

**Message from Ann Qualman
President, CAPA**

Welcome to this first issue of *CAPA Voices*, a wonderful, new tool for arthritis advocates.

At the first meeting of the CAPA Steering Committee on December 8, 2001, communication was identified as a critical function of CAPA. The concern then and now is to provide the means for CAPA members across Canada to identify and respond to common problems, to learn from each other and to deal effectively with arthritis-related issues on a national scale. To enable this exchange of ideas and improve the flow of information, the Communication Committee has designed and developed *Voices*, which will be published quarterly.

Voices will help you tell others what you are doing. When people with arthritis tell their stories and share what they know, we all benefit. Too often, we feel isolated in our suffering and feel that our protests fall on deaf ears. The information that you share and read here may be just what you need to become an effective advocate.

The Communication Team, with input from you, will use *Voices* to keep you informed of CAPA activities that are generally national in focus. So much, however, happens on the ground locally and provincially. We are counting on you to let us know the state of arthritis services and regulations where you live so that *Voices* can communicate these. What are the needs in your community?

Changes are needed in many areas – rapid access to affordable medications, reduced wait lists for surgery, changes in legislation so that disability benefits are available to those needing them, better education about arthritis for people with arthritis and the health professionals who treat them, greater public awareness of just how serious arthritis is... The list goes on. To wage these battles, good communications are essential. We need to hear from you, and you need to hear from other advocates. Contact us at: capaeditor@arthritis.ca or connect with other CAPA members on the Discussion Board.

Happy reading!