

Westman Aphasia grateful for donation

Westman Aphasia was recently gifted a \$1,000 donation from the Brandon Wheat City Lions Club. The funds were raised from the club's weekly bingo games, played every Wednesday at 3 p.m. on WCG TV channel 1012 or 12.

"Every so often, we choose a few local charities to donate our bingo proceeds to," said Lion Jeff Sim, secretary of the Brandon club.

"We've given to places like the food bank, Helping Hands, the Brandon Friendship Centre, Special Olympics, the Women's Resource Centre, and many others," he added. "We also encourage the organizations to use our donation wherever they feel it is needed."

Sim said his club learned of aphasia and Westman Aphasia through a former Lions Club member whose family included someone who had lived with aphasia for many years.

"Aphasia is a communication disorder," said Susan Cable, chief administrative officer and board chair of Westman Aphasia.

"Its usual cause is stroke, and it can affect a person's ability to speak, read, write, and understand.

"Because of the lack of communication skills, the person can also become depressed and isolate themselves from family, friends and their community."

Westman Aphasia helps those who live with aphasia and their caregivers by offering support groups, community outreach, public awareness, public and health-care professional education and training, and more.

The non-profit and registered charity is grateful for financial support from the United Way Brandon & District for its annual programs and services.

The charity also relies on other grants and public donations and fundraising events to help with the necessary operating costs that keep its doors open.

Cable said donations went down and fundraising events were non-existent during the more than two years of COVID-19. Before then, funds from both helped Westman Aphasia keep up with expenses.

She also said even now, as we all learn to live with COVID, neither is what they used to be.

"The Brandon Wheat City Lions Club gift will help with our operating costs, which we struggle annually with, even before COVID," said Cable.

"We do not receive provincial or federal funding as we are not part of either's health-care system, so it is a constant challenge to find the money to keep operating.

"We also need client referrals, and, because many people, including health-care professionals, don't know or understand what aphasia is — most have never even heard of it — or how it affects a person, they also don't know about our organization or services and how we can help those who are affected by aphasia."

A community-based volunteer board of directors leads Westman Aphasia. The organization has no paid staff, other than two part-time casual program clinicians who, along with other volunteers, give many hours of their own time to run programs and services.

"It's always a challenge to find new volunteers with time to sit on our board and/or help with our groups and activities.

"And COVID has made it even tougher to recruit volunteers for us and many other organizations."

If you or someone you know has aphasia, wants to learn or know more about it or Westman Aphasia, or wants to give volunteer time to the organization, visit westmanaphasia.ca or email westmanaphasia@gmail.com.

» Submitted by Westman Aphasia