

# arbi**chat**

Let's get connected ...



## Executive update

### A message from Mary Ellen Neilson

**The year 2016 promises** to have many headwinds. Uncertain economic times, a changing political landscape, and unprecedented demand for ARBI's services will test us. And yet, we are privileged to witness daily the resilience with which our clients face their challenges; and it is for them that we need to be ready for whatever 2016 may bring.

Fortunately, we have many great partners to help us along the way. We've just renewed our contract with Alberta Health Services, and continue to work collaboratively with their team of professionals to ensure that those who need us most can easily access us. Congratulations go out to our long-time partner, the United Way of Calgary and Area, who amazingly raised \$55.2 million in what could only be described as a difficult year. United Way supports ARBI and so many other agencies to truly make Calgary a better place. We were also proud to receive a Community Heroes Award from our long-time friends, The Kinsmen Club of Stampede City. The Kinsmen are our heroes, with their unfailing support of ARBI over so many decades!

Another great partner of ARBI, the Calgary Foundation, generously supported us this year so that we could develop a new five-year strategic plan. The plan is posted on our website;



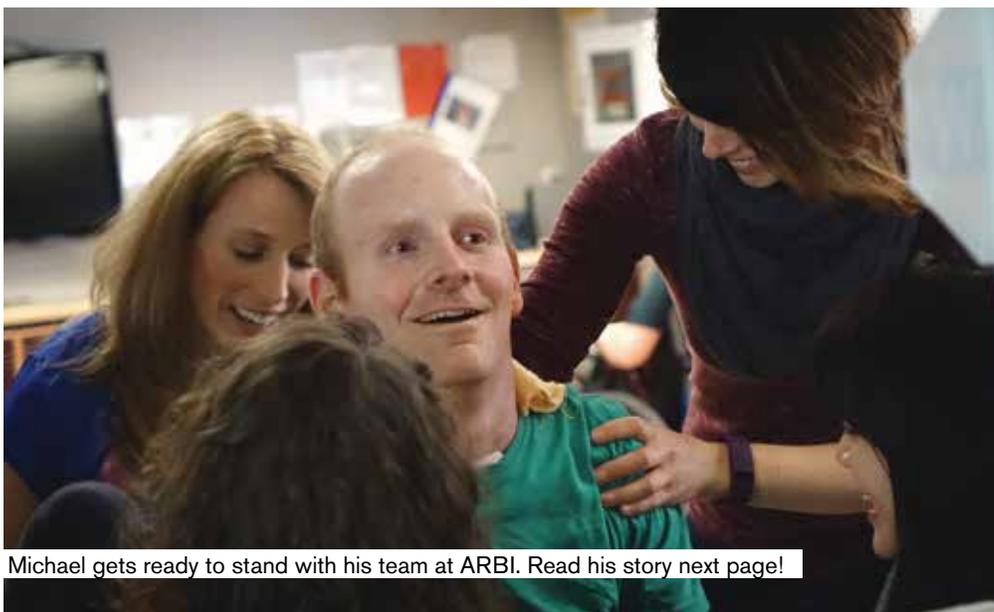
we encourage you to read it, talk to us about it, challenge us, and hopefully join alongside us on the journey.

So, what does the next five years have in store for ARBI? At the heart of the plan is the promise that we'll stay true to our roots. ARBI's approach is based in science but practiced with deep compassion;

ARBI is so often the place where clients and families find renewed hope. Our amazing team of employees works side-by-side with dedicated volunteers to transform lives, providing rehabilitation to brain injury survivors and supporting them in their reintegration into the community.

As we look to the future, however, demand for our services continues to grow, and we need to be there for those who need us. Ensuring that there is a community beyond ARBI that is accessible and accepting of our clients is another significant and complex challenge. There is still much to be done, and we cannot do it alone. Growth will require us to creatively build partnerships so that we can best leverage our resources to help survivors. As well, since only 60 per cent of our operation is covered by contractual funders, we'll continue to seek the help of ARBI's many supporters. These are the friends who ensure that we can keep doing the work we do and stay true to our mission—thank you to each and every one of you. We know the road ahead won't always be smooth, but we know with certainty it is the right road.

Mary Ellen



Michael gets ready to stand with his team at ARBI. Read his story next page!

# Memorable moments

Stories from the front-line

*The front-line team at ARBI is on the floor each day, supporting clients in their rehabilitation. This month, Carmela remembers the morning Colleen came in with something she couldn't wait to share...*

Colleen was so excited to tell me that over the weekend she began using the front steps to get in and out of her house (instead of the lift), and she now uses the walker to the living room, into the kitchen, and back to the living room (15-foot walk).

She also mentioned that she is now sitting on a regular kitchen chair while having dinner with her husband, and it feels good. "No stress."

"We are back to normal," she said with a smile.



Colleen, pictured at ARBI

## Bud

Farewell to ARBI's good friend, Bud McDonald. Bud was a dedicated board member of ARBI for over 12 years, which included serving from 2007 until 2012 as our board president. Bud's wisdom was surpassed only by his kindness. He will be missed by all. A truly great man who gave so much to ARBI. We are grateful to have known him.

Our hearts go out to Bud's wife Dorothy, and his family.



## Ogden Legion

We were fortunate to have a conversation with Annie Marshall, President of Ogden Legion #154. In December 2015, the Legion was sadly shutting its doors for good; but out of this more than \$2 million was presented to local charities—ARBI was truly fortunate to receive \$84,500 that night.

### What is the Ogden Legion all about? What is the Ogden's mission?

The ultimate goal of the Legion is to help our veterans. The Ogden Legion started in June of 1945 and was mainly for CPR workers who were coming home from the war. Ogden wasn't a part of Calgary at that time so it was a place for vets to come together and socialize.

### Can you tell us about some of the people we might have found at the Ogden Legion on any given day?

Back in the day, you would find either vets, or family and relatives of vets. They would meet for crib night or dart night. The Ogden Legion even had a curling club! Nowadays, any Canadian citizen can become a member. It is a great place to hang out and socialize.

### How did you come to know ARBI?

When the decision was made to close the Ogden doors, we all sat around and tossed out ideas of who should receive this money. A lot of great names were on the table. Someone then mentioned ARBI; when we learned it was for the brain injured we thought it sounded like a great organization. I visited ARBI for your open house Christmas party and it was great! It was just a friendly and happy place to be. The atmosphere was, up.

### Ogden Legion handed out more than \$2 million to local charities that night. How did that make you feel?

Grateful. It was such an emotional night. I just wish I was younger and had the energy to be more involved nowadays. I still feel the high from that night.

Thank you Annie and Ogden Legion #154 for your incredible generosity and for *Making Life Better* for our clients.



## Michael Skyping

Michael has been attending ARBI for three months now, and despite suffering from a severe acquired brain injury he is already striving to meet his goals.

"At this level of injury," says his physiotherapist, "the smallest gains in such a wide variety of areas (motor control, tolerance to activity, communication) are quite rare and can really help us to see new potential for the future."

Michael's mom, Jo-anne, has been joining in on his sessions from out of town via Skype (pictured here). Her daughter (Michael's sister), Alyssa, sent us a nice message on Facebook in February:

*He has come a long way since his brain injuries. I am very grateful for everything you do with him. There's nothing more comforting than seeing my brother smile and laugh again. Thank you for being there for him, when his family can not be due to distance. ARBI is not only changing his life, but also his family and friends again. Thank you for not giving up on him, as I never did or ever will.*

## Card from a client

Upon Derek's graduation from ARBI, he and his wife, Dixie, wrote ARBI a very nice card. They gave us permission to share it here (edited for length):

*"There are no words to express how grateful we are to everyone at ARBI. You took us in when we were shattered. You helped us pick up the pieces, begin to heal and recover. Your compassion, knowledge, time, energy and kindness was unending.*



*We leave ARBI much stronger and able to deal with the challenges we face.*

*We will continue to work hard and utilize all you have taught us. It lifts our spirits to think of all the others that will walk through your doors for the first time. We know that they will receive the same wonderful care. We will miss you more than you could ever know. God bless each and every one of you."*



Norm and Jackie

hard on the kids, because he can't speak.

It's sort of like playing charades, and it's rare that I don't understand what he's trying to tell me.

**On what is most challenging...**

You can't discuss things with your best friend. And, there's not as many visitors because he's not able to talk to them.

**On what is most surprising about communicating now...**

I'm surprised that we are able to communicate as much as we are.

He's very aware and alert, and that is so much to be thankful for. It's rare that he seems down.

**What has been most helpful for coping with the impact of aphasia?**

Out-patient rehabilitation has been fantastic. The social worker and speech-language pathologist at the Fanning were the two people who believed Norm would benefit from ARBI, and they pushed for it.

Coming to aphasia group is beneficial for both of us. Seeing Norm participate and seeing him try...because back in his room, he may not try to speak.

Learning that we can still communicate, and still laugh and understand each other. He's trying and there's hope.

## The impact of aphasia on families

By Heather Tomlinson, R.SLP

Norm is a graduate of the ARBI on-site program, and currently attends our weekly aphasia group. He and his wife Jackie celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 29, 2013. Just a few weeks later, Norm experienced a stroke resulting in significant communication impairments (aphasia, and

verbal apraxia).

I sat down with Jackie in November 2015 to talk about the reality of living with aphasia. The need for hope and empathy on the journey were over-riding themes during this interview:

**On the impact of Norm's aphasia...**

Most of the time it's OK, but I know it's

**Advice for other families coping with aphasia:**

Don't give up. Learn from the SLP (speech-language pathologist), and sit in on therapy sessions.

Don't dwell on the negative; appreciate the positive and be able to accept support.

And, when something like this happens so drastically to someone you love and your family, empathy is so important.

## Strat plan highlights

With support from the Calgary Foundation, ARBI has completed work on a Strategic Plan that will set the course for the next five years. Bruce Murray, president of ARBI's Board of Directors, explains the heart of it:

"With the wisdom that comes from decades of experience, ARBI takes seriously its responsibility to contribute to the larger conversation about brain injury and to advocate for survivors. I am proud that ARBI's voice has grown to be respected in the medical community, and that ARBI's influence is felt through its many volunteers and partners.

"Over the past year, ARBI's Board of Directors has worked closely with the leadership team to develop this strategic plan. At the heart of it, ARBI's strategy is to grow to serve more clients. Growing will include, in part, expanding capacity to do more of what we do now, as well as developing new ways of serving clients. Growth will require us to strengthen our many partnerships, raise our profile and leverage resources for maximum benefit."

Please visit [www.arbi.ca](http://www.arbi.ca) for the in-depth, 13-page report.





Kayla Feddema, volunteer

## Volunteer Q&A

*Kayla started at ARBI as a practicum student while working toward a Bachelor of Science in biology at Ambrose University. She continues to volunteer on her own time.*

### Could you walk us through a day at ARBI?

I come at 1pm to work with my client for 2.5 hours with another volunteer. The program involves physical, occupational, and speech rehab. The client generally starts on the bike to warm up followed by some stretches. We then have the client sit supporting himself to gain strength. While doing that we do various stimulating activities, such as play catch, watch videos, practice flash cards, and draw on the iPad. We end the day standing on the tilt table. While standing we encourage olfactory stimulation with various scents, and swallowing.

### What have you learned about your client?

I have learned a lot of about the difficulties and confusion that can come with brain injury. But I have seen so much determination and improvement in my client, which is so rewarding.

### What are some of the challenges/fears/rewards you, as a volunteer, face?

There are some things that I am physically unable to do as a volunteer, which can be challenging, but I find that I am always supported. The staff are

wonderful at maintaining communication with volunteers so I feel like a valued member of the rehabilitation process. The rewards include seeing the growth in my client and in myself. Even on rough days, where it feels like we are getting nowhere, there are always little moments of joy and laughter to be cherished.

### Do you think that your experience at ARBI has affected your general worldview and might, ultimately, affect your medical practice down the road?

When I first started at ARBI I was so excited to have found a place that shared my heart for an authentic relationship with those in need. I have been so encouraged by ARBI's attitude to seek and give hope to others. Volunteering here has reinforced my desire to pursue occupational therapy as a career. By implementing my client's program I now understand what occupational therapy entails and I know that it lines up with my passions.

### What would ARBI do without volunteers?!

The volunteer relationship is such a special one. For a client to know that someone comes in on their own time to help them just because they care, is encouraging and gives hope for recovery and confidence for reintegration into society.

### Join our team as a volunteer!

Please visit [arbi.ca](http://arbi.ca), call Wendy at 403-217-4591 or email:

[wendy@arbi.ca](mailto:wendy@arbi.ca)

# ARBI NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT, PLEASE

# DONATE TODAY

[WWW.ARBI.CA/GIVE](http://WWW.ARBI.CA/GIVE)



# ARBI GETS SOCIAL

