

## In Their Own Words . . .

Dave is a stroke survivor and has graciously shared with us some details from his stroke journey at Stratford General Hospital, from his inpatient stay on the *Integrated Stroke Unit* through to his time with the *Community Stroke Rehab Team* and the *Life After Stroke Program*. In this conversation, Dave spoke about the need for hope “that each day will be better than the last”, strength, “to face each challenge as it arises”, and finally determination, “to never give up”.

Dave explained how beneficial it was to receive visits from the Peer Support volunteers while he was in the inpatient unit. “The peer volunteers visited me. They all had a story to tell, but for me it was good to see that they improved so much from the time of their stroke. They kept telling me to never give up and to never look backwards. They asked me to consider being a peer volunteer, and I think once my arm gets stronger, that I will. In the hospital, the patients need to be fighters. They can’t give up . . . but they need to hear the message over and over”.



After Dave was discharged from the *Integrated Stroke Unit* at Stratford General Hospital, he spoke about his experience with the *Community Stroke Rehab Team* and explained how he was “so happy that the team came to my home. They were all really good to me”. He went on to say that “I used all the tools that I have at my home. I use a wheel barrow all the time, and they worked with me to take it all the way down the laneway. Because of their help, I am able to go shopping. I owe my strength to Holly, she convinced me to swim. It was an unreal experience – I felt like a fish. I learned to walk in the water, and I am building strength in my arm in the water. I used to get mad when I got out because my arm would flop down and just stick to my body. Now I just swim more so I can get stronger and feel like a fish more often.”



Finally, Dave spoke about his involvement with the Community Reintegration *Life After Stroke Program*. “The program is really good. I look forward to going every week. I see everyone else who is worse than me, and it makes me feel not so sorry for myself. There are lots of fighters in there. We laugh and work and grow there.”