

# ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

*Celebrating 50 Years of Impact*

**50 years of  
empowering  
people with  
disabilities to  
build lives of  
meaning and joy**

**OVER  
2,000**  
people with disabilities  
and families served  
annually in the  
Ottawa region

**500+**  
volunteers  
changing lives  
every year

**MORE THAN  
36,000  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS**  
dedicated yearly to  
making an inclusive  
community

**260,000  
PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES IN  
OTTAWA**  
face barriers to their  
full participation in  
society



# Message from the Executive Director & Board Chair

As we reflect on the remarkable journey of ABLE2, we are filled with immense gratitude. For 50 years, we have witnessed the transformative power of compassion—how it ignites hope, strengthens the threads of inclusivity, and empowers people with disabilities to embrace lives of purpose.

Canadians with disabilities face many barriers to their full participation in society: stigma, social isolation and loneliness, discrimination, poverty, exclusion from employment, and inequities in education, health care, and legal systems. With recent Statistics Canada numbers, we have seen the rate of disability among Canadians increase from 22% in 2017, to 27% in 2022— and 260,000 of those people with disabilities are in your community.

Since its inception as Citizen Advocacy Ottawa in 1974 and rebranded as ABLE2 in 2020, the organization continues to grow and focus on reducing the barriers, and enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities in the Ottawa region. ABLE2 has supported over 2,000 people with disabilities yearly to combat isolation, facilitate autonomy and safety, and help these individuals play their roles as active citizens of their communities.

It is through the collective effort of ABLE2's visionary partners, donors, volunteers, and staff that we have built a legacy where a generation of people with disabilities have developed meaningful friendships, have the tools and connections to make their own choices, pursue their passions, and establish themselves as active members of the community.



Heather Lacey,  
Executive Director



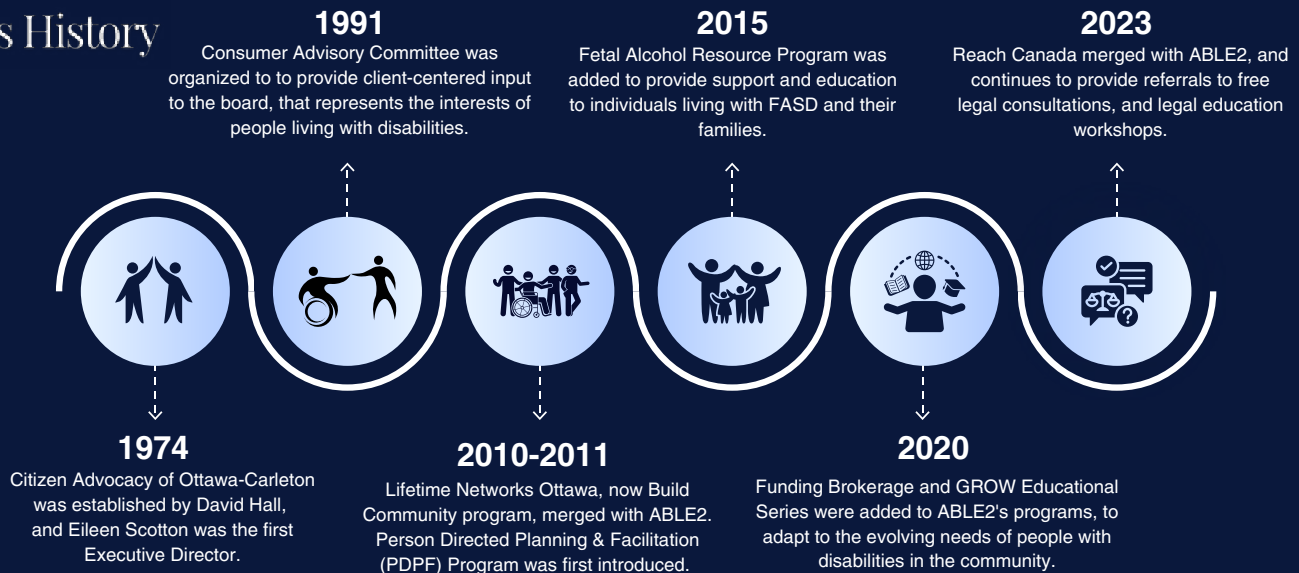
Nick Korhonen,  
Board Chair

We are not just an organization; we are a family— a network of dedicated allies, friends, and advocates who share the same vision: a world where every person, regardless of abilities, is seen as able, important, and valued.

Thank you. We share and celebrate this triumphant milestone with you. Your contribution, time, efforts, gifts, and partnership have made a profound impact on the lives of the people in your community.

As we look ahead, our vision remains clear: to dismantle the barriers and empower people with disabilities and their families to live the lives they choose. Your compassion and support drive ABLE2's mission forward, shaping a path that will change the lives of the next generation of people with disabilities and their families for the next 50 years and beyond.

## ABLE2's History





### Sophia becomes a part of the family

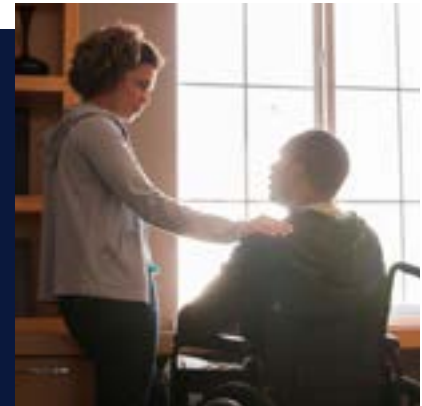
15 years ago, Sophia and Patricia was paired through ABLE2's Matching Program, and had no idea how it would profoundly impact their lives. As Sophia was able to go on outings regularly with her Ally, she was also able to spend more time with Patricia's children, watching Disney movies with them, having dinners at Swiss Chalet, and enjoying outings. "I have grown to love Patricia's children like my own siblings, and I am grateful to be a part of a bigger family outside of my group home," says Sophia. To this day, Sophia and Patricia continue to share many milestones and meaningful moments together.

**"I am glad that Patricia and I met through ABLE2's Matching Program because I have been able to enjoy going out into the community, experiencing new things, and meeting a lot of people. I know I can rely on Patricia for support, and I know she will always be there for me."** Sophia

### Orhan spends less time worrying about finances, and more on enjoying life

With the guidance of ABLE2's Funding Brokerage team, Orhan received support in managing his finances, and found more opportunities to socialize and go out into the community.

**"What I like about the funding brokerage program is it allows me to get access to services that I wouldn't otherwise have access to, like having bus pass reimbursement and getting Ottawa 67s tickets, something that allows me to go out to the public instead of staying home all day. It also helps to know what services and purchases are allowed and not allowed before I order it, something I wouldn't be able to do if I didn't have a funding brokerage to help me to do."** Orhan



### Michael finds renewed confidence and trust

Michael has struggled with agoraphobia and mental health issues over the years. He would spend weeks couped up in his home, and would avoid any opportunity to go out in public. During the pandemic, he spent lockdowns in isolation, which did not improve his condition or mental health. In 2021, he was matched with Mike, who slowly encouraged him to step out of his comfort zone and engage in the community. In March 2024, ABLE2 was able to send Michael and Mike to an Ottawa Senators game at the Canadian Tire Centre. Being surrounded with 17,000 people, Michael was surprised that he did not have a panic attack, and was able to have a great time, thanks to his Ally, Mike.

**"Thankful for my match over 3 years; I'm getting healthier and better with each event he's taking me on. Thanks again to my match for his time to volunteer and for becoming great friend, helping me overcome agoraphobia."** Michael

### Mom finds direction and support for son in navigating FASD

When Tracy adopted her son Alex, she knew he had complex needs and started researching Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). There was an overwhelming amount of information but no support for parents like her, who needed direction and navigation for supporting individuals with FASD. With the help of ABLE2's Fetal Alcohol Resource Program (FARP), Alex and his family were provided with tools and connections tailored to their unique needs, and received support within their family home, within Alex's educational support system, and mental health resources, among other things.

**"We really felt very alone. FARP for our family has been life-changing. [ABLE2] has helped us through some really difficult times when our family has truly been in crisis. And their help and assistance in navigating really complex support systems... they have been there every step of the process. They respond to the unique needs of the child, and for a parent, that is just invaluable."** Tracy







### Stacey gains independence and pursues her goals

When Stacey decided she wanted to move to Ottawa, she reached out to ABLE2's Person-Directed Planning & Facilitation program so she could receive the support and resources to become independent. The PDPF facilitator assisted her in finding a place of her own and even helped her register in school, so she could graduate from 12th grade. Stacey is now planning for her future and aspires to pursue journalism in college.

**"PDPF has helped me live the life in the way I wanted it. The [PDPF] facilitator takes the time to get to know me. We build a relationship. Compared to other types of workers, PDPF facilitators hear me for what I have to say, and help me live my best life. Working with ABLE2 changed my life."** Stacey

### Elijah finds a place he can call home

For over 7 years, Elijah has been on the Social Housing Registry, waiting for an affordable and accessible place to live. In a span of less than a year, ABLE2 was able to assist and support Elijah in filling out forms, finding information, and ultimately securing a rental home that is geared to his income.

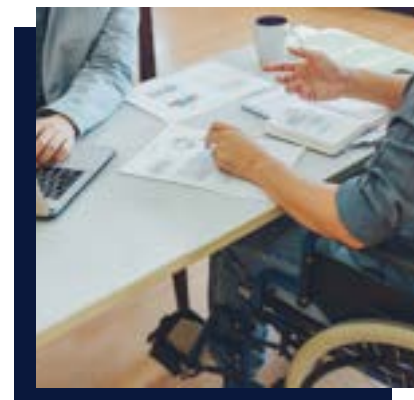
**"I am most thankful for the help I get from ABLE2. I am in good shape now, I have a safe and affordable housing, and I continue to get the support I need."** Elijah



### Olga finds her voice in asserting her rights

Olga heard about the Reach Legal Referral program by chance as she was researching organizations that assisted people with disabilities in resolving legal issues and providing guidance in navigating the justice system. She started having difficulties walking due to severe pain from Spine Stenosis. When she approached the HR department of her workplace to request a handicap parking space, she was told that they could not accommodate her, as all the spaces were taken. Olga contacted government offices regarding her issue but still did not receive any resolution.

**"After hearing my situation and the challenges I was going through, ABLE2's Reach program connected me with a lawyer, issued me a certificate and I met with a lawyer free of charge. What I value most about my relationship with ABLE2's Reach Program is that they indeed care for individuals like me, they listen and act accordingly. Thank you so much for your assistance and the great work you do helping people with disabilities."** Olga



Your support helps to reduce barriers and build strong relationships for individuals systemically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life.

