

## Meet Paul and Sherri

Paul's stroke happened in December of 2013. He left work early, not feeling well, and later that day his son found him on the bathroom floor.

"I was paralyzed on my right side. I couldn't talk," Paul says via email.

He spent the next few weeks in an intensive care unit. Doctors described his stroke as 'catastrophic', and told his wife, Sherri, that his only option – if he lived – would be long-term care.

"I was on a feeding tube, and wasn't aware of anything going on," Paul continues. "I couldn't speak read or write. But my wife saw a light in my eyes that told her not to give up on me."

Paul wasn't considered a good candidate for rehabilitation, but one of the hospital's rehab workers disagreed. She lobbied to give him a chance, and it paid off.

"I'm very grateful," Paul says. The communication centre in my brain was damaged, but I regained use of a muscle in my leg that allowed me to walk again. I'm so thankful for that."

"I was in denial for a few months after Paul's stroke,' says his wife Sherri. 'I was sure one day I'd visit him in the hospital and he'd be his regular self."

Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Reality hit when Paul was discharged.

"It was just him and me,' she says. "It was a frightening experience, not just the physical challenges but also dealing with the emotions."

Adjusting to his new life was difficult, and so was communication in the beginning. "He couldn't speak, read or write and his gestures were all very similar," Sherri adds. "It was frustrating for both of us."

Paul and Sherri were lucky enough to have a strong network of family and friends to support them. And Paul's outlook has helped.

"He makes it easy for me. He sets goals and works at achieving them. If there's a way he can do it himself, he will." That can require patience, Sherri admits, since it would be easier for her to do things for him. "But I remind myself that this is about his journey, too."

Today, Paul is living life to the fullest. He walks miles every day and he has taught himself to paint with his left hand. "I keep busy, but it looks different than it used to," he adds. Paul regularly attends a weekly March of Dimes Canada aphasia group and After

Stroke Peterborough. He goes to Aphasia Camp by himself, and Wellness Retreats with Sherri. And they both volunteer with our Peers Fostering Hope program.

“Before COVID-19, we’d go into the hospital and visit stroke survivors. Paul shows them there’s life after stroke, and I give them insight from a caregiver’s perspective,” says Sherri.

There are challenges, of course. Paul can’t speak at all, and his reading and writing are limited.

“Life is still good,” says Paul. “It’s just different now.”

“And I always get the last word in,” Sherri jokes.

Find out more about the After Stroke programs supported by the money you raise at [afterstroke.ca](https://afterstroke.ca).

### **By the numbers**

- 2,581 volunteers
- 38 communities across Ontario
- 16,000 doors were knocked on
- 7,123 people donated
- 6,800 hours donated by canvassers and captains
- \$194,000 (gross) raised

### **Message from Len**

Nothing has been going as planned this year, including our Community Canvass Campaign. COVID-19 moved us entirely online, which we have the infrastructure to do, but many people simply weren’t able to donate.

It’s a tough fundraising environment.

Our volunteers have been coming through, though, as always. Your commitment is allowing us to safely reach people at a time when our services are more crucial than ever. The money you raise ensures that Canadians living with disability can safely, conveniently access the care and connection they need now and in the future.

You go above and beyond. You show up for March of Dimes Canada and our clients in a remarkable way, and we can’t tell you how much we appreciate it. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

## **Where the money goes – After Stroke**

Over 400,000 Canadians live with the effects of a stroke. So do their families. And many of them feel lost once they leave the hospital – they don't know where to turn or what to expect. That's where After Stroke comes in. With programs that range from hospital visits from peers to adaptive devices, we help stroke survivors and caregivers gain as much independence as possible as they adapt to life after stroke.

The money you raised will help us reach people across Canada online and – when it's safe again – in person. You can find out more about After Stroke at [afterstroke.com](https://afterstroke.com)

## **Conquer the Curve**

COVID-19 has impacted us all, but not equally. People living with disability continue to face urgent challenges, cut off from family, friends and supports they rely on every day. As our communities reopen, they have to remain vigilant about exposure to the virus.

That means staying at home.

Our Conquer the Curve campaign has raised money to make our programs, including After Stroke, available online. That means stroke survivors and caregivers will be connected, supported and safe as they self-isolate.

Find out more about how COVID-19 is impacting people living with disability, and Conquer the Curve, at [conquerthecurve.ca](https://conquerthecurve.ca)

## **Every dollar counts**

Our canvassers work hard for every dollar they raise, and we're incredibly grateful. Help make sure that those dollars go as far as possible by providing us with your email address. This saves money on printing, and protects the environment. Sign up for email communications by sending your name, community and email address to: [door2door@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:door2door@marchofdimes.ca).

Don't forget to put Captain E-mail or Canvasser E-mail in the subject line. Please consider increasing your door-to-door canvassing impact this year by getting involved in our online campaign —[www.marchofdimes.ca/AfterStrokeCampaign](https://www.marchofdimes.ca/AfterStrokeCampaign). It's an easy way to involve your friends and family, and increase your support for After Stroke.