



Osteoporosis Canada

Ostéoporose Canada

COPING

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Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

That Was Then... This is Now... A Mother's Determination

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**"I am passionate about stopping fractures and saving lives."
Christine Thomas**

An article on Christine Thomas appeared in *COPING* May 10, 2013, access at http://www.osteoporosis.ca/wp-content/uploads/coping_may_10_2013.pdf. We thought it would be great to get caught up with Christine.

Background:

Christine Thomas was only 42 when, bending to lift her newborn daughter, she fractured her spine. Diagnosed with five vertebral fractures as a result of unsuspected osteoporosis, she had no idea of the painful and transformative road she would have to travel to build stronger bones and reclaim her life.

What have you been up to since your diagnosis of osteoporosis and spinal fractures?

Since 2002, I have researched the disease extensively, launched my website and book *Unbreakable*, and now blog and tweet! I have been a volunteer in various roles with Osteoporosis Canada, but I have to say the most rewarding experiences come from meeting people at my seminars. Recently I attended the 100th birthday celebration of Pat Giff, whom I met at one of my speaking engagements and who was featured in the December 14, 2016 issue of *COPING* - <http://www.osteoporosis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016-12-14-COPING-Seasons-Greetings-FINAL.pdf>. She was so grateful for the knowledge and resources she gained from the event and I was in awe of meeting such an incredible woman who, despite having multiple fractures from osteoporosis, was living well with the disease at 100! In this crazy, busy world we live in, many of us do not take time for seniors; yet, we have so much to learn from them. Engaging with Pat is incredible. She is witty, vibrant and funny. There is something very humbling listening to her stories and rich wisdom.

What do you consider most challenging living with osteoporosis?

Pain! The spine, the body's information superhighway, is our body's central structure and tower of strength. Spinal fractures alter that tower and even after they heal, can cause intermittent chronic pain. Chronic pain can rob you blind. It can take away your livelihood, your friends, your activities and big chunks of your personality. In our household, when Momma is happy, everyone's happy. When I am struggling, the whole family feels it!

I have learned so much about pain and how it is so important to be open to ways to manage my pain that complement medication. Massage therapy, meditation and breathing exercises are really helpful for me. They relax and calm those nasty tight muscles. They may not eliminate my pain but they sure help reduce it and improve my quality of life.

We asked Christine's husband, Gerry, this question: How has your family adapted?

At one time, we had to be careful about everything. It seemed that every normal activity had an inherent risk. Now, we no longer notice how much our lives have changed. What we do just feels normal now – it is difficult to identify specific things that we do to adapt but here are a few examples that come to mind:

- We always check winter weather to determine how (not if) we will deal with its worst conditions. We make sure there is always a steady hand to lend support in slippery conditions. Even on normal days, we drive a little slower than most on side roads to minimize the effects of the city's many speed bumps, which can be jarring for Christine's spine.
- We take vacations like everybody else, and look forward to them like any other family. We are just careful to choose accommodations that provide maximum comfort for Christine. For example, she loves to swim in the ocean but she needs a gentle sea flow and a flat beach for easy entry, while our daughter Chanel loves to tackle the big waves and surf, so we alternate among beaches to accommodate everyone!
- Our home is a large two-bedroom condo, which is common for a family in New York or Vancouver but unique for a family in Ottawa. It is in a fabulous neighborhood that has lots of parks and the building offers so much -- a gym, pool and indoor parking, so no snow shovelling required! As fitness is a priority for Christine, she can roll out of bed and be in the gym in minutes. At first we were hesitant to make the move to the condo but realized it was best for all of us – especially Christine. We realized that kids need love and support. Our daughter can get that just as well in a condo as in a house!

Back to Christine: What has your daughter learned about osteoporosis?

Our daughter, Chanel, learned from a very young age about the building blocks to take care of her bones – calcium, vitamin D and exercise. The good news is that she has shared what she has learned with her friends. Many of them came to my book launch in 2010. I was thrilled they were there to celebrate this



Left to right: Gerry, Chanel and Christine

milestone and learn the importance of taking care of your bones. Chanel's healthcare team is following her closely to ensure that her bones remain healthy.

And we have both learned how supportive our community can be. When my daughter was in kindergarten she had hip surgery as the cup of the hip was not shaped properly. After the operation, she was in a body cast for weeks! Because of my spinal fractures, I could not lift her. How was I to cope? Unbeknownst to me, friends organized a schedule to drop off meals and

visit to help. I was so grateful!

What are you most passionate about?

The Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network! COPN is an incredible gift that can be a lifesaver. You spend about 20 minutes with a doctor and then you need to learn to live well with the disease on your own. That's tough! There is an invisible thread that forms a bond of understanding and empathy towards each other that we COPN members share that others may not quite understand. E-newsletters and webinars allow each of us to read about others' fears, triumphs and emotional and physical relapses. COPN provides hope, helps reduce stress and helps all of us realize we are not alone living with this disease. That is so important for my emotional well being. I have learned the importance of paying it forward and ask *all* COPN members to reach out to friends and family and ask them to join COPN and help them build better bones!

What's next in your osteoporosis journey?

My most powerful tool is my voice. I share my story and raise awareness for bone health wherever and whenever I can! I am driven to do what I can to stop fractures and save lives. I suffered tremendously from my broken bones. It is hard to explain, but I feel like this is my life's purpose. Reaching out to others not only helps them but it helps me stay connected and energized to continue to advocate for better bone health and preventative care for Canadians. It is the least I can do.

As I said in 2013, what I am determined to do now, besides pay attention to my own bone health, is get the word out that osteoporosis is a big deal. It has terrible long-term ramifications, both individually and socially. And since it is often discovered after a sudden and surprising fracture, it seems to invade like a thief in the night.

But bones, even declining ones, can be kept healthy. The first step is awareness. People just don't think osteoporosis can happen to them. They think, "I'll worry about it when I am 80 or 90." I am here to tell them that waiting is not an option.



Christine is a nationally recognized author and speaker in Canada. She is on the Osteoporosis Canada Board of Directors, has won numerous awards and is often seen in the Canadian media delivering her message with the kind of conviction learned only through hard experience. She also uses her valuable communication skills as a passionate advocate for better bone health around the world.

Christine is the author of Unbreakable: A Woman's Triumph Over Osteoporosis. To contact Christine and learn more about her book, visit www.christinethomas.com.

To access her webinar Unbreakable, go to <http://webcast.otn.ca/mywebcast?id=66526997>.

Thank you Osteoporosis Canada Volunteers! **2016 Osteoporosis Canada Award Recipients (continued)**

Angela Reyes Memorial Staff Award

On July 25, 2013, Angela Reyes, a long-time employee with Osteoporosis Canada, passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. In memory of Angela, a commemorative staff award was created – The Angela Reyes Memorial Staff award. This award is intended to honour and recognize dedication and outstanding contributions by a staff member.

The 2016 recipient of this award was **Janet Choboter**, Executive Director of the Manitoba Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada.

Janet, a passionate, dependable and dedicated staff member, has been an employee of Osteoporosis Canada for over 15 years. Janet is an asset not only to the Manitoba Chapter but to the entire organization.

As the Executive Director of the Manitoba Chapter, Janet oversees all of the numerous Chapter activities and programs, both educational and fundraising, as well as a diverse group of almost 100 volunteers. Janet willingly shares her expertise and knowledge, and provides guidance to the Chapter's staff, volunteers and various Chapter committees.



Janet Choboter, far right

She is highly respected by the volunteers and staff alike. Her exceptional people skills are an asset for the Chapter in maintaining relationships with clients, sponsors and donors. Janet is a team player who works collaboratively with staff across the entire organization. She is friendly, courteous and professional in her interactions with volunteers, staff and the public. She meets each new challenge with optimism, creativity and patience and often goes above and beyond the bounds of her position.

*The **Award for Overall Excellence** is presented to an Osteoporosis Canada Chapter that has succeeded in furthering the osteoporosis cause through its numerous activities/ work in the areas of education, fund development, communications and volunteer development. Initiative and adherence to national priorities and ideals will have been demonstrated in the many ways in which the Chapter delivers OC's programs and promotes both Osteoporosis Canada and its group in the community.*

The 2016 Award for Overall Excellence was presented to the Manitoba Chapter, which was started in 1995 and chartered in 2000.



Left to right: Janet Choboter, Cheryl Baldwin, Dr. Heather Frame, Cherylle Unryn, Joan Bartley

One of the strengths of the Manitoba Chapter is the quality and number of educational activities in which they engage throughout the year. In 2016, over 5,000 individuals have had contact with the Chapter through educational sessions and displays. Some of these activities include: 2 public education forums, 3 well-attended support groups, more than 35 health fairs and displays that reach more than 3000 people, 75 presentations to various groups, and a Stand Tall Canada height clinic that measured more than 250 individuals.

The Manitoba Chapter organizes and holds a number of fundraising events to provide the resources needed for their many programs and activities in support of those living with or at risk of osteoporosis.

Over the past year, the Chapter has recruited and retrained 25 volunteers and logged well over 4,000 volunteer hours. Volunteers, new and seasoned, stay knowledgeable about osteoporosis through continuing education, Health Knowledge Training and orientation sessions offered by the Chapter. The Chapter creates a community spirit with its volunteers, and their enthusiasm and dedication have helped the Manitoba Chapter grow and thrive.

One of the Manitoba Chapter's successful activities this past year came through its advocacy efforts with Manitoba Health and its Regional Health Authorities. Through combined efforts, the "Manitoba Osteoporosis Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Osteoporosis" were developed.

These many and varied activities have helped to raise the profile of Osteoporosis Canada throughout the province and allowed the Chapter to grow and expand its services. However, it is not only the quality and volume of these activities but the variety and innovativeness of its activities that make the Manitoba Chapter worthy of this honour.

BONE MATTERS

Take charge of your bone health

Spine-Sparing Strategies: Moving Safely to Prevent Spine Fractures

Did you miss this presentation? View the archived version of Caitlin McArthur, MScPT, PhD (c)'s talk on the hows and whys of modifying a range of daily activities and movements to protect your spine and prevent fractures.

View the presentation [here](#)

Spine-sparing Strategies:
Moving Safely to Prevent Spine Fractures

Watch it live!

Have your questions answered!

Wed. May 3, 2017
1:00 - 2:00pm ET



For more information on Osteoporosis Canada and the Canadian Osteoporosis Patient Network (COPN) call 1-800-463-6842 or visit osteoporosis.ca/copn

BONE MATTERS

Take charge of your bone health



Access the forum at:
<http://www.osteoporosis.ca/osteoporosis-and-you/copn/virtual-forum/#spine>

Presenter:

Caitlin McArthur, MScPT; PhD Candidate, Department of Kinesiology, University of Waterloo

Some daily activities – vacuuming, sweeping, picking up heavy groceries or your grandchild – can increase your risk of spine fracture.

This presentation will provide an overview of which activities and movements need to be modified, why they need to be modified, and how to spare your spine to prevent spine fractures.



We Welcome Your Feedback

- Have a question?
- Is there an osteoporosis-related topic that you would like to see featured in the newsletter?
- Looking for a great volunteer opportunity?

Please contact us by calling Osteoporosis Canada's toll-free number **1-800-463-6842** or emailing copn@osteoporosis.ca.

FUNNY BONE:

“I’ve been on a calendar, but I’ve never been on time.” Marilyn Monroe

A Recipe from our Sponsor

Cheddar & asparagus potage

Course: *Hors D'oeuvres & Appetizers*

Preparation Time: 15 mins

Cooking Time: 25 mins

Yields: 6 servings

1/2 milk product serving(s) per person

Calcium: 20% DV/ 220 mg



Ingredients

1 tbsp (15 mL) **butter**
1 onion, chopped
1 lb (450 g) asparagus, trimmed and cut into small pieces (about 4 cups – 1 L)
2 cups (500 mL) potatoes, peeled and diced
3 cups (750 mL) chicken or vegetable broth, no salt added
1 cup (250 mL) **milk**
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 cups (500 mL) **Canadian Extra Old Cheddar**, grated and divided
Fried onion rings, homemade or store-bought (optional)
Homemade Gouda asparagus pesto (optional)

Homemade fried onion rings:

1/2 cup (125 mL) **milk**
1 onion, sliced into very thin rings
Oil for frying
1/4 cup (60 mL) flour
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Tips

Cooking tip: To maintain its colour, texture and flavour, cook asparagus quickly and then immerse in ice water to stop the cooking process.

Cheese alternatives: Canadian Provolone, Monterey Jack.



Nutrition Tip

Get into the habit of adding grated cheese to your soups, pastas, salads, grilled vegetables, omelettes, etc.

Preparation

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, melt butter and cook onion and asparagus for about 5 min, stirring frequently. Reserve a few asparagus tips for garnish.

Add potatoes, broth and milk. Season with salt and pepper.

Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for 15 min or until vegetables are tender.

Purée using a hand or upright blender. If using an upright blender, return mixture to saucepan.

Add 1 cup (250 mL) cheese and stir into soup until melted. Adjust seasoning.

Serve soup garnished with reserved asparagus tips and remaining cheese. If desired, top with onion rings and drizzle with Gouda asparagus pesto.

Homemade fried onion rings

Pour milk into a bowl and add onion rings. Soak for 10 min and then drain.

In a saucepan, heat oil on medium-high heat.

Place onion rings and flour in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Mix well to coat onions. Shake off excess flour.

Fry onions in hot oil until golden and crispy. Remove with slotted spoon and let drain on paper towels.

Set aside to cool to room temperature, away from humidity.

For more information about this recipe:

<https://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/cheddar-asparagus-potage>

This issue of COPING is sponsored by Dairy Farmers of Canada

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