

Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “A woman’s fight for recognition – Martine’s Story”

Martine Stonehouse is a unique individual, and she is clearly a force to be reckoned with. Martine volunteers her time and energy on Autism Society Canada’s Advisory Committee of Adults on the Spectrum. She also is involved with other advocacy initiatives in an effort to help dispel misconceptions about ASDs and developmental conditions in general.

Today, 35 years later – and with the help of strong advisory committee members like Martine - 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.

Martine’s story is one of triumph. In 1999, Martine Stonehouse won a human rights case to fund her gender reassignment—it was a case that she fought for eight years. This experience brought Martine out of her shell. An activist for individuals on the spectrum, Martine has been on the Board of Directors for the Autism Acceptance Project, and the Geneva Convention Centre for Autism. She has participated in speaking engagements for the Autism Group and currently sits on an advisory committee for Autism Society Canada (ASC). “People on the spectrum experience autism in many ways. We’re all different yet we’re all in the same boat making the same journey.”

Born in the 1950’s when there was little understanding of autism spectrum disorders, Martine was kicked out of grade two because of her severe learning difficulties. The school recommended committing Martine to a mental institution; her parents fought hard to find an alternative solution. Martine was enrolled at Hinks-Dellcrest, an alternative school that did a better job of catering to her needs and which offered a flexible curriculum. Despite all her struggles in high school as an adult, Martine has made a life for herself as the head caretaker for the Toronto School Board—a job she’s held for 27 years. While Martine may have gained recognition as a transgendered woman, she continues the fight for the recognition of services for individuals with ASD’s. Martine continues to address many misconceptions that exist in our communities about ASDs. She unabashedly spreads her message of awareness and acceptance everywhere she goes.

Autism Society Canada supports Martine by advocating on a national platform on her 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 Ontario is Autism Ontario

<http://www.autismontario.com> or 416.246.9592