

## **Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “Frustration in rural Saskatchewan – Arden’s story”**

Arden Fiala’s frustration is one that is felt by every parent of a child with an autism spectrum disorder; she has trouble accessing resources for her 13 year old daughter named Elene who has Asperger’s. Arden is also the provincial representative for Saskatchewan on 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. In conjunction with ASC, Arden continues to fight for more government funded programs in her community and across Canada.

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

Arden Fiala is only one of many parents who continue to lobby the government to increase and properly allocate funding, yet those who so desperately need help feel like they have been abandoned. “It’s time to get past the dialogue and do something; it’s time for action now, not tomorrow, not next year.” says Arden. There is a sense of fatigue when ones speaks to parents like Arden; they have children on the spectrum, they lobby sitting members of Parliament, they sit on autism councils, they’re involved in speaking engagements in their communities and across Canada, they fundraise and then they come home where the work is ongoing. Change is not happening at a rate where it is visible. These parents are tired and it’s time that the federal government act as a catalyst to encourage strides at the provincial level.

In Saskatchewan an action plan was implemented in 2008, yet there was no accountability for where the money was going and there are few success stories. “When you have a child on the spectrum you receive a lot of help from other parents; whatever we found, we found as parents.” Although the action plan is a good start, it only helps children up until the age of 19. This means that by the time the money gets to the frontlines, individuals are cut off from receiving any money, because they are no longer eligible. In addition, resources geared toward supporting adults on the spectrum are limited, and in rural Saskatchewan these resources are virtually non-existent. Children on the spectrum grow up to become adults on the spectrum. But there are precious few resources to help them make the transition into adulthood. Parents worry constantly about their children’s futures; what will happen to their children when they are gone? The fear that their children will have nowhere to turn is all too familiar for parents like Arden.

Autism Society Canada supports Arden and her 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](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca), or contact us at 866-476-8440.

ASC’s Provincial Member society in Saskatchewan is SASKFeat.

<http://www.saskfeat.com/> or 306.862.4768