

A Conversation with Sonia Whyte-Croasdaile

CSPA Committee Member: Affiliate Members, Breaking Barriers



Sonia Whyte-Croasdaile, RPN, RSW

Founder and President of SJS Canada

Why did you get involved with CSPA?

I survived Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS) – a disease that burns the body from inside out – in 2011 and was searching for community support to assist my recovery. I needed to be connected to a safe space with like-minded individuals and my dermatologist at the time referred me to CSPA. I am thankful that CSPA provided me with the safe space I required to enhance my recovery journey. Not only that, but they offered me the opportunity to create awareness about the illness I was battling through the sharing of my story in a public arena. CSPA helps skin patients like me amplify our voices as we continue the quest for a better tomorrow. My involvement with CSPA has allowed me to grow personally and professionally and has increased my sense of belonging as a person living with a skin condition.

What do you perceive as outcomes of your involvement?

As a CSPA Affiliate Member, being able to engage in meaningful conversations that help to influence change and support the skin patient community is paramount. It's a great benefit personally and socially to be able to contribute to the growth and empowerment of my organization and other Affiliate Member organizations, along with the communities we serve. The opportunities to network, share and support, in addition to the platforms to amplify patient voices and expand our reach, are very beneficial for all involved.

Why do you like volunteering with CSPA?

As a CSPA volunteer, I feel like I am a piece of a larger puzzle. My inputs are validated and well received, and my voice is heard. I enjoy the camaraderie of the staff and volunteers. They are very knowledgeable in their areas of expertise, and do not hesitate to bring in additional experts to meet the needs of the community they serve. They are also resourceful and have enabled me to be a part of an amazing group of organizations that help others. The opportunity to connect with a diverse group of skin patient organizations, support a larger cause, and simply be able to learn about the various known and rare skin conditions make my volunteering worthwhile.

Why would you tell others that they should get involved with CSPA?

CSPA operates as an umbrella organization for people dealing with skin conditions and is dedicated to its mission. The CSPA team is driven by like-minded, caring individuals who are committed to the population they serve. At CSPA the staff and volunteers have compassion and serve with their hearts in a friendly and supportive environment. I believe "Caring and Sharing" should be their motto because among the many other things they do, that's what they do on a daily basis.

Has a personal connection with the skin patient community inspired your participation?

It has been very difficult managing the challenges of my skin condition and having to deal with the uncomfortable stares of individuals. I had to quickly develop daily coping strategies while navigating this lonely path. As a part of the skin patient community, I soon realized that I am not alone. This supportive community enhanced a sense of belonging for me and increased my mental resilience in dealing with these challenges. Thanks to CSPA for its support in making this possible.