



# APHASIA GROUP NEWSLETTER



Edited By: Lisa Esposito and Leanne Just



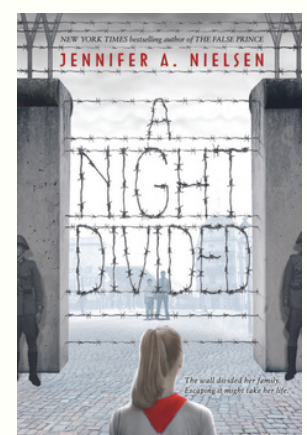
Amari DeBerry and Jana El Alfy, UConn Women's Huskies basketball players, stopped by to meet aphasia group members and graduate students in March 2023

## APHASIA BOOK CLUBS

The Aphasia Book Club returned to meeting in-person in Fall 2022. One group continued to meet online. In the fall, we read **Theodore Boone: the Accused** by John Grisham, a crime thriller solved by a clever teenager. As with any book club, the books received mixed review but allowed for interesting discussions about who the criminal might be and best escape routes for those needing to flee the country without a trace.

This past semester, we read **A Night Divided** by Jennifer Nielsen, a story about a family divided by the Berlin Wall. We discussed the moral compromises one must make to save family and self under oppressive conditions. After a stroke, many of our members have had to dig through their own "dark tunnel" to set up a new life on the other side. Many interesting life conversations were had!

New book club members are welcome at any reading level. Audiobooks are encouraged!



## APHASIA LANGUAGE GROUPS

Our Aphasia Language Groups were also able to return to meeting in-person this past Fall, 2022! This year, group members had the opportunity to visit with two **UConn Women's Husky basketball** players, Amari DeBerry and Jana El Alfy. They also got to watch a basketball practice and meet **Coach Auriemma!** We played language games to increase word finding and improve expressive language and comprehension. One week, we wrote a collective story about a zombie apocalypse and a movie outline. Discussions centered around **current events** as well as weekly personal "highs and lows". Who knew Groundhog Day would be such a terrific conversation starter? Participants vary in aphasia severity and we accommodate all ability levels. The only way to improve your language is to use it! New group members are welcome to begin any time!

## MEMBER INTERVIEW: GENE



Geno Auriemma (right), coach of UConn's Women's Huskies Basketball, finally got to meet Gene Leonard, his biggest fan! Gene hopes Geno can help bring more public attention to aphasia.

### 1. You've been participating in research on stroke and aphasia.

Yes, stroke or aphasia. I've been doing it with UMass, UConn, and B.U. I went for an MRI and they did a regular one and then they asked me questions while I was in the machine. I pressed A or B or 1 or 2. We did some speech, things I had to say. There were three kinds. There is a physical therapy study with Western New England college that's different from the brain functioning.

### 2. So you had to respond to questions while you were being scanned?

Yes. They were trying to see which part of my brain was the right part. My wife and daughter were watching some of it and I couldn't see it. They thought it was pretty cool.

### 3. How many years has it been since your stroke?

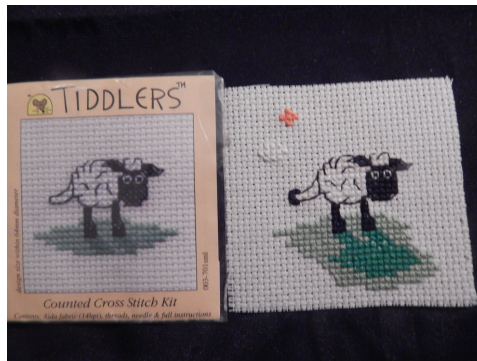
I had it in 2021. Pretty new.

### 4. What motivates you to do all of these research studies?

I like to learn and it's the only way I can give back. It will promote my healing and if it doesn't, it will promote someone in the future's healing. It's the best I can do. I like learning with kids. **I can give them hope and they can give me hope.** That's what it's all about.

# ARTWORK FROM GROUP MEMBERS: ROB

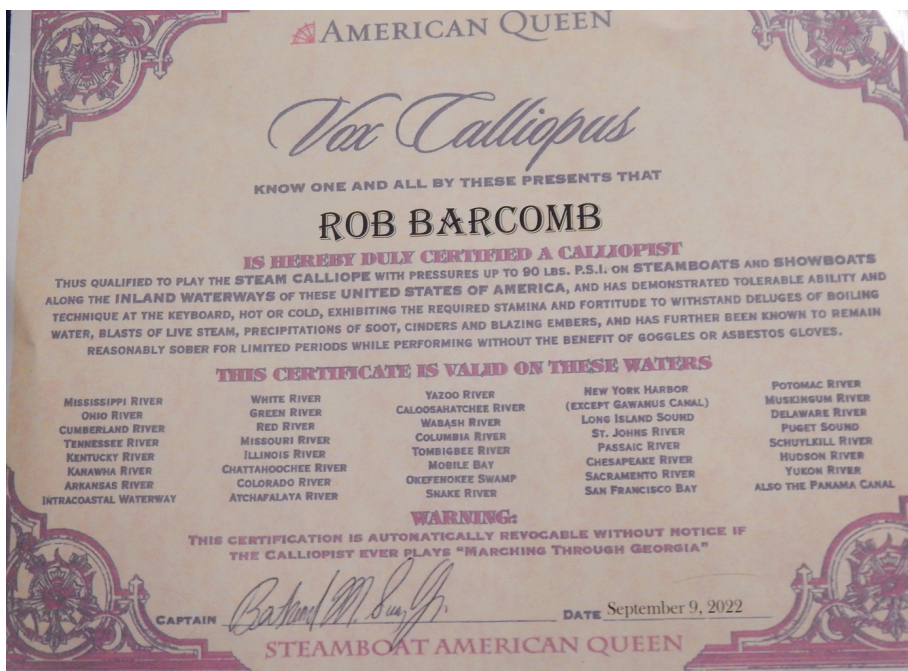
## ROB BARCOMB'S CROSS STITCH: A MEDITATIVE PRACTICE



Cross stitching is one of Rob's many talents. The themes and patterns he chooses often reflect Rob's Scottish Heritage. His other hobbies include beadwork, playing the calliope, and snowboarding. Rob's productivity in artwork, music, sports, and adventure is quite inspiring!



### ROB'S CALLOPE CERTIFICATION



**What is a calliope?**  
A calliope is an instrument that produces sound through large whistles, often used on riverboats and in circuses.

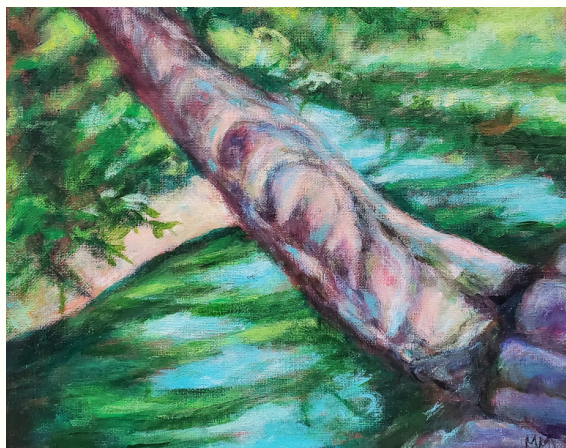
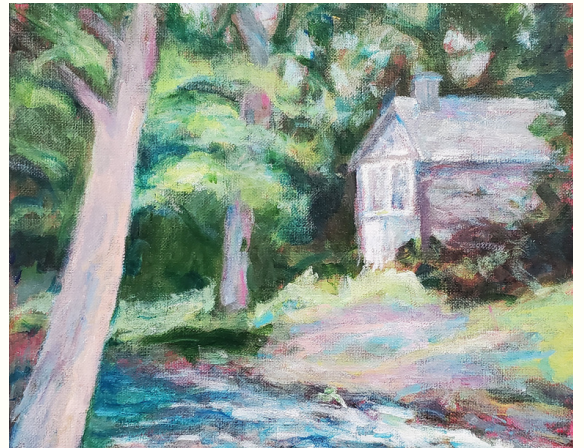


# ARTWORK FROM GROUP MEMBERS: MURIEL

## MURIEL'S OIL/ACRYLIC ON CANVAS PAINTINGS



Muriel Miller is a talented artist and retired art professor. She received her Master's from Central Connecticut State University and was a professor of art at Eastern CT State University and Paier College of Art. During her career, Muriel traveled to many countries with her students. When she's not painting, Muriel enjoys riding horses



## WHAT OUR GROUP MEMBERS ARE UP TO

### JIM: BEER BREWING



In Spring 2023, Jim Pickles is planning to brew a beer similar to Oktoberfest and Märzen-style lagers (März meaning “March”, the time of year it is traditionally brewed in). This style of beer is easy to make at home. “It’s all about how you do it”, says Jim. There are only 4 ingredients: water, barley, yeast, and hops. Jim explains that the batch is divided into three. For each of the three, you add the hops at different times to create variations in the flavor: at the beginning, middle, and end. He uses Chinook hops from Washington state and a pre-mixed starter that were part of a beer-brewing kit. Jim says you combine water and wheat first. That goes into a big container with malt. The total time it takes for this brew is only 2 days. It does not require sugar nor does Jim add ingredients to balance the pH of the water since the water he uses is already good. Cheers or Prost, as they say in Germany!

### LEE'S NEW HAMPSHIRE VACATION



Lee Soverino and his wife took this stunning photo of fall foliage reflected in a lake in Meredith, New Hampshire in September of 2022. It was relaxing and the trees were beautiful. They plan to return to the same place this year.

# WHAT OUR GROUP MEMBERS ARE UP TO

## TED: BANJO SOCKS



*From Ted Phillips:*

This is a picture of me and Tony Trischka at a concert at Connecticut College at the Lyman Allyn Museum on October 15, 2022. He is a world famous banjo player and songwriter. I went there because I also played the banjo before my stroke. I was lucky that I can still play the banjo and sing even though I have aphasia. My wife helps me play the banjo with my right hand but my left hand is fine.

When I met and talked with him at the concert he listened to me talk. His brother in law had a stroke and has aphasia also so it made it easy to speak with him. He played and sang and talked about the history of the banjo. The banjo began as a gourd with only three strings and now it has 4 strings and 5 strings. I play and Tony plays a 5 string banjo music that is called Bluegrass.

Also there was private collection of over 50 banjos. I saw this as well. I felt excited the whole time I was there. Tony gave me a pair of socks with banjo's on them as a present. I have only worn them once and loved it.



# WHAT OUR GROUP MEMBERS ARE UP TO

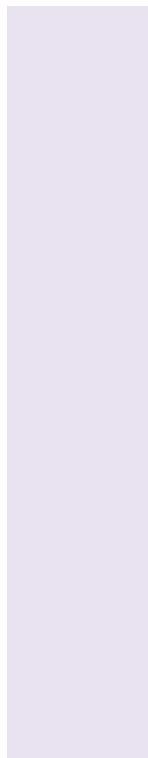
## TED & ASTRO



Ted Hageman with Astro, his grand-dog, walking on a path at Haddam Meadows Park along the CT River.



Ted also stays busy with home renovation projects. Ted's handyman and helper pictured below helped Ted install shelves and coat hooks in the entryway.



# WHAT OUR GROUP MEMBERS ARE UP TO

Jeff Perry and his wife would like you to meet their precious grandson, Simon! Simon is a year old and brings so much happiness to their family. They treasure every minute they spend together.



Elizabeth Hinderger's stroke story and book release were featured in our last newsletter. Here is a beautiful watercolor she created in 2021.



In loving memory of Mister, Colleen's beloved dog who passed away this year. Pictured here is Mister in his Irish sweater that Colleen's daughter bought him in Ireland for Christmas. Above, a birthday celebration with family in Terryville.

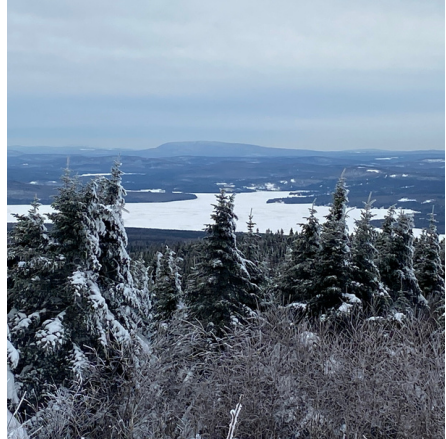




# WHAT OUR GROUP MEMBERS ARE UP TO

## JOHN'S SNOWMOBILING

Hibernate all winter? Not John Lauria! He spent several weekends snowmobiling in Maine. Pictured here is a February trip with Peter, Jim, and Rick where they averaged about 100 miles per day! They went through Pittsburg, Colebrook, Errol, and Andover, ME.



## IN MEMORY OF ANDY

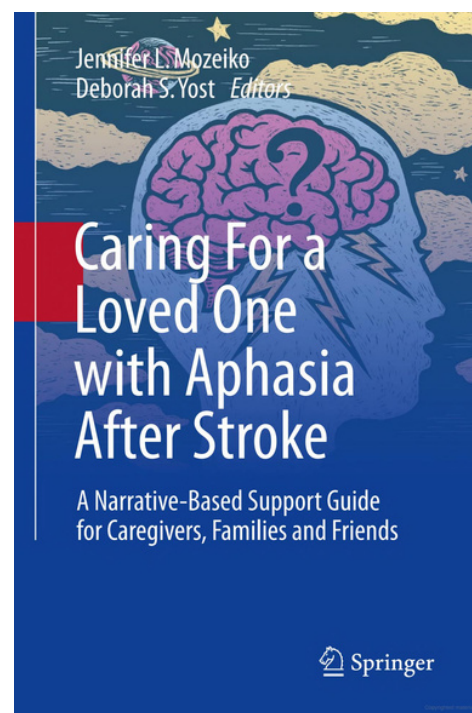


Andy Mitchell, UK native, first began attending the UConn aphasia group book club after having moved from Colorado. He struggled to read at first but took the advice of other participants and kept notes on what he read. He used to read each chapter three times and then, slowly, his reading proficiency completely recovered. Last summer he was plowing through novels one by one and did not have to keep notes or re-read. In addition to

being an incredible participant and friend to several of our aphasia group members, Andy relished his role as husband and father. He was also a bee keeper and shared his honey with all of us. We all miss Andy and wish his family many happy memories of their life with him. -Jennifer Mozeiko

## GIVE THIS BOOK A READ!

This book is a compilation of personal stories written by family of our members with aphasia. Aphasia greatly impacts not only the lives of stroke survivors but also the lives of their loved ones and community. The group of women whose stories make up this book learned through experience and sharing with one another how to cope in the wake of a stroke and are now sharing what they have learned with the world.



**Copies are available at UConn for free to caregivers. Can also be purchased online via Springer or Amazon.**