

**"Learning to live with paralysis has been the hardest thing I have ever had to do. Others have told me they could not do it, but you don't know what strength you have until you are in the midst of needing it."**

*Julie Sawchuk - mother, sister, daughter, wife, teacher, activist, speaker*



Having taught high school science for 18 years, Julie has now turned to teaching a new topic - *life*. After sustaining a spinal cord injury from a collision between a car and her bike she is living life with paralysis. Using a manual wheelchair and working every day to regain muscle control and increase strength she still deals with issues such as nerve pain and fatigue. Paralysis is more than not walking.

One challenge that Julie faces (along with 30% of the Canadian population) is a lack of accessibility. Getting around in the community, at friend's homes and even in her own house is a challenge. Julie has been working to help people gain a better understanding of all these topics by writing a blog and a column in the Blyth Citizen and by speaking to schools and community groups.

Julie wants to spread awareness and inspire others. Always with lots to say, Julie will tailor her presentation to what you wish to focus on - accessibility in the community, sharing the road, helmet safety, distracted driving, mental health, the importance of community, determination, fitness & health and living with paralysis. She has spoken to nurses (new and retired) from the patient perspective and to community groups on the importance of activism.

Julie is a consultant for new construction projects in Huron County, is a member of the County and IPM 2017 accessibility committees, represents the Rick Hansen Foundation as an Ambassador, brought StopGap to Huron and is writing a guidebook for those newly injured with a spinal cord injury. All the while, she continues her recovery with physiotherapy and experimenting with various adaptive sports.

#### **Here is what some people are saying:**

"I know you've inspired me to look at my own personal barriers differently and I certainly have more awareness of obstacles for others thanks to your voice."

*Lisa - secondary school teacher*

"Julie was absolutely fantastic. Her presentation was engaging and dynamic, she is an authentic leader who shows enthusiasm throughout her talk. Julie exceeded expectations in anything we could've hoped to have presented at the forum. Further, she left us with a better understanding of doing things 'because it's the right thing to do'."

*Ali - Ivey School of Business Western University*



**Invite Julie to speak at your next assembly or event and you will leave thinking differently about the word "disability".**

Contact Julie [julie@juliesawchuk.ca](mailto:julie@juliesawchuk.ca) or visit [www.juliesawchuk.ca](http://www.juliesawchuk.ca)

