

Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “Defying the odds – Jason’s story”

Jason Olford truly is an under-dog; he has defied the odds that he was given to him as a child. Back in the 1970’s, a diagnosis of autism – if they even received a diagnosis - left parents feeling bewildered, confused and isolated. Jason defied those odds and today he is an accomplished member of ASC’s Advisory Committee of Adults on the Spectrum.

Today, 35 years later – and with the help of board members like Jason - ASC has grown to become the largest collective voice in the Canadian autism community. Provincial and territorial autism societies and their member groups provide direct support to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and their families all across Canada. As a member of ASC’s Advisory Committee of Adults on the Spectrum, and as an adult living on the spectrum, Jason has defied his own odds: he is actively involved in aiding ASC to accomplish its mandate.

"They told my parents I wouldn't make it in regular society," says Jason Oldford as he recalls growing up in the 70's with high-functioning Autism. Jason could only receive treatment at a mental health clinic, teacher's aides were non-existent, and autism spectrum disorders were virtually unheard of. In particular, high school was very difficult for Jason; especially grades eight and nine.

Today, almost 25 years later, Jason is a full time translator, holds two BA's (one in Linguistics and French from the University of New Brunswick and one in translation from Concordia University), and he is a member of the Advisory Committee of Adults on the Spectrum for ASC. The challenges he encountered along the way have stayed with him. "It's hard; you don't feel like taking chances because you don't know how people will perceive you or how they will react." To overcome his challenges, Jason sought help from a mental health clinic which helped him improve his communication skills. And while Jason has come a long way from his high school days, he is still troubled by the lack of resources geared toward adults on the spectrum. In particular, funding for proper housing for autistic adults is of great concern to autism community. "Many parents in New Brunswick with a child on the spectrum fear that once their children are adults they will end up in homes with inadequate care or will be institutionalized because they just don't understand." Jason's fear is real and his concerns are valid; according to the most recent findings of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States, 1 in 100 children are being identified as having an ASD. It's clear that ASDs are becoming more prevalent; more resources need to be provided to parents and individuals on the spectrum. The time for action is now: these children, individuals, and families living on the spectrum cannot wait any longer.

Autism Society Canada supports Jason and his family by advocating on a national platform on their behalf. After 35 years of experience working with the Canadian autism community, ASC knows that the time is now to develop the foundation of a Canadian Autism Strategy, so individuals across Canada can access high quality services for their Autism related needs. For more information log on to www.autismsocietycanada.ca, or contact us at **866-476-8440**.

ASC's Provincial Member society is lead by a number of volunteer parents in New Brunswick.

Additional resources can be found in ASC's **National ASD Service Directory**