came into our lives,” says Jennifer. “It has made us hopeful.”

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Anna Bauer-Ross and husband

Since 2013, Anna has successfully obtained her Advanced Diploma in Behavioural Science from George Brown College. She is particularly interested in brain injury and therapy, and she has worked with autistic children as well as older adults and seniors with acquired brain injuries. Ever passionate about learning, these days Anna is pursuing an undergraduate degree from Ryerson University in Disability Studies. Her two daughters, now 19 and 22, are building successful lives of their own.

TO HAVE OTHERS AROUND YOU WHO CAN PROVIDE HOPE AT A TIME WHEN ALL ELSE SEEMS UNCERTAIN MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE.”

-Anna Bauer

Looking back, Anna muses about her life after stroke and the amazing journey she has taken since 2008. “I never dreamed that I would be so active again, but I have a supportive partner who encourages me.” Anna also credits March of Dimes’ peer support program for the support and encouragement she received, first as a survivor and then as a volunteer. As I said before, “To have others around you who can provide hope at a time when all else seems uncertain makes a huge difference. The After Stroke program gives stroke survivors back our dignity and self-esteem.”



IN THE DIMELIGHT: NICOLE M^CDONALD



Nicole McDonald

As a Rick Hansen Foundation Ambassador, Nicole McDonald visits schools to talk about accessibility and inclusion from the perspective of someone who lives with a disability. However, a spinal curvature affects Nicole's posture and breathing, which means that giving presentations has been challenging.

"We'd been thinking about how we could improve my public speaking by removing paper notes, as I was having a hard time both holding onto the paper and the microphone," Nicole recalls. She had to bend forward to hold onto everything, which further compromised her breathing. "That, in turn, made it hard for the audience to understand what I was saying. Somehow, I needed to free up my hands to hold the mic and advance the presentation slides. I needed something attached to my chair.

March of Dimes Canada's Assistive Mobile Technology Initiative (AMTI) to the rescue. AMTI provides free tablets to people who are living with a disability and meet the eligibility criteria. Each tablet is customized with apps chosen to address each recipient's specific needs and goals. Nicole is using her device to make her presentations more convenient and easier to deliver. She is delighted.

"I was able to make four presentations in a row at one school all in the same morning!" says Nicole. "I was able to look out at the crowd without having to search my notes. I had no trouble with my breathing, and I wasn't fatigued when I was done. The tablet has made a huge difference."

Nicole receives an honorarium for each presentation she does, which supplements her income. "Now that it's easier, I'm hoping that I can arrange to do more."

WHO WILL CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS?

70%

of stroke survivors depend on daily care from informal family caregivers.

74%

of caregivers don't have access to the supports they need.



WE CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS.

March of Dimes Canada's **After Stroke** program was created to provide community support and resources to stroke survivors and care givers in need. But many Canadians still can't access it because of where they live and because resources are stretched thin.

WE HAVE A PLAN FOR CHANGE.

We're building a Canada where no caregivers and stroke survivors become socially isolated. Our fundraising target of \$300,000 is one step in a long-term goal to make **After Stroke** available coast to coast. Please visit campaign.afterstroke.ca to donate.



VOLUNTEER STORIES

HAMIDA DEWJI



Hamida Dewji

Helping others is Hamida Dewji's reason for getting up in the morning. She eagerly looks forward to being at the March of Dimes Canada head office, where she is the Finance Department's go-to person

on all matters related to filing. If staff are ever in need of a file, Hamida can locate it quickly. That's because Hamida has been creating and maintaining the files for over two decades. "I cannot believe that I have been here 21 years!" she exclaims. Hamida began volunteering half days, Mondays to Fridays, to keep herself busy after her mom passed away at the age of 92. In addition to filing and mailing cheques for Finance, she occasionally helps out other departments.

For Hamida, the joy of giving her time is the reward. "The people are really nice. I just love working here." Meticulously accurate yet modest to a fault, Hamida is a valued volunteer and her dedication is appreciated by everyone at March of Dimes Canada.

PENNY O'SHAUGHNESSY AND THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR CADETS OF IROQUOIS FALLS



Penney O'Shaughnessy and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets

For more than ten years, Penny O'Shaughnessy has helped to marshal the community spirit of the cadets at the Major McCarthy No. 792 Air Cadet Squadron in Iroquois Falls, Ontario. The Royal Canadian Air Cadets is a national youth program for individuals aged 12 to 19. Every year, the Iroquois Falls squadron

participates in the March of Dimes' Door-to-Door Community Canvass Campaign.

"It's important to learn the value of volunteering when you're young because it stays with you for life," says Penny, the squadron's Sponsoring Committee Treasurer. "Volunteerism is very much alive in our community," she adds. "We support each other. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 70, for example, is our squadron's official sponsor."

However, learning what it means to be a good citizen is at the heart of the Air Cadet culture, she points out. "Our cadets are happy to help the March of Dimes because your programs offer Canadians living with a disability opportunities for health, independence and active community participation."

ARE YOU A STROKE SURVIVOR OR CAREGIVER?

After Stroke is a national service offering support, education and community programs for stroke survivors, their caregivers, and families.

Please visit: afterstroke.marchofdimes.ca or call: 1-888-540-6666. We're here to help.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A MONTHLY DONOR?

To learn more about becoming a monthly donor, please go to www.marchofdimes.ca/donate

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LEAVING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL?

To discuss leaving a gift in your will, please contact **Margaret Purcell**, Associate Director, Individual Giving at 1-800-263-3463 ext. 7286 or mpurcell@marchofdimes.ca

WAYS TO CONTACT US

Stay connected! Hear more great stories about our programs and participants on social media. Like or follow us on your favourite app today:



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