

Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “A message of hope – Cynthia’s story”

Cynthia Carroll is the executive director for the Provincial autism organization in Nova Scotia. She is also the Nova Scotia representative to the board of Autism Society Canada (ASC), an organization that was started 35 years ago with the goal of helping parents find information and supports for their children living with an autism spectrum disorder. Cynthia is a great asset to ASC and continues to touch the lives of many individuals living with an ASD.

Today, 35 years later – and with the help of board members like Cynthia - 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 Board Member, Cynthia sits alongside other parents and individuals who play an active role in aiding ASC to accomplish its mandate.

Cynthia says, “I do not have a personal story to share; however, I have a story of inspiration. Over the last four years in Nova Scotia, autism organizations and support groups from across the province have come together to meet and discuss how to better support families and people living with autism in Nova Scotia. It was not an easy task. Many people were sceptical as to whether we could work together, united in the fight for autism support and services. Over the years we developed a relationship, worked together, shared resources and stories. Perhaps most importantly, we valued the diversity of the group. Like autism, we are all unique and need to be valued for what we bring to the table. During this time we spoke to government with one voice, participated in working groups and together as a community got the Nova Scotia government to release the first ASD Action Plan in the Country. There were bumps in the road - like any relationship - but our end goal of supporting families and people living with autism always kept us united.”

Cynthia continues her story by saying “The Provincial Autism Centre will change its name to Autism Nova Scotia in the coming months and many of the groups I mentioned above are becoming Chapters of the organization. This journey is one of support, understanding, endurance and collaboration. This story is not the story of one, but the story of many who truly believe that we are stronger together than we are apart. I am humbled and honoured everyday to work with amazing parents, volunteers, professionals and people with autism who are paving the way for better awareness, support and services for the generations coming behind them. It gives me great hope that as we move forward, we will someday have a world where all people living with Autism Spectrum Disorders can live their lives fully.” Thank you for sharing your thoughts, Cynthia. Autism Society Canada supports Cynthia and her community 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 in Nova Scotia is the Provincial Autism Centre.

<http://www.provincialautismcentre.ca> or 877.544.4495