I am so pleased to have the opportunity to lead The Arthritis Society, as we serve the needs of so many people experiencing the pain that arthritis brings to their everyday life.

When I meet those people, I am always surprised by their ability to “push through the pain.” But then I stop to realize that they should not have to live like that. No one should. There needs to be a cure. Easily said — but the journey continues. That is why the support of our donors and sponsors is so vital — to allow us to harness the expertise of our scientific and medical experts in making recommendations on how funds can be best applied to find breakthrough discoveries. One such opportunity is the potential of medical cannabis to alleviate the chronic pain of arthritis. This year we have been strong advocates with government as the prospect of full legalization looms. To demonstrate that more funding must be put into scientific research in this field, we have awarded our first ever grant for medical cannabis research.

We also want to help those living with arthritis improve their quality of life. There has never been a greater need for people to be equipped to be their own self-advocates. Our on-line resources and educational modules are designed to help people manage their disease, including a new educational tool on how to communicate effectively with your health care practitioner. The development of this content is a result of our wide-reaching network within the medical profession who support us in providing evidence-based insight and guidance.

One area that remains personally troubling to me is the diagnosis of arthritis in a child. I cannot imagine how it must feel to be told your child has a disease believed to be “only for old people.” This is a life-changing diagnosis for children and their families filled with medical appointments and regular injections to stem disease progression not to mention chronic pain. We have made the development and expansion of children’s camps a strategic priority — to give these kids the chance to have a great experience with others like them in a safe environment. It is always a highlight of my year to visit these camps and see the joy on the children’s faces.

None of what we seek to accomplish would be possible without the continued support of our generous donors and sponsors as well as the thousands of volunteers who help us deliver our educational programs and run our fundraising events across the country. Thank you.

We can only achieve our mission to provide leadership and funding for research, advocacy and solutions to improve the quality of life for Canadians living with arthritis through the generosity of our donors, sponsors and volunteers.

**2016–2017 Priorities**

**CURF**
Fund discovery research.

**CARE**
Train health care professionals.

**COMMUNITY**
Provide information and resources to a broader array of Canadians with arthritis.
Why I Walk
Eileen Davidson (“Chronic Eileen”)

In her twenties, Eileen was hit with a double arthritis diagnosis in her twenties. She has both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis and is just thirty years old. The diagnoses caused her intense emotional turmoil that she described as her “rock bottom.” Losing the ability to work and the constant struggle with her health, while trying to raise a child by herself, have been the biggest challenges of Eileen’s life. Every day experiences pain and crippling fatigue that make normal activities difficult and draining. Even the simplest of tasks can tire Eileen out – and the side effects of medication have been unpleasant, to say the least. She found a sense of solace during her rock bottom when she started sharing what she was going through on social media and became an Ambassador for the Arthritis Society after people started noticing her writing and photos. The biggest compliment she’s ever received (and there are many from all over the world) was that they found her to be an inspiration to take better care of themselves and to treat others better.

People have also shared that until they heard about arthritis through Eileen’s journey, they really didn’t know about it. And those who thought they did had no idea that there are so many kinds of arthritis or that someone in their twenties could be diagnosed with it. This inspired Eileen to believe in herself and gave her a hunger to help others. The best part was that she could do it just by being herself and being open, and through that, she could promote something meaningful.

Eileen shares what she was going through on social media and became an Ambassador for the Arthritis Society after people started noticing her writing and photos. The biggest compliment she’s ever received (and there are many from all over the world) was that they found her to be an inspiration to take better care of themselves and to treat others better.

People have also shared that until they heard about arthritis through Eileen’s journey, they really didn’t know about it. And those who thought they did had no idea that there are so many kinds of arthritis or that someone in their twenties could be diagnosed with it. This inspired Eileen to believe in herself and gave her a hunger to help others. The best part was that she could do it just by being herself and being open, and through that, she could promote something meaningful.

Eileen wants to show her young son that a disease like arthritis isn’t going to stop his mom. “I am doing it to be a voice for those suffering with arthritis and to show that not all diseases and disabilities are seen by the eye,” she says. “My late grandmother and aunt were both severely affected by arthritis, and I never knew their suffering until I too became a person living with arthritis.”

I started one morning with a knuckle that was purple and swollen to twice its size. Odd, but it was easily explained away. A few months away, Laura Burnison woke up to find both knees in the same condition.

“They literally weren’t functioning. I had to crawl my way across the floor to my desk chair to hoist myself up,” she says.

Within a week, all of her major joints were swollen. Hips, elbows, wrists, shoulders, and both hands were stiff and painful. “I had to crawl to the door and knock so that my roommate would come open it. I couldn’t turn the knob,” she recalls.

Doctors were stumped. Some dared to suggest arthritis, but others said it couldn’t possibly be. Laura was just 19 years old.

“Getting it is hard to explain, but to me, it was the turning point for Laura, when she finally pulled herself out of her ‘pity-party pit’ as she calls it, realizing she could return to activities she previously enjoyed, especially hiking. Her new husband helps her stretch out her hips during their 10km hikes in the mountains. Stress and severe weather changes often trigger flares but Laura, who is studying to become a relationship counsellor, realizes that there’s a silver lining to her arthritis.

Laura Burnison
Young Volunteer Shares Her Silver Lining

Laura was just 19 years old.

“Getting it is hard to explain, but to me, it was the turning point for Laura, when she finally pulled herself out of her ‘pity-party pit’ as she calls it, realizing she could return to activities she previously enjoyed, especially hiking. Her new husband helps her stretch out her hips during their 10km hikes in the mountains. Stress and severe weather changes often trigger flares but Laura, who is studying to become a relationship counsellor, realizes that there’s a silver lining to her arthritis.

Laura wants to share her story with younger people because there was no other explanation, “she says.

“I want to pay it forward so that people’s newly diagnosed experience won’t be as lonely as mine was.”

Laura Burnison
Young Volunteer Shares Her Silver Lining

Laura Burnison
Young Volunteer Shares Her Silver Lining

Laura Burnison
Young Volunteer Shares Her Silver Lining
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative information for 2016

Revenue
Support from the public
   Campaigns 14,708,338 14,122,457
   United Way 214,076 234,684
   Bequests and other planned giving 7,434,624 9,128,117
   Total revenue 29,155,321 29,976,741

Expenditures
   Administration 2,899,824 2,963,978
   Mission 13,008,136 13,618,868
   National office 3,728,058 3,799,721
   Program operations 10,380,459 9,920,453
   Total expenses 28,992,596 28,403,216

Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses 162,725 1,573,525

Full audited financial reports are available for review at arthritis.ca/finances.

The Arthritis Society is accredited by the Imagine Canada Standards Program, Canada’s highest measure of excellence for charities and not-for-profits. For more information, visit imaginecanada.ca.
To our donors, sponsors and volunteers —

THANK YOU

The Arthritis Society

arthritis.ca  1.800.321.1433  /ArthritisSociety  @ArthritisSoc  @ArthritisSociety