



The Arthritis
Society



In June 2016 the guild was contacted by Robin McLean, the Community Development Coordinator for The Arthritis Society's Central West Ontario division. She was looking for individuals and/or a group to help her raise funds for The Arthritis Society and to spread awareness about the physical and emotional journeys of the 4.6 million Canadians living with Arthritis. She thought that surely, if 1 in 5 people have arthritis, some of them must be quilters! She didn't know then that her email would go directly to someone with a sympathetic ear.

She told me about a grant awarded by The Society to Dr. Lihi Eder (Toronto) who is examining the linkage between psoriatic arthritis and heart disease, and ways to identify and assist high-risk patients. The grant is one of many just announced as part of The Society's funding commitment for arthritis research: \$4.82 million, spanning 23 projects across Canada. We also talked about the need for education, the need for others to understand what having arthritis means. The importance of the Society's motto: *We have arthritis. It doesn't have us!*

Our conversation moved on to how we can help by creating a quilt. Funds raised by a WCQG/Arthritis Society project would directly support high-impact research by scientists and clinicians searching for the causes of, and cure for, arthritis. They would also support the researchers doing transformative work uncovering the best ways to treat and manage arthritis right now.

Robin hoped that the quilters who take part in this project would share their own stories, as I did with her. Perhaps they have arthritis themselves, or their spouses, or their children. Those shared stories will live on in every stitch, and one day find a place in someone's home. Her hope is that as the finished quilt will travel around the province, it will help to tell those stories, to connect arthritis sufferers, and inspire others to learn about life with arthritis.