

2022 DOT SOWERBY PIONEER AWARD RECIPIENT

Larry Kolasa

For his many contributions to the National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association (NSDA), including serving as Founding President from 1989 to 1994, and Greater Detroit Support Group Leader, using his considerable leadership skills to support, educate, and raise awareness about spasmodic dysphonia and related voice conditions

In 2015, the NSDA created the **Dot Sowerby Pioneer Award** to recognize an individual who has made a significant positive impact on the dysphonia community. For the eighth time, NSDA bestows this annual award. We wish to recognize **Larry Kolasa** for the commitment and leadership for the NSDA that he has shown for many years. We salute him and is most grateful for his extraordinary service. He is an enthusiastic, empathetic, and organized leader who has served the NSDA in a variety of ways.

In 1989, Larry Kolasa and a small group of advocates and healthcare professionals founded the NSDA. Thirty-three years later, Larry still serves on the NSDA Board. All quotes from Larry used in this write-up are part of the book, *Speechless No More: A Life Transformed by a Voice Disorder* by Dot Sowerby. “I have received so much more than I feel I contributed from my many years volunteering. Being a part of this organization has enriched my life greatly and knowing that I helped to launch an organization that provides a welcoming community when a person receives that diagnosis of SD or a related voice condition, is such a gift.” (Page 179)

“Coping with spasmodic dysphonia was and is challenging. This disorder has ruined a lot of careers, but I did not let it ruin mine. I struggled, but I never let SD stop me.” (p. 166) For years, Larry was employed as an independent life insurance and securities sales professional. The Million Dollar Roundtable Foundation with which he is associated has helped fund a number of NSDA projects.

Larry has always had a passion for running. He has run 38 marathons in his lifetime. In 1998, he ran a fundraiser for the NSDA called “Running for Research”. According to Larry, “It was the support of our community that helped me endure this race knowing that this was going to help us find answers for spasmodic dysphonia.” Page 174)

It is fitting and touching that Larry Kolasa is receiving the Dot Sowerby Pioneer Award in 2022 from Dot Sowerby virtually. Both Board members have been serving continuously since the start of the NSDA in 1989 and will continue with Dysphonia International. They are true pioneers who embody steadfast commitment, strong dedication, and selfless service. Thank you, Larry Kolasa, for starting the NSDA by having your kitchen table as an office. The entire dysphonia community is forever in your debt.

