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Lydia

Message from the Chair

Welcome to 2025. It's amazing how quickly time flies. I hope everyone enjoyed a joyful holiday season with loved ones. Here's to a new year filled with new opportunities, growth, and plenty of memorable moments ahead!

We had a great mix of celebrations to close off 2024. It was nice that everyone had the chance to unwind and enjoy each other's company in the different events. At the end of November, we had a great turnout at the Christmas Party at the Alpine Club in Kitchener. The kids were kept busy with games, cookie decorating, and of course listening to the Buddy Choir as Santa came to visit. A special thank you to Mandi Butcher and her committee members for a great event. A group of moms also enjoyed a Mom's Night Out dinner at Del's Italian Eatery in Kitchener. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal and a perfect way to relax and reconnect and make memories. What a wonderful evening and a thank you to WWDSS for the delicious appetizers provided for the evening. The Office came together to celebrate the holidays with a bowling party at Splitsville. The Office members, parents, and caregivers enjoyed a fun night out and enjoyed spending time together before the holidays.

Members have plenty of events to look forward to in the coming months. The Bowling Party will be on February 23 at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener. This is followed by our World Down Syndrome Day celebration on March 21 at Alpine Club in Kitchener. The Annual General Meeting and Spring Mini Conference will be held on May 3 at RIM Park in Waterloo. Childcare will be provided for this event. We are also excited to announce that the annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament will be held on June 16. More information on all these events will come in your email. Be sure to register for these events.

WWDSS programming has been going strong. Our Cooking Classes have been running with the age 14 and older group. We are currently looking for a new Cooking Class Coordinator to keep this program running. Please email info@wwdss.ca if you would like more information. Our Speech & Music Social Groups have started a winter session with groups offered in Waterloo and Guelph. The New Parent Connection group has been running in Kitchener with Wendy Newbery facilitating. This program will run bi-weekly throughout the winter. In February and March, we will also be hosting online art group sessions with Stepping Stones Expressive Arts. Along with the caregiver art retreat held in November, this was made possible through the Caregiver Grant from Ontario Caregiver Organization. The Skills for Independent Living group will start up again in the spring. The time for summer camp registration is here! Please see the insert for the WWDSS Summer School Camp that will be running again at Creekside Church in Waterloo during August 11-15. Please watch your email for registration information.

As a parent-run organization, we rely on the dedication and support of volunteers to bring our events and programs to life. Please consider stepping up and volunteering your time to any of our programs, events or fundraisers. Together, we can continue to create an enriching and supportive environment for the people in our lives with Down syndrome..

I hope everyone enjoys a healthy winter season.

Lisa Buurma
WWDSS Chair

WWDSS Board of Directors for 2024-2025

Chair Lisa Buurma	Treasurer Tony Fraser	Director At Large Janice Duncan	Director at Large Matt Williams
Vice Chair Arisa Alexanian	Director At Large Jenn Burechails	Director At Large Jocelyne Bridle	Director at Large Shelley Sims
Past Chair Janine Oosterveld	Director At Large Roberta Thompson	Director at Large Tara Hart	Director at Large Merita Elmazi
Secretary TBD	Director At Large Kim Murphy	Director at Large Janine Rorke	

WWDSS Committee Leads for 2024-2025

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

WWDSS Representatives

PAAC on SEAC
Marianne Domm

DSAO Representative
Mary Casagrande

Waterloo Region

SEAC – Catholic Primary Kim Murphy	SEAC – Public Primary Roberta Thompson
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SEAC – Catholic Alternate Gillian Hadden	SEAC – Public Alternate Jeff Senior
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Guelph/Wellington County

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



The Christmas Party

by Christmas Party Committee

This year, our Christmas party was held on November 25 at the Alpine Club in Kitchener, and it was a huge success, marking the largest attendance since 2019. The hall was beautifully decorated by the Alpine Club members, and a few of our own decorators added their special touch, setting up the party with a festive Christmas theme.

Guests had the opportunity to decorate and enjoy their own cookie creations. A big thank you to Blue Whisk Bakes for providing the delicious cookies and all the decorating essentials. The Buddy Choir made a grand appearance, filling the hall with the glorious sounds

of carols. Keeping with tradition, the Buddy Choir even sang the big man in red, Santa, into the party, adding to the holiday magic. Santa entertained guests as he passed out little presents and candy canes.

A pizza dinner, generously supplied by Pepi's Pizza of Kitchener, was accompanied by fruits, veggies, and a variety of snacks.

Members anxiously waited for the much-anticipated raffle. So many wonderful donations by members of the KW community made for some excellent prize hauls. Donations included meat from Finest Sausage and Meats,

coffee from Planet Bean Coffee, bike accessories from Ziggy's Sports and Cycle, KW Titan tickets from David Schooley, a homemade quilt from one of our members, Kerry, Kitchener Rangers tickets, pet supplies from Ayr Veterinary, and many gift cards and other thoughtful contributions. The generosity was overwhelming!

A good time was had by all, and we are already looking forward to next year's celebration. From all of us, we wish you a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and a joyful holiday season. May the year ahead bring you health, happiness, and safety.





Caregiver Art Retreat

by Rossy Jivkova

On November 30, we got together for a caregiver art retreat, hosted by Wendy and Rachel from Stepping Stones Expressive Arts. The art retreat allowed us to:

- connect with other caregivers;
- express our joys, challenges, and hopes through different art prompts (like painting, creative writing, felting, and mixed media art); and
- share about ourselves and our art pieces with the group.

It was a wonderful experience being part of the art retreat, getting to connect with other individuals going through similar life experiences, and getting to show our creative sides for the day.

The caregiver art retreat was made possible through the Caregiver Grant from Ontario Caregiver Organization!

In February and March 2025, we will also be hosting online art group sessions with Stepping Stones Expressive Arts, which are part of the same Caregiver Grant. It is a great way to connect with other caregivers and make some fun and casual art. Registration is free and art kits will be provided. Be on the lookout for the sign-up emails and registration opening on the website!



Buddy Choir

by Lori Maloney

Buddy Choir enjoyed performing at our Any Which Way You Can a-Thon, Decade, and the annual Christmas Party. We love when our friends join us onstage to perform with us. Even if you don't come out for rehearsals, please join us!

We also performed at The Doon Pioneer Community Centre Christmas Party and the E.A. and CYCW Professional Activity Day for the public school board. On December 29th, we look forward to singing O Canada at the Kitchener Titans' Game!

We rehearse every Monday at 109 Ottawa St. S. Kitchener from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. We would love to see you there!!



Teen Hangout

by Arisa Alexanian

In November, the teen group gathered for some karaoke and pizza. There were lots of amazing solos and group songs, along with plenty of giggles and laughs. The group is looking forward to their next get-together in January/February.



Upper Grand District School Board SEAC Report

by Amber Barens

At our December 11th, 2024 meeting there was a presentation from Wes MacVicar, Post-Secondary Navigation/Coordinator, about lighting the path for students with disabilities as they exit UGDSB. Post-Secondary Navigation (PSN) is a team of educators and service navigators working collaboratively with post-secondary institutions, employers, community services, and provincial associations. Their mission is to support the transitions of UGDSB students with disabilities as they exit secondary school and continue their educational and life journey. PSN divides its work into 2 operating levels or phases: GROUNDWORK and GUIDANCE.

GROUNDWORK spans Gr. 7 to 11 with initiatives and resources that build self-knowledge and confidence in students, enlighten their support systems, and help refine on-going strategies forged for their success. GUIDANCE spans Gr 12+ with initiatives and resources that inform, encourage, connect, and assist students as they cross the bridge to the community, workforce, or further education.

There was also a presentation from April King, Principal of Special Education K-12 and Accessibility, and Alicia Ralph, Human Rights, Equity, & Accessibility Commissioner on the 2023-2028 Upper Grand District School Board Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). The Objective: The plan describes the measures that the UGDSB will take over the five-year period of 2023-2028 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn, and participate in the school board community and environment, including students, staff, families, volunteers, and visitors to the UGDSB and its schools.

Waterloo Catholic District School Board SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

At our Nov 6/24 WCDSB SEAC meeting, we discussed:

- Promoting Sacraments Kits for students with special needs.
- Planning session for a potential Sacrament preparation for students with special needs.

At our Dec 4/24 WCDSB SEAC meeting, we discussed:

- Andrea Snyder, Mental Health Lead shared the board's Mental Health Update
- We received an update on the Sacrament Preparation family event. The date, location, and details will soon be announced.

As a standard agenda item, local community associations and the Trustees shared their updates and upcoming events.

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 WWDSB 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



the **Office**
WWDSS
Social Group

by Lori Maloney

The Office is our adult group that loves connecting both in person and online. Our meetings are biweekly, and we alternate between online and in-person gatherings. All participants are given the opportunity to lead our zooms. They do a great job of asking each other interesting questions and listening for the answers.

In person, we've had great fun at our Halloween party at Lori's community room, the movies, and on December 17th, we came together for our Christmas Party at Splitsville in Waterloo.

In January, we'll meet to plan more Zoom meetings and fun events for January to June.





Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society

Come On Out to the WWDSS Bowling Party

Sunday February 23, 2025

Victoria Bowl
280 Victoria Street South, Kitchener

3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Please register at www.wwdss.ca

Come enjoy an afternoon of bowling with the whole family! You do not have to bowl to enjoy this event. There will be pizza and drinks for everyone to enjoy. Gluten free options are available as well.

This is open to all WWDSS members and is a no cost event. **Registration is required** for bowlers and non-bowlers so that we can plan the lanes and food.



**SAVE
THE
DATE**



**SPRING MINI
CONFERENCE
AND ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

Saturday May 3
RIM Park, Waterloo



Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society



Backcountry
Camping

by Adam Rath

I really like going camping with my dad. We tried Backcountry Camping for the first time, we got there by kayak. I like kayaking, having campfires, going on hikes and I like swimming. I like going for wood for the campfire. I did word-find and we played Tigers and Goats and relaxed in the hammock. We also stayed in a hotel and I want to go camping again this summer. I saw animals - Loons, Otters, a Snake, Herons and Turtles.



11th

Annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament

Monday June 16, 2025 - 12:00 PM Shotgun
Rebel Creek Golf Club - Petersburg, ON

For more information
see insert



Moms Night Out

A group of WWDSS moms gathered for a fun and heartfelt evening of delicious food and conversation at Del's Italian Eatery in Kitchener. A big thank you to WWDSS for generously providing the appetizers, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. It was a wonderful time for all!



SUMMER PROGRAM AND SUMMER VACATION 2025

Join us this summer for great camp experiences, themed weeks and more!

Summer Program: Themed weeks for ages 13+
Summer Vacation: Overnight camp for ages 15+

REGISTRATION WILL OPEN ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025



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

WE ARE!



COMMUNITY OF HEARTS
Lifelong Learning Centre

Supporting adults with developmental disabilities to achieve the level of independence they desire through quality programming.

- Build self confidence, independence and become more engaged in the community
- Programs available daytime, evenings and select weekends
- Free trial days for Learning Day Program!

519-826-9056
www.communityofhearts.ca

info@communityofhearts.ca
55 Wyndham St. N, Guelph, ON

Save the Date Events

Bowling Party

February 23

World Down Syndrome Day

March 21

Spring Mini Conference and Annual General Meeting

May 3

Teen Hangout

TBD

Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament

June 16

Any-Which-Way-You-Can-A-Thon

September 28

Save the Date Programs

Independent Skills Program

Starts Spring 2025

New Parent Connection

January 11, 25
February 8, 22
March 8, 22

Speech and Music Program

Starts January 2025

Summer School Camp

August 11-15

The Office

TBD

Buddy Choir is up and running for our 17th year!



We rehearse every Monday at Our Studio 109 Ottawa St Kitchener from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.

Our upcoming gigs are:

- Nov 1 WRDSB PA day for EAs and CYCWs
- Dec 29 National anthem for the Titans game

A choir for the entire family - please join us!

For more info call Lori Maloney at 519-501-6747 or email her at lm50@gmail.com.