Does London and Area volunteer? Yes indeed they do! And they are really appreciated.

On November 9, 2015, the staff of Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, in London, and its many volunteers were brought together by the generous people at Lerners LLP Law firm for an evening of fine dining and recognition. The Sunningdale Golf and Country Club provided a lovely, accessible setting and a delicious repast. One of the many positives of an event like this is the opportunity to get to know and exchange information with other members of the spinal cord injury community, with both staff and volunteers.

Nigel Gilby, a partner at Lerners Law Firm, spoke to the group about his background, both personal and in his law career, and why sponsoring Spinal Cord Injury Ontario peer related events reflects his desire to give back to the community. Meredith Burley of Spinal Cord Injury Ontario gave an overview of the Peer Support Program in the province, including the fact that nine of the ten support programs have a community of volunteers who are trained and available to work one-on-one with newly injured individuals.

Penny Watson, Peer Support Coordinator for London and area also spoke about the Peer Support Program, and how it not only reaches out to newly injured people but that getting to know the different Peer Volunteers has expanded her world. Special recognition was given to recently deceased volunteer Perry Meunier. Penny introduced each Peer Volunteer who attended the event on the evening and highlighted some of their background, and attributes that they had contributed to the program while handing out certificates of appreciation.

At the end of the evening Diamondz Designated Drivers, sponsored by Lerners Law Firm, were available to give anyone a ride home if they had partaken in the festive beverages.

Thank you to our sponsors, and everyone who came out on the evening.
Outspoken!

My life.

honoured because if you’re talking about heroes, these two are heroes in
can trust them and count on them. Matt and Darren should absolutely be
people; there should be more people like them in the world. I know that I
they mean so much to me. They are both so into their jobs and helping

came into my life when they did. I want to honour Matt and Darren because
strong, dedicated and ready to face whatever lies ahead.

really cool thing that it continues beyond our coffee group, when people
community come together and provide support to each other. I also think it’s a

strong, dedicated and ready to face whatever lies ahead.

Diane, Regional Services Coordinator,
Sault Ste. Marie

There are two groups of people who I would like to honour. The first group
always been athletic.

Although he is grateful to Chris and Angela for their support, the one
person he honours most of all is Vanessa, his wife of five years. They met in
high school, long before his injury and have been together ever since. “She
doesn’t get much attention, but she has a bigger role in my life than people
think.” Joey honours her by being loving and supportive and by always
remembering how important she has been and continues to be in his
adapting to having a disability. Vanessa motivated him to stay positive, and
to never lose hope. She has been with him through his difficult rehabilitation
and encouraged his pursuit of education and sports. Together, they are
slow, dedicated and ready to face whatever lies ahead.

Diane, Regional Services Coordinator,
Sault Ste. Marie

There are two groups of people who I would like to honour. The first group
is every client that I’ve ever worked with. I learn so much from each person,
whether they have a new or an existing spinal cord injury. Although clients’
lives may be similar when it comes to the level of their injury and ability,
each story is so unique. I’m very proud to be part of the journey and see
people achieving their goals. A spinal cord injury is something that can turn
your world upside down for sure, but if you can begin to look at things
differently, it presents an opportunity for personal growth. I’ve learned a lot
along the way and I’m very grateful because when people share their
stories and successes with me, it helps me provide even better support to
the next person.

The second group I would like to honour are the people who partici-
pate in our coffee social. Every month, we meet at the Sault Ste. Marie
Spinal Cord Injury Ontario office. It’s so nice to see people in the commu-
nity come together and provide support to each other. I also think it’s a
really cool thing that it continues beyond our coffee group, when people
run into each other at the mall or at community events. There is so much
to be said for this kind of peer-to-peer connection. You could never put a
dollar value on that.

Nigel Honours Larissa

There are many people with spinal cord injuries who I could honour. I have
had the privilege of acting for a large number of people with spinal cord
injuries through my occupation as a personal injury lawyer. I have seen too
many young people in their prime who have had to face the challenge of
rebuilding their lives after a spinal cord injury and yet they have found a
way to continue and be productive. I have had the honour of representing
individuals, such as a young hockey player who sustained an injury and has
gone on to be a multi-
medalist winner in the
Paralympics for wheel-
chair rugby. Similarly, I
have represented a high
school student who lost
the ability to use his legs
due to an accident during
a wrestling match in gym
class. He has taken up
sledge hockey to replace
the athletics he can no
longer do and coura-
gously moved forward
with his life.

But for this article, I
want to honour Larissa
Gerow.

I met Larissa for the
first time when she was
in the Critical Care
Trauma Unit at the
hospital. She was, and
still is, a beautiful young
woman of only 26 years
of age when the driver
of a vehicle who had
failed to look to his right
before making a right-
hand turn. This caused
her to fall from her
bicycle, resulting in quad-
riplegia.

There were no
outward signs of a phyl-
ical injury; no bruising, no cuts or scrapes, and I found it incredible to
believe that after something that happened in a moment, she would have
to adjust to life with quadriplegia.

As I came to know Larissa and work with her for many years, what most
amazed me about her was her unbelievably positive outlook on life and her
optimism despite her injury.

I am ashamed to say that here I was, a healthy individual who is able to
walk, to run, to bike, to dance, and to hug my loved ones, and I had a more
pessimistic outlook on my own life than Larissa did on hers.

Whenever I saw her, and whenever I still see her, Larissa is always
smiling and has an optimistic outlook on life. She never
let her disability stop her from travelling to various parts of the world
despite the difficulties
involved in doing so.

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