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Message from the Chair

Happy Spring to all WWDSS members.

World Down Syndrome Day was a spectacular day for our DS community. Many of our members with Down syndrome ordered a free WDS Day t-shirt and were proudly wearing their shirts on March 21st. Over 270 members, family and friends came out to the Alpine Club in Kitchener to enjoy a fun night of dinner and dancing. During the day, the Guelph Library hosted a couple of our members with Down syndrome and their families and Avery made the CTV news. We hope everyone had a great time celebrating and if anyone has ideas of ways to celebrate for 2025, email info@wwdss.ca.

We are thankful for local businesses and organizations in our community that reached out to us to help us celebrate WDS Day and raise money for WWDSS. Thank you to TWB Brewing and Seasons Retirement Community for your support and helping to raise money for WWDSS events and programs.

The following WWDSS programs have taken a pause for the Spring: New Parent Connection and Speech & Music Program. We plan to have these programs available again in the fall. The Cooking Class, Teen Hangout and Independent Living Programs are running in the Spring.

The Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday May 4th at RIM Park, Waterloo. A new Board of Directors was voted on and will begin to meet monthly in May. The Board of Directors does not meet for July and August. Prior to the AGM, members participated in a Spring mini conference. Members were treated to a presentation by self advocate: Anthony Tamming followed by the option of Guest speaker: Ed Mahoney or a group discussion on Life after school.

Registration for the Summer Picnic will soon be available at wwdss.ca. The picnic will be Sunday June 23 and once again be at our family farm in Puslinch. We are excited that FreshCo has reached out to us again this year to be a food sponsor of this event.

Be sure to save the date for the Any Which Way You Can A-Thon on Sunday October 6 at Waterloo Park. More information about registering a team for AWWYCA-Thon and details of the event will be coming through email in August.

We are getting ready for our annual October portrait series and 2025 calendar. This year is special as we are celebrating 10 years of collaboration with One for the Wall Photography. Save the date for the afternoon of Sunday, October 20 for Decade. An event and documentary. More details will follow closer to the event.

Included in this newsletter are the following: Passport Funding Preparation Bursary (ages 16 & 17) and the NEW Adult Programming Bursary. Members provided feedback to the Board about the financial obstacles posed by post-school programming for our members with Down syndrome. An Adult Programming Bursary committee was formed and we are excited to share this now with members.

For anyone graduating this year, we wish you much success in your future. I hope the school year ends well for all our students and families and that everyone has an enjoyable summer!

Lisa
Chair WWDSS

WWDSS Board of Directors for 2023-2024

Chair Lisa Buurma 519-577-9198	Treasurer Chris Cartile 519-803-5072	Director At Large Janice Duncan 519-578-9361	Director at Large Janine Rorke 519-220-1757
Vice Chair Roberta Thompson 226-972-8984	Director At Large Jenn Burechails 519-496-5967	Director At Large Jocelyne Bridle 519-822-2098	Director at Large Rossy Jivkova 519-400-4877
Past Chair Janine Oosterveld 519-635-1091	Director At Large Julian Gordon 519-954-1437	Director at Large Tara Hart 226-505-0330	Director at Large Matt Williams 226-899-6459
Secretary Stacey Beattie 519-841-9494	Director At Large Kim Murphy 226-989-2538	Director at Large Arisa Alexanian 519-729-7855	

WWDSS Committee Leads for 2023-2024

Newsletter Lori Murray	WWDSS Cooking Classes Rossy Jivkova and Mary Casagrande	Camp Bursary Sylvia Cook	Any Which Way You Can -A-Thon Sarah Kelly, Janine Rorke, Janine Oosterveld
New Parent Contact – Kitchener-Waterloo & surrounding area Vacant	Pizza Pals Susan Powell - Older Group	WWDSS Bowling Party Merita Elmazi	WWDSS Christmas Party Mandi Butcher
New Parent Contact – Cambridge Roopa Bose	Pizza Pals Susan Lott - Younger Group	WWDSS World Down Syndrome Day Celebration Roberta Thompson, Arisa Alexanian, Susan Vaz, Brenda Garcia, Lisa Buurma	New Parent's Connection Wendy Newbery
New Parent Contact – Guelph/Wellington County Vanessa Richard	WWDSS Calendar Tara Hart Vanessa Richard Katrina Fraser Kate Herron	WWDSS Family Picnic Lisa & Ross Buurma	Moms' Night Out Janice Duncan
WWDSS Website Steve Nicholson	Therapy Bursaries Alison Senior	WWDSS Social Media Vanessa Richard	Teen Hangouts Steve Nicholson and Arisa Alexanian
WWDSS Store Sylvia Cook	Transition Bursary Marianne Domm	Volunteer Coordinator Julie Maxwell	The Office Meetups (18+) Lori Maloney
			Independent Skills Program Jocelyne Bridle

WWDSS Representatives

CDSS Affiliate Representative
Arisa Alexanian

PAAC on SEAC
Marianne Domm

DSAO Representative
Mary Casagrande

Waterloo Region

SEAC – Catholic Primary Kim Murphy	SEAC – Public Primary Roberta Thompson
SEAC – Catholic Alternate Gillian Hadden	SEAC – Public Alternate Jeff Senior

Guelph/Wellington County

SEAC - Catholic Primary Katrina Fraser	SEAC - Public Primary Amber Barens
SEAC - Catholic Alternate TBC	SEAC - Public Alternate TBC

Mission Statement

The Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (formerly the Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society) supports and informs individuals, families and the community on issues related to Down syndrome. We advocate for persons with Down syndrome to lead healthy and active lives enabling them to contribute their unique gifts to our community.

Waterloo Catholic District SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

At our Mar 6/24 WCDSB Community Transition Support Worker Filomena Cruz shared the many ways she supports students and their families, including referral processes, transition planning and community connections.

At our Apr 3/24 WCDSB SEAC meeting, Learning Strategist, Sarah Daly from Conestoga College shared details of their 2-year Community Integration Through Co-operative Education (CICE) Program designed for adults with developmental disabilities who wish to further their education in a community college setting. Wilfred Laurier University was represented by Director, Accessible Learning, Dr Jeanette Parsons and Educational Supports Coordinator & Learning Strategist, Anahid Shirkhodaee. We also discussed details for the virtual presentation on April 23 at 6:30 pm called "Promoting A Culture of Inclusivity And Independence" with insights from Michael

Jacques & Dr. Gillian Parekh. Michael Jacques is the author of Can't Read, Can't Write, Here's My Book and Dr. Parekh brings a wealth of experience as a former Special Education teacher and research coordinator with the Toronto District School Board.

At every meeting, representatives from each local association and our Trustees provide updates on their respective areas. SEAC Meeting Minutes can be found here on the Board website: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/programs-and-services/special-education/special-education-advisory-committee-seac/>

As your WWDSS WCDSB SEAC Representatives, we are available as a resource for parents and as a voice for concerns related to our children.

Primary: Kim Murphy
Alternate: Gillian Hadden

Annual General Meeting

by Lisa Buurma

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday May 4th at RIM Park, Waterloo. In the morning members attended a conference with the option of registering for one of two sessions after self advocate Anthony Tamming spoke to the group. The guest speaker in the 1st session was Ed Mahoney, a special education teacher and advocate.

The focus was on positive advocacy: practical, proven, and positive strategies to help our members work with schools to support their children with Down syndrome as well as other educational needs. The 2nd session was a focus on life after school. Members in this room came together to collaborate and brainstorm with other families to

discuss topics of interest. While parents met for the sessions and the AGM, the youngest children were in an on-site care room while the other children and the teens enjoyed a field trip to Funvilla in Kitchener. An update on the AGM and the Spring conference will be in the next newsletter coming out in September.



Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC

by Roberta Thompson

The WRDSB has provided professional development support for our ACE (Alternative Continuum of Education) classrooms. The opportunities were offered through a series of meetings over the Region and at a Professional Development Day dedicated for the ACE program (elementary and secondary levels of education).

What is 'ACE'? The ACE program is designed to meet the needs of exceptional students who require an alternative program (out of the regular classroom). In an ACE program, students will receive:

- A small ratio setting
- Alternative curriculum (with a functional skills focus)
- Alternative Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Alternative Program Report Card

For some students to develop and reach their full potential, an alternative program to the Ontario curriculum with an alternative plan for graduation may be required. The Alternative Continuum of Education (ACE) program meets the needs of exceptional students who require an alternative program at the secondary levels.

The ACE program is a non-credit program leading to a Certificate of Accomplishment. As an alternative to Ontario curriculum, the program does not lead to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

In preparation of the PD Day, ACE Teachers, ACE Educational Assistants, ACE Speech, and Language Professionals

(SLP's), ACE Psychologists, Literacy Professionals, ABA Transition Leaders (to name a few) met. Through a series of small focus groups, the teams organized what would be a professional development day like no other. Here are a few of the topics covered in the PD Day:

Literacy and Numeracy Professionals:

- Focus on alternative IEP development and individualizing programming using the ACE framework (Literacy/Mathematics, Personal Life Management, Citizenship, Work and Transition Supports)
- Explored resources for literacy goals (e.g., Lexia, BoardMaker and How to Teach Your Child to Read)

ACE Learning Model Training for EA's:

- Led by ACE Program Leads and supported by ACE SLPs, ACE Psychologists
- ACE Educational Assistant professional development focusing on ACE learner profile and ACE program information.
- Developed a half day training session for elementary EAs in the am and secondary EAs in the pm
- EAs participated in whole group presentation and small group discussion highlighting best practices to support students with the ACE Learner profile, understanding the ACE framework and how/why IEP expectations are developed by the teacher as well as roles and responsibilities of team members.

ACE Program Leads Shared Resource Information:

- Provide ACE teachers a full day professional development focusing on transitions and self-identified areas of learning need.
- Carousel sessions offered:
 - Sensory Bins
 - Independent Work Systems
 - Declarative Language
 - Mental Health
 - Learner Profile
 - Communication Skills
 - Communication Devices
 - Community Supports
 - Teams
 - Field Trips
 - Lexia
 - Literacy
 - Effective Instructional Strategies

In addition, the staff met with the EA union representatives, Lisa Weiler Haskins, and Colleen Dietrich Sisson along with other WRDSB staff to review the EA allocation process.

If this information is too much to digest, consider it a good thing, this is progress and this is proof that sitting at the SEAC table matters. The WRDSB administrators and professionals that attend and sit at the SEAC table listen to our suggestions, opinions and lived experiences. They take our conversations and feedback to their teams, and they work to change, include and help our students. This is why communication and teamwork go hand in hand and we make good things happen.

Cooking Class

by Rossy Jivkova

WWDSS offered a recreational cooking class for members with Down syndrome ages 14 and older in April and May. The class options that were offered were Beginner Level and Intermediate Level. The purpose of the class was to allow the cooking instructor and participants to get to know each other. Each class made the same recipes, which was simple to prepare. Participants worked in groups of 2-3 and had a volunteer assisting them in completing their recipe. After cooking, everyone sat down to enjoy the meal together. Classes will take a break over the summer and start up again in the fall.



These are pictures from the first class that was held in April with Chef Teresa. The group had lots of fun and food was delicious.

Watch your email for Fall cooking class registration.





*Any which way
you can A-thon*
Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society

Mark your date for Sunday October 3, 2024. The **Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society** will be hosting the **Any Which Way You Can A-thon** at Waterloo Park. Plan to join us for fun, food, and fellowship as we raise funds and awareness for those living with Down syndrome in our communities. More information about registering your team and all the event details will be coming to your inbox at the end of the summer!

www.communityofhearts.ca



COMMUNITY OF HEARTS
Lifelong Learning Centre



Spring
Open House

Come join us for an afternoon of community and celebration
Sunday, June 2nd: 2pm-4pm
 at **Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre**
55 Wyndham St N, Guelph
(Main floor of Old Quebeck Street Mall)

Learn about our Programs ● Enjoy snacks & refreshments ● Join engaging activities
info@communityofhearts.ca 519-826-9056



Raising a glass for World Down Syndrome Day!

by Janine Oosterveld

For a third year, TWB Brewing and Anthony Tamming who is a TWB employee and WWDSS member, collaborated on a special brew in honour of World Down Syndrome Day. Special thanks to all who attended the launch night or purchased AJ & Zeus. It is now sold out! WWDSS is so thankful for the generosity of TWB Brewing for donating a portion of the proceeds from this beer to us and also for demonstrating what an inclusive workplace can look like!



Come to the

ANNUAL PWWWSS PICNIC

Date: Sunday June 23rd, 2024
Rain date will be provided if needed

Time: 3:00pm - 7:00pm

Location: Ross and Lisa Buurma's Farm in Puslinch

**Hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks will be provided.
Members are asked to bring a salad or dessert.**

Please bring lawn chairs/blankets. Lots of fun with outdoor games, beach volleyball, soccer game, candy scramble and a bouncy castle. Bring a bathing suit and towel for a splash in the pool (lifeguard will be on duty). Bring a lifejacket for small children.



Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society

Watch your email for
registration information.



Guelph Public Library
Explore • Connect • Thrive

Guelph Public Library Partners with WWDSS for World Down Syndrome Day

by Jocelyne Bridle

We are so grateful that Guelph Public Library (GPL) partnered with WWDSS on World Down Syndrome Day to build awareness of the value and contributions of those with DS! They were creative and instrumental by providing opportunities for our members to actively participate in their community and spreading the word by posting announcements about those activities on social media. They also posted many examples of books about Down syndrome on social media and set up a book display in the children's library at the main branch.

One of the activities the library promoted was a display that we set up about Down syndrome and the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome

Society. It was located on the first level of the main library branch, which included a table and a billboard of information and posters. Jonny and I, along with Byram and one of our friends, Bronagh Ni Chonaill, sat at the table to answer questions and share personal stories. We also handed out items to celebrate WSDS such as funky socks and bracelets. We created a Kahoot! trivia game about DS to provide a fun way to learn some basics about DS and promote a positive, proactive perspective about those living with DS. Several people showed interest in learning more, chatting with us and encouraging Jonny. A couple of people were entertained by the trivia game. Jonny was excited to chat with others,

especially when CTV came! He enjoyed sharing his knowledge about WSDS and especially about his skills and interests.

Overall, the opportunities that GPL and CTV provided, sent an incredibly important message to our loved ones with DS. They promoted them as active members in our community who have valuable input and deserve to be seen and heard. The whole event boosted Jonny's and Avery's self esteem and worth! Their beaming faces were testimony to the profoundly positive impact this event generated! There are few greater gifts and for this, we're eternally grateful.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you, GPL, especially Lisa Cunningham, Meg Forestell and Lauren Contini!

by Susan and Darryl Vaz

Avery was excited to team read at the Guelph Public Library as part of the "Storytime Surprise" program to raise awareness for World Down Syndrome Day. Avery enjoyed sharing the story, "Different - A Great Thing to Be", by Heather Avis, which was well received by the audience of toddlers and their parents. It was a pleasure seeing Avery take naturally to the role of teacher-librarian, a future we have often envisioned for her. The day was made even more exciting with the visit from CTV News Kitchener, who took the time to interview and listen

to Avery read her book once again. It was fun for Avery to see herself on the 5:00 and 6:00 evening news. The next morning, it was heartwarming to see Avery greeted at school by her peers excited to share in her TV fame!

We are so grateful to Lisa Cunningham, Lauren Contini and all the staff at the Guelph Public Library for opening their doors and highlighting our kids on their special day! We look forward to making this an annual tradition throughout Guelph.



Ready to fight for the basic income

by Lorna Aberdein

Alison Aberdein, ready to fight for the basic income that she, and so many other Canadians, deserve.

I was approached by reporter Doreen Nicoll last month about including a paragraph or two in the article she was writing about why a basic income is important for people living below the poverty level like our daughter Alison. She was responding to an email that I had sent to our federal senate:

Dear Senators,

I am writing to you today to respectfully request that you pass Bill S-233. I strongly support a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income (GLBI) in Canada and have been actively working towards making it a reality. I am a member of Basic Income Waterloo Region (BIWR) and a parent of an adult daughter, Alison with Down syndrome who receives ODSP, an income that is well below the poverty line. A basic income would allow her to live an ordinary, everyday life with enough money for food, clothing, entertainment, and a modest vacation. It would allow Alison and so many others without adequate income to live with dignity, be healthy and participate in their community.

I'm sure you are well aware that income is the most important determinant of health. And it has been demonstrated numerous times that a basic income relieves poverty. This is an historic moment that has been a long time coming. Please don't keep Alison and so many other Canadians waiting any longer.

You can access the full article and podcast here -
https://doreenn.substack.com/p/basic-income-equals-freedom-security?r=2658v9&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&triedRedirect=true



by Lori Maloney

The Office continues to get together in person and online. Here are some pictures from our movie night and pizza and games night.

Adults - please join us for great times!

- May 7** Make a Mother's Day gift
- May 21** Zoom
- June 4** Zoom
- June 11** Carousel Theatre Production
- June 18** In-Person BBQ





Seniorosity

by Lisa Buurma

A group of residents, called Seniorosity, at Seasons Retirement Community in Cambridge that love to get involved in the community and host fundraisers, came together to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day and raise \$300 for WWDSS. WWDSS would like to thank the residents of Seasons Retirement Community and their Fun Manager, Erica Boer, for their donation and creating awareness of our loved ones living with Down syndrome in our community.



SUMMER VACATION

Geared towards youth aged 15+, Summer Vacation takes place at a scenic, rural camp and emphasizes time spent in nature enjoying the outdoors together.



Registration provided by:
MyCommunityHub.ca
www.eafwr.on.ca/summer-program



World Down Syndrome Day Celebrations

by Lisa Buurma

On March 21st, over 270 people came out to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, at the Alpine Club in Kitchener. It was awesome to see so many of our members with Down syndrome wearing their free WSDS t-shirt and having such a great time celebrating with each other. There were many new members that came out for the first time. We hope you had a great time and hope to see you at other WWDSS events.

We would like to say a big thank you to Pepi's Pizza, for serving food that everyone loved: pizza, pasta, salad and dessert. Many members commented on how yummy the food was.

The crowd was in a mood to celebrate and DJ Matt Hoddle played music all night long to keep the celebrations going. The dance floor was packed and members showing off their dance

moves. A huge thank you to Matt for keeping us entertained all night long with great music.

There were many that contributed to an amazing evening and we would like to say a huge thank you to: Canadian Tire, Pinebush, Cambridge for the blue and yellow balloons, LUX Photobooth for the endless group photos, Storybook Events and Makin Faces for the facepainting and balloon artists and to the wonderful volunteers from the Rotary Club Waterloo that assisted with the registration table and our store sales booth.

Thanks goes to our volunteer WSDS planning committee led by Lisa Buurma; Roberta Thompson, Arisa Alexanian, Jocelyne Bridle, Susan Vaz, Janine Oosterveld, Janine Rorke, and Brenda Garcia.



Pizza Party Winners:

1. Grade 2/3 Class - Central Public School, Cambridge
2. Grade 1 Class - Holy Trinity Catholic School, Guelph
3. Room 118, St. Daniel Catholic Elementary School, Kitchener
4. ACE Class (Room 1740) - Bluevale Collegiate Institute, Waterloo

WWDSS - A Year in Review

February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024

by Lisa Buurma

PROGRAMS

Cooking Classes

Cooking classes were once again offered to people with Down syndrome ages 13+. These classes were held in the spring to work on independence skills, build confidence and foster peer relationships.

Skills for Independent Living Program

WWDSS partnered with LEG UP and KW Habilitation to offer 6-week courses in Kitchener for teens and adults with Down syndrome. In April and May a Financial Fitness: Exercise Your Money Skills course was offered. From September to October the focus was "On My Own", November to December, "SAFE - Safety Awareness For Everyone" and January to March, "Abuse Awareness".

Moms Night Out

There were a mix of virtual and in-person events for Moms Night Out open to mothers of individuals with Down syndrome of all ages. In March a group of moms adventured into an Escape Room. In October, a group of moms met at Market Sports for a cool night of mini golfing and laughs. Moms also met virtually in May, September and November. The year came to a close with a fantastic night out at Del's Italian Kitchen in December.

Mother's Connection

Mother's Connection for mothers of children with Down syndrome under the age of 6 returned to in-person in the Spring. The group of ten moms met at Breslau Mennonite Church weekly Friday mornings for April and May supported by a facilitator and childcare provided on site.

The Office - Meet-ups for Adults

Adults with Down syndrome ages 18 and up met virtually twice per month.

Participants took turns leading the meetup. It was a great way to remain connected, build friendships, share ideas and have fun. The Office met to help assemble the WSD school packages in March. They also met in-person with events such as: Different is Good the musical, Karaoke Party, Movie night at Galaxy Cinemas and dinner out at Crabby Joes in Waterloo.

Partners for Planning

WWDSS partnered with Partners for Planning Network to access learning resources for our members.

Pizza Pals

Although Pizza Pals was paused due to COVID for most of the year, the group started meeting again in September to put together the September/October newsletter.

Speech and Music Social Groups

WWDSS partnered with McLennan Speech & Language Services and Emily Carruthers from KiJingle Music to offer Speech & Music Social groups for the Waterloo area. In Guelph, WWDSS partnered with Stephanie Maxwell at Wellington Music Therapy and Laura Hutchison, Speech & Language Pathologist. A combination of virtual classes and in-person classes for all age groups with spring, fall and winter sessions. In Waterloo the groups ran from: 5-8 years old, 9-13 years old, 14-21 years old and 22+ years old. In Guelph there were two groups: 5-8 years old and 9-14 years old. These sessions launched again in January 2024 with the addition of the 1-4 years old group on Saturday mornings in Waterloo.

Teen Hangout

The Teen Hangout is for members who are age 13 to the end of high school. In March and April they gathered together for bowling. In the fall, the teens enjoyed

karaoke, CTRL-V, and a holiday dinner at Crabby Joe's.

FUNDRAISERS

Any Which Way You Can A-thon

On Sunday September 24th we gathered at Waterloo Park for the AWWYCA. The walk also included a performance by Erik Traplin, face painters, outdoor games, a barbeque with sausages provided by Pillars Meats and hot drinks and sweets provided by Starbucks. It was both a successful fundraiser to support our programs and services and also a great opportunity to gather as a larger group.

100 Women Who Care Waterloo Region

WWDSS was selected as the spring recipient of the 100 Women Who Care Waterloo Region receiving funds to support the expansion of the re-established summer camp in 2024 which was paused during the pandemic to include campers to age 21 and a new employment skills program planned to launch in the fall of 2024.

Canada Post

The Canada Post Local Community Engagement Committee for Kitchener, Waterloo & Cambridge selected WWDSS as the charity for the year.

CHANGE Lifestyle & Apparel, St. Jacobs

WWDSS was selected as CHANGE Lifestyle & Apparel's Charity Partner for April, May and June. CHANGE Lifestyle & Apparel donated 10% of their in-store and online sales to WWDSS. Additionally, they hosted their first corn hole tournament in June and donated proceeds from that event to WWDSS.

Chef on Call, Waterloo

Chef on Call supported WWDSS as well as local DS associations in London and Montreal throughout March for each of their restaurant locations. This included a February meet-up at their Waterloo location with WWDSS teens and adults who made a batch of special sauce and toured the kitchen. A portion of the proceeds for their special crispy Donator Burger were donated to WWDSS in the month of March. Family, friends and other customers enjoyed the Donator Burgers while raising funds for WWDSS.

Crabby Joe's Bar & Grill, Waterloo

For every X Factor Burger sold the last two weeks of March, the Jaggi family, owners of Crabby Joe's in Waterloo and a WWDSS member family, donated \$5 to WWDSS. This promotion was launched in February with a teen and adult kitchen tour and tasting. Many families and friends of WWDSS enjoyed this promotion while raising funds for WWDSS.

General Motors CAMI Facility

One of our members, Maggie, was invited to the facility to promote World Down Syndrome Day. The supportive team at General Motors CAMI Facility created and sold a "Rock Your Socks" T-shirt to employees at the plant to raise funds for WWDSS and another local organization.

Jakup's Lemonade Stand

Jakup held a lemonade stand on July 28, 29, and 30 to raise money for WWDSS. Jakup is 14, and has high functioning autism and a passion for giving back to his community.

TWB Brewing

TWB Brewing and their employee, Anthony, who is also a WWDSS member, partnered to create a beer for World Down Syndrome Day. Beer sales were launched with a tasting event in March. The beer sold out quickly. WWDSS appreciated not only the funds raised through the sales and also the awareness of Anthony's role as a valuable employee with TWB.

Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament

On June 13th, the 10th Annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament was held at Rebel Creek Golf Club in Petersburg

for the first time since the pandemic including a silent auction to raise funds for WWDSS.

GRANTS

Ontario Caregiver Grant

The Fall Mini Conference was partially funded by an Ontario Caregiver Grant to support learning and connection opportunities for parents and caregivers of adults with Down syndrome.

Starbucks Foundation - Neighbourhood Grants

WWDSS received a grant from Starbucks Foundation - Neighbourhood Grants. Meg at King Street Waterloo Starbucks submitted WWDSS for the grant.

EVENTS

Bowling Party

The Bowling Party was on Sunday February 26th. The party was a success and everyone had a great time. This was the first in-person Bowling Party since the pandemic.

Christmas Party

In December, many WWDSS families came together in-person for the annual Christmas Party at Country Hills Community Centre. The event included: a visit from Santa, pizza and snacks, cookie decorating, raffle baskets and music. Members enjoyed this gathering.

Fall Mini Conference

A Fall Mini Conference was held at RIM Park, Waterloo on Saturday November 4. The focus was on Health and guest speakers included: Dr. Sharon Cushing, MD, MSc, FRCSC, Otolaryngology/Audiology Pediatric Otolaryngology, ENT, The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and Dr. Joan Jory, Nutritionist, as well as Kurtis Wright, Psychotherapist at Qualia Counseling Services. The members had the privilege to listen to self advocate, Allie Libertini, and her experience with Special Olympics.

Summer Picnic

On Sunday June 25th, over 100 members came together at the Buurma Family farm in Puslinch. The weather was perfect for a swim in the pool and

the kids had a lot of fun on the bouncy castle and participating in a scavenger hunt. FreshCo was the food sponsor for the picnic.

WWDSS World Down Syndrome Day - March 21st, 2023

Over 200 of our members came out to celebrate at Bingemans Boston Pizza for the first time since the pandemic. The evening included a delicious dinner including: pizza, pasta, and salads. Entertainment included: DJ playing music that members enjoyed all evening, photo booth, face painters, and a balloon artist. Members were also able to participate in a music video presentation to I Am by Vinyl Hearts. The WSDS committee offered members similar school packages to 2022: lawn signs, bracelets, CDSS and WWDSS posters and letters for teachers to celebrate WSDS. The Office members were helpful in preparing the WSDS packages for members. WWDSS also held a social media awareness campaign, Rock Your Socks pizza party contest. Class/ programs/teams were encouraged to take a picture of the classes/groups and tag WWDSS on social media for a chance to win a pizza party. Winners from Cambridge, Guelph, Kitchener and Waterloo were randomly selected.

BURSARIES

Camp Bursaries

The Camp Bursary assists families with costs involved over and above regular camp fees for children (ages 4-17) to attend and participate in camps. WWDSS supported 23 families through the Camp Bursary.

Conference Bursaries

The Conference Bursary assists families with costs involved with attending the DSAO conference at Great Wolf Lodge. WWDSS supported 2 families through the Conference Bursary.

Passport Funding Preparation Bursaries

The Passport Funding Preparation Bursary assists in funding a psychological assessment required as part of the application to receive Passport funding at the age of 18 through

Development Services Ontario. WWDSS supported 4 families with this bursary.

Therapy Bursaries

The Therapy Bursary is designed to help offset the high cost of the private therapy costs that families must cover personally for their children starting age 5 when government funding ends. The Therapy Bursary can be used towards: Physio, Speech, Music, Occupational and Alternative Therapies. This year WWDSS awarded bursaries to 29 families.

EXTRAS

Annual Calendar & Portrait Series

WWDSS partnered for another year with local photographer Hilary Gauld of One for the Wall on a portrait series, social media campaign and calendar.

The campaign for the 2024 campaign was entitled: Just ask me. The photos were released twice daily through the month of October along with a thought-provoking theme - how well our members with Down syndrome understand others, and how others understand them.

Annual General Meeting

WWDSS held its Annual General Meeting in-person at Breslau Mennonite Church on Saturday May 6th.

Future Planning Workshop

As follow-up to the December 2022 to January 2023 member engagement about Future Planning, a Next Steps in Future Planning workshop was held in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting on May 6th. While parents met for the session, the youngest were in

an on-site care room while the other children and the teens enjoyed a field trip to Sky Zone.

WWDSS Newsletter

The WWDSS newsletter is prepared and distributed 5 times per year to our members to share stories about our members and information about our programs and offerings. The Pizza Pals group is responsible for organizing the newsletter distribution.

Special Education Advisory Committee representation

WWDSS continued to have representation on the Waterloo Region, Waterloo Catholic and Wellington Catholic District School Boards. In November WWDSS was accepted to represent on the Upper Grand District School Board.

Save the date

The Office

May 7, 21
June 4, 11, 18

WWDSS Summer Picnic

June 23

WWDSS Summer School Camp

August 12-16

Any Which Way You Can A-Thon

October 6

Decade: an event and documentary

October 20

WWDSS Golf Tournament

Look for it returning in 2025

BUDDY CHOIR

Buddy Choir has been meeting weekly at 109 Ottawa St. to rehearse. We will be performing with The Police Chorus on May 12 for a fundraiser for Ontario Special Olympics and have been invited to perform O Canada at the Police badging ceremonies, and the medal ceremonies for the 2024 Ontario Special Olympics Spring Games. Please join us!

We rehearse every Monday from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

For more information Imyc50@gmail.com or 519-501-6747.

If you would like to join Buddy Choir or would like more information, please let me know.
Imyc50@gmail.com
519-501-6747