

**Annual General Meeting of the Members of the Lymphedema Association of Ontario via Webinar  
March 7, 2016**

Board Members and Staff in Attendance: Ben Ciallella Board Member – Barb Foster Board Member – Liisa Morley Board Member – JoAnne Raditz Project Manager – Andrew Matta – Cindy De Graaff – Catherine Bowman Presenter. Attending via webinar: Liisa Morley Board Member– Debbie Ciotti-Bowman – Charlotte Schultz.

32 voting members of the LAO also attended the AGM via webinar.

Quorum was reached and the meeting was called to order at 7:05p.m.

1. Call to Order - Ben Ciallella

Ben warmly welcomed everyone and began by reminding everyone what the aims of the LAO are by reading the Mission statement of the LAO. He also thanked the previous Executive Director, Anna Kennedy on behalf of the board for all her hard work over the years. Ben then introduced the current Board of Directors which consists of himself, Barb Foster and Liisa Morley; he also presented the proposed slate of new directors: Cindy De Graaff, Andrew Matta, Charlotte Shultz, and Debbie Ciotti-Bowman.

2. Motion to Accept the Agenda – Ben Ciallella

Moved by Cindy De Graaff, seconded by Andrew Matta. All in favour. (10 yes)

3. Motion to accept the Minutes from the 2014 AGM as presented - Ben Ciallella

Moved by Ben, seconded by Barb Foster. All in favour (12 yes).

4. Presentation of Financial Statements - Ben Ciallella

Ben reviewed the financial statements as presented on-line for the years 2014 and 2015. He noted the shortfall of \$40,000 for the 2015 year, as well as a gain of \$30,000 during the previous year. He shared that one of the difficulties was the cancellation of the annual provincial conference – this was due to a lack of sponsors for the conference as well as low registration numbers. At the time it was felt that it was better to cancel and cut our losses than face an even greater loss because of poor turnout and lack of sponsors. Ben stated that we have now rebounded and believes that for the year to come the numbers will be positive. He then asked the auditor Mellissa Coulson to say a few words.

Melissa Coulson: Both audits were clean, even though there were some dramatic changes during the year. Minimal controls were still in place. Financial statements were presented to the board both years and any questions they had were addressed.

Ben made a motion to accept the financial statements as presented.

Moved by Barb Foster, seconded by Andrew Matta. All in favour (13 yes)

6. Presentation of Slate of New Board of Directors – Ben Ciallella

Ben read out the names of the proposed slate of directors, he made note of the fact that Barb and Ben would be seeking their second three year term, as allowed by the LAO By-laws.

Motion made to accept the slate as presented -Barb Foster, seconded by Leonna DiCasmirro. All in favour (12 yes).

After the business portion of the AGM we were very fortunate to have two excellent presentations made to the membership. To begin with Andrew Matta addressed the membership relating his story

with lymphedema and what has inspired him to seek election to the LAO Board. Andrew is a Milton Ontario resident and pharmacist, and delivered the keynote address at the 2015 NYC LE&RN Walk to Fight Lymphedema & Lymphatic Diseases. Andrew's greatest desire is to bring lymphedema out of the dark and into the forefront to produce positive changes for people suffering with the condition. At the age of 20 his leg began to swell up, eventually becoming so pervasive that he was bedridden for six months, unable to get up and go about his daily business. Andrew refused to believe that this was going to be his reality; he did lots and lots of research and found out that he might be a good candidate for surgery to help his condition. However the surgery he needed was not available in Canada and he ended up having to go overseas. He can't help but wonder where he would be if he hadn't have taken such a proactive approach and get the surgery he needed. He believes it was his own determination that helped him find a cure for his condition and he wants to make it easier for others to get the help they need. His message to everyone is that he is here to help all people living with lymphedema and that no one should give up hope. He would like to lead the LAO over the next few years to help our cause become better known and to make our voices heard on the provincial level.

The next presentation was made by Catherine Bowman, a 17 year old high school student. She also shared some of her personal story, how her mother's cancer in 2008 and subsequent lymphedema made her vow to find a "cure for lymphedema" as a young 8 year old. In her teens she began competing in Science fairs with her research on lymphedema and often placed first in the competition. After this she entered an International Science Fair and won a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish. Last year Catherine was a speaker at the National Lymphedema Conference and then completed a 2 month summer internship at the University of Calgary with Dr. Pierre Yves von der Weid, doing research on the pharmacological potential of two naturally occurring compounds to treat the underlying molecular factors of lymphedema. Catherine then shared some of the details of the type of research that she has been involved in and what she hopes to study when she begins her University studies next year. It was an incredibly inspiring presentation to see someone so passionate and involved in lymphedema research, as well as being such an effective advocate for those suffering with lymphedema which has gained the attention of medical professions and scientists.

Ben then shared some of the activities the LAO may undertake in the coming year. He was pleased to share that the new board members bring a brand new set of skills and passion to the board, for example, communication and social media skills. It is also hoped there will be the annual fundraising walk-a-thon and continued awareness at health fairs. Overall there is a strong desire to focus on advocacy and find ways to increase awareness about lymphedema in the medical community, with individuals who may be at risk of lymphedema and with provincial officials.

Andrew Matta was then asked to say a few final words. He encouraged all members to never give up hope, that there is research going on and that we will take things to the next level. He believes there will be new insights into the condition and that no one should give up hope. He ended by saying he plans to raise his voice for lymphedema and everyone suffering with it.

Ben Ciallella thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.