



Survivor Story

Determination and Gratitude

My name is Monique Robertson.

I am happy to be here with you today to speak about an unfortunate experience and I am also happy to be able to read my "Story". You see, just a little over a year ago, I experienced a stroke. When it happened, I was only 28 years old and had no idea what I was in store for. At the time, from what I can recall, it all happened so very quickly on a Sunday morning while reading the paper and watching TV. There was no warning – no signs or symptoms. I really can't remember to any great detail – what happened. I received emergency medical services within minutes of the stroke and then found myself being transported from the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Cornwall to the Civic Hospital in Ottawa for surgery. The cause still remains unknown and I'm not exactly sure what kind of stroke I had but I do know that it was the kind where they could not administer the Stroke Buster medication. Before I had the stroke, I was very independent with my own car and my own apartment. I was a fairly recent graduate from Police Foundations and working at NAV Canada as a Commissionaire. Of course, just like all women, I was also very busy and loved to shop.

So what happened?

I was transported to Ottawa from Cornwall by ambulance where they performed a craniotomy to save my life. The procedure worked. Two weeks later I was off to rehab in Cornwall at the General Hospital, for 2 months to learn how to read and write as well as walk and talk again. From there they sent me back to Ottawa for rehab at the Ottawa General Hospital at the Intense Brain Injury Center. I was there for another three months. Looking back, it was a very humbling experience. After rehab – I found myself trying to pull together the life I once had with the skills that I had to relearn. I was no longer able to work and no longer able to drive. So much for shopping... I'm kidding. It is without exaggeration that when I was released from the medical services community that I still needed time to retrain my body to do the things that I took for granted. Tying shoes, getting dressed, cooking, cleaning and figuring out how to work that darn alarm clock. These were frustrating times to say the least. And if it wasn't for my friends and family supporting me I don't know what I would have done. Since the stroke, I have lost my ability to read and write at a high school level. I am no longer permitted to drive – nor is it recommended that I work. However, it's my opinion, there's nothing that I can't do – so long as I remain determined. Some days are easier than others. Looking back, it's been a long, long road both physically and emotionally and I still really can't believe that this has happened. When I have a good day or a not so good day, my family and friends are always there for me. Now, almost a year later if you see me, thankfully, you may never have known that I have had a stroke. I am busy as ever. Mind you, still unemployed but volunteering at none other than The Heart and Stroke Foundation. From all of this, I have learned that life can suddenly change for the better or worse. Like the weather, it's going to do what it's going to do – There is not much we can do about it. – but what we do with it. In days to come I hope to regain my driving privileges, return to work and live a wonderfully rewarding life. In closing, many times, the odds were not in my favour

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and I'd like to take a moment to personally thank the people involved in saving my life. First of all, the staff and services at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, for their quick response as well as their Emergency Medical Services Team for quickly transporting me to Ottawa. Next I'd like to thank the Ottawa Civic Hospital for surgery and initial rehab services. The Ottawa General for rehab everyone from the Cornwall Rehab. And finally, my friends, my family and countless others who helped me get back on my feet. Lastly – my Mom and of course Mike.

I am a very lucky lady.

Thank you for taking time to listen to my story.

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