

[illegible]

- 2 **Message from the Chair**
- 4 **Catholic SEAC Report**
- 4 **2026 WWDSS Calendar -
"We Belong"**
- 5 **Annual General Meeting and
Spring Mini Conference**
- 5 **Join us on September 28th for the
Any Which Way You Can A-Thon**
- 6 **Mom and Dads Axe Throwing**
- 7 **Caregiver Art Retreat**
- 7 **Fall 2025 Speech & Music Program
Save the Dates**
- 8 **World Down Syndrome Day**
- 10 **WWDSS - A Year in Review**
- 12 **New Parent Connection Winter
2024/25**
- 14 **World Down Syndrome Day at
Guelph Public Library**
- 15 **The Office**
- 15 **Track 3 Skiing Program at Chicopee**
- 16 **Save the Date**
- 16 **Buddy Choir**

Photo by Hilary Gauld from One for the Wall Photography

Message from the Chair

Spring always brings a sense of renewal and hope. It's great to see the days getting longer and the weather warming up.

Thank you to the World Down Syndrome Day Committee for another great year celebrating those living with Down syndrome in our community and all through the world. We had an amazing turnout on Friday March 21st at the Alpine Club in Kitchener. Over 300 WWDSS members, along with their families, friends, and dignitaries, came out for a wonderful evening of celebration. We watched the I Can and 3-2-1 Dance videos together and danced the night away. Thank you to DJ Matt Hoddle, Alpine Club, Pepis Pizza and Rotary Waterloo for their continued support.

There were other exciting events for members to celebrate an extended World Down Syndrome Day. On Sunday March 16, members attended the KW Titans basketball game, adding some spirited fun to start the celebrations. One of our members, Jason Tinline, had the amazing opportunity of being a part of the game opening tip-off. On March 21, two of our Guelph members, Jonny and Avery, along with their moms, Jocelyne and Susan, hosted an event at Guelph Public Library to educate the community about World Down Syndrome Day. On March 22, the Cambridge Public Library partnered with WWDSS to host a free screening of the DECADE documentary and a featured presentation by author Adelle Purdham of the book "I Don't Do Disability and the Other Lies I've Told Myself". This presentation was followed by a panel of WWDSS members, photographer Hilary Gauld of One For The Wall, Katie Billo of Digital Sabbath Film Productions and author Adelle Purdham. The panel members shared their insights and experiences on how the film was produced.

We also want to thank TWB for partnering with WWDSS for another year to raise funds and create awareness. Anthony Tamming, a WWDSS member and team member of the TWB team, helped design the beer. Proceeds from the sale of this special brew go directly towards WWDSS.

Programming has slowed down for the Spring. New Parent Connection has finished their winter sessions. We hope to run this program again in the Fall. Cooking Classes are on hold until the Fall. Speech & Music groups will also begin again in September with the option of participating in Waterloo and Guelph.

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday May 3 at RIM Park in Waterloo. The AGM was held in the afternoon after the morning Mini Conference. The conference began with a presentation from Katie Millman, WWDSS member and Self Advocate. Members were offered to participate in one of two sessions: Behaviour with Dr. Nicole Neil and an Employment Fair. There will be more information on this event in the September newsletter.

We are excited to be hosting the Annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament again on Monday June 16 at Rebel Creek Golf Club in Petersburg. Registration is now open on the WWDSS website.

The Summer Picnic will be held at the Buurma Farm in Puslinch on Sunday June 22. We hope to see everyone there!

Be sure to save the date for the Any Which Way You Can A-Thon on Sunday September 28, 2025, at Waterloo Park.

Your WWDSS Chair
Lisa Buurma

WWDSS Board of Directors for 2024-2025

Chair Arisa Alexanian	Treasurer Sylvia Cook	Director At Large Merita Elmazi	Director at Large Kim Murphy
Vice Chair TBD	Director At Large Jocelyne Bridle	Director At Large Tony Fraser	Director at Large Janine Oosterveld
Past Chair Lisa Buurma	Director At Large Jenn Burechails	Director at Large Tara Hart	Director at Large Janine Rorke
Secretary Tracey Kuepfer	Director At Large Janice Duncan	Director at Large Lori Maloney	Director at Large Roberta Thompson

WWDSS Committee Leads for 2024-2025

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

WWDSS Representatives

PAAC on SEAC
Marianne Domm

DSAO Representative
Mary Casagrande

Waterloo Region

SEAC – Catholic
Primary - Kim Murphy
Alternate - Gillian Hadden

SEAC – Public
Primary - Roberta Thompson
Alternate - Jeff Senior

Guelph/Wellington County

SEAC – Catholic
Primary - Katrina Fraser
Alternate - TBD

SEAC – Public
Primary - Amber Barends
Alternate - TBD

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.

Catholic SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

Jan 8/25 WCDSB SEAC meeting summary:

- We took part in a Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) Visioning Session, led by Josh Fullan, Executive Director of Maximum City.
- The committee offered their feedback from the perspective of the organizations they represent.
- WCDSB is currently in phase 2 which is information gathering. We provided feedback on topics such as: what do we want for students entering WCDSB, strengths, challenges that we see for WCDSB families & students, how we can overcome challenges, how we can work together with local agencies and organizations.

Apr 2/25 - WCDSB SEAC meeting summary:

- We received a presentation from 2 board Behavior Analysts outlining the Board's agenda for Building Skills in Full-Day Kindergarten.

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/>

Please note: WCDSB will no longer be posting updates on social media platform X. New Instagram accounts have been created:

WCDSB Official Board Account – @Waterloocdsb
Learning & Curriculum – @WCDSB_Learns
Student Wellbeing & Mental Health – @WCDSB_Wellness
Innovation & Technology – @WCDSB_Innovates
Special Education – @WCDSB_SpecialEd
Experiential Learning – @WCDSB_Experiential
Athletics – @WCDSB_D8Athletics

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



2026 WWDSS Calendar – “We Belong”

Continuing the success of our “I Can” World Down Syndrome Day campaign, we are calling on our members to show the world how they belong.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

This year's shoot will be **ONE DAY ONLY - Saturday, May 31st, 8:30am to 4:30pm.**

Are you a member of a hockey team? Come dressed in your hockey gear! Are you a dancer? Come dressed in your dance clothes or a recital costume! Are you a member of a playgroup? Bring along a toy that you use at playgroup! Do you like to go biking with your friends? Come wearing your helmet and biking clothes! Do you love to read? Bring some books with you! Do you love to bake? Wear an apron and bring some cookies! Do you love to swim? Wear your swimsuit!

This photo shoot will be a “costumed” shoot. Members will be responsible for dressing their part with outfits and/or props. Note: Props must be easily portable. If you have any questions about “costuming”, please reach out to the calendar committee for clarification. Note: You must be costumed for this shoot. If you are not prepared for the photo shoot, you will still have your photo taken but risk the chance of not being included in the final series and calendar.

Registration has closed and registrants should check their emails for the photo shoot schedule and future updates.

Annual General Meeting and Spring Mini Conference

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday May 3rd at RIM Park, Waterloo. In the morning members began the conference with a presentation by Self Advocate Katie Millman. She shared about her life after high school. After the presentation by Katie, members had the option of registering for one of two sessions. Session 1 was Applied Behaviour Analysis – ABA with Dr. Nicole Neil. Session 2 was Life After High School: Employment Information Fair and Discussion.

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 THEMUSEUM in Kitchener. An update on the AGM and the Spring Mini Conference will be in the next newsletter coming out in September.



Join us on September 28th for the Any Which Way You Can A-Thon

by Janine Oosterveld

Mark your calendar and tell your friends and family to do the same! We are getting ready for our biggest event of the year. The Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society is hosting the Any Which Way You Can A-thon on Sunday, September 28th from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at Waterloo Park. This FUNdraising event includes games and activities, a 2-km walk and roll, food, and a dance party! Everyone is welcome so help us spread the word.

Look for more information about setting up your fundraising page this summer.

Help us make this event a success

- Our organizing committee has started planning the event and always welcomes new volunteers
- Do you know a business or do you have an employer that may be interested in sponsoring or donating a prize to this event?

We look forward to hearing from you through PublicRelations@wwdss.ca.



Mom and Dads Axe Throwing

by Arisa Alexanian

On Friday, March 28, moms, dads, and caregivers gathered at Bingeman's for a fun-filled evening of pizza, wings, and axe throwing. It was amazing to see such a great turnout! Everyone had a chance to meet new friends, connect, and enjoy some well-deserved social time.

The atmosphere was lively, the food was delicious, and the axe throwing added a fun twist to the night. A huge thank you to the **Ontario Caregiver Grant** for making this evening possible for our members. We are truly grateful for the support in helping our families connect with one another.





Caregiver Art Retreat

Exerpts from an email by Wendy Newbery

Rachel and I were sorry to say goodbye to our WWDSS art makers. It was a lovely group.

In the four sessions, we played with marker and pastel, watercolour, collage, poetry, and creative writing. The group was enthusiastic and bravely participated with insight and spirit. There was laughter, emotion, and some "ah ha!" moments.

A big thank you to you, Rossy from Rachel and myself. We think your idea that this was going to be valuable for WWDSS folks was spot on - they really made it a great experience for each other. We liked working with you and appreciate all you did to make this grant happen. We also want to thank the WWDSS Board for being open to the idea. Caregiver art making is something we have been doing for a number of years, and we keep seeing the way this short interlude can make a difference to the resilience and energy levels of those who spend their days in caregiver roles.

Stepping Stones Expressive Arts

Check out our social media pages and our website:
www.steppingstonesexpressivearts.com



Fall 2025 Speech & Music Program Save the Dates

KW groups are set for

September 15, 22, 29
 October 6, 20, 27

Guelph groups are set for

September 13, 20, 27
 October 4, 25
 November 1

Younger group at 3:30 p.m.
 Older group at 4:30 p.m.

Look for more information
 about registering for these
 programs this summer.

World Down Syndrome Day

by Lisa Buurma

It was wonderful to see so many people in our communities celebrating World Down Syndrome Day at their schools and workplaces on March 21. We love seeing our members recognized and celebrated, and we're so thankful for everyone that helps advocate for a world where individuals with Down syndrome can live their best possible lives.



KW TITANS BASKETBALL GAME

On Sunday, March 16, WWDSS members had the incredible opportunity to attend a KW Titans Game against the Jamestown Jackals and take part in a memorable game day experience that promoted inclusion and raised awareness for individuals in our community living with Down syndrome.

A heartfelt thank you to the KW Titans for their commitment to inclusion and creating such a welcoming atmosphere. During the

game, a shortened version of the "I Can" video was featured on the Jumbotron, showcasing the talents and achievements of our members with Down syndrome – a truly inspiring moment for all in attendance.

A special congratulations to Jason Tinline, who was selected to participate in the opening tip-off. What a proud and unforgettable moment.



SCHOOLS

Thank you to all members that shared the interactive Google Slide with their educators. This Google Slide was created to help educators celebrate, explore and learn more about those living with Down syndrome. Thank you to the schools that participated in WDSD by encouraging their students to wear funky socks to show their support, spread awareness, and celebrate the amazing individuals in our school community with Down syndrome.

Pizza Party Winners

St. John Catholic School (Arthur)
Mrs. Scott's Grade 2/3 Class

Holy Trinity Catholic School (Guelph)
Mr. Plat's Class

Resurrection Catholic Secondary School (Kitchener)
Ms. Gallagher & Ms. Zister's Class

Northlake Woods Public School (Waterloo) Room 8

World Down Syndrome Day Celebrations at Alpine Club

Later that evening, over 300 members, dignitaries, family, and friends, came together at the Alpine Club in Kitchener to celebrate in true community spirit. It was a night full of joy and connection, with face painters, a photo booth, delicious pizza and pasta, and a DJ spinning great music that kept everyone dancing.

During the celebration, members also watched the "I Can" video – a compilation that showcased just how capable and inspiring our members with Down syndrome are. Thank you to everyone that contributed by sending a video or photo. An extra thank you to volunteer, Sebastien Meunie, who worked with the WDSD Committee to put





the video together. Events like this don't happen without dedicated volunteers. A heartfelt thank you to everyone on the WDS Planning Committee that helped make the evening such a success – we couldn't have done it without you! Many thanks to **Rhonda & John from Pepi's Pizza** for partnering with us to provide a delicious meal. Thank you to **Alpine Club** for hosting us for a second year in a row. Thank you to **DJ, Matt Hoddle from Hoddle Services** who very graciously donated his services for the dance party. Finally, a big thank you to our friends from **Rotary Waterloo** that helped keep everything running smoothly so our members could enjoy this special event.

A special thank you to the following Dignitaries for attending our event:

- **MPs Bardish Chagger and Mike Morrice;**
- **MPP Aislinn Clancy;**
- **Regional Councillors Colleen James and Chantal Huinink;**
- **Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic, Waterloo Mayor Dorothy McCabe and Cambridge Mayor Jan Liggett;**
- **Waterloo Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee representatives Laura Shoemaker and Trustee Robert Sikora**

We appreciate your leadership in supporting inclusion for people with Down syndrome in our community, province and country.

WWDSS Hosts Free Film Screening and Discussion at Cambridge Public Library

On Saturday, March 22,

WWDSS members and members of the community gathered at the Cambridge Public Library in the Old Post Office location, for a free screening of the DECADE documentary. This event showcased DECADE, a short documentary and photo series by renowned photographer Hilary Gauld, One for the Wall and Katie Billo, Digital Sabbath Film Company. This documentary commemorates 10 years of challenging stereotypes through powerful storytelling and highlights the progress made in the media representation and the ongoing need for advocacy.



Attendees also had the pleasure of hearing from keynote speaker Adelle Purdham, writer, educator, and parent disability advocate. She is the author of "I Don't Do Disability and Other Lies I've Told Myself". I've Told Myself. Adelle's powerful words and lived experience brought depth and inspiration to the event, sparking meaningful dialogue and connection.

After Adelle's presentation, there was a panel discussion, including Hilary Gauld, Adelle Purdham, Katie Billo and WWDSS members that were featured in the documentary, Kaleb Nieva and Janine Oosterveld. They shared about their experience and answered questions from the audience.

Thank you to WWDSS member, Roberta Thompson for her vision and dedication in creating such a special and meaningful event. Her efforts helped bring the community together for an unforgettable afternoon of learning, connection, and advocacy.

AJ & Zeus Pale Ale at TWB Brewing

To celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, TWB partnered once again with WWDSS. They brought back extra special lemongrass pale ale, named in honor of Anthony Tamming (AJ) and his beloved pup, Zeus.

Anthony, a dedicated team member of the TWB team, helps design the beer every year, bringing his unique creativity and joy to the process.

The beer was launched at a special event on March 4 – a fun and memorable night for everyone who attended.

Proceeds from the sales of this special brew go directly to support the WWDSS.



We truly appreciate the support of TWB Brewing raising funds and employment awareness through this initiative! Visit TWBbrewing.com or stop by the brewery to purchase while quantities last.

WWDSS - A Year in Review

February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025

PROGRAMS

Cooking Classes

Cooking classes were once again offered to people with Down syndrome ages 13+. A beginner and two intermediate classes were held in April and May. This was followed by classes both at the beginner and intermediate levels from October to November. These classes were held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Cambridge. These classes were held to work on independence skills, build confidence and foster peer relationships.

Moms Night Out

There was a mix of virtual and in-person events for Moms Night Out open to mothers/caregivers of individuals with Down syndrome of all ages. In March we held an evening zoom conversation. In May moms enjoyed a night out at Crock a Doodle. The year ended with a fantastic night out at Del's Italian Kitchen in November.

New Parent Connection

This program was previously named Mother's Connection and was re-named New Parent Connection to include moms and dads of a young child with Down syndrome. The group met in the Spring 2024 and another session began in December 2024. The winter session was sponsored by Hammond Power Solutions. Both groups were facilitated by Wendy Newbery.

Partners for Planning

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

Pizza Pals

Pizza Pals gathered together to put the newsletters together in March, May, September, November and January.

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 March 2024 the Abuse Awareness program ended. The Spring 2024 focused on Self Advocacy. The winter session was sponsored by Hammond Power Solutions. Both groups was no Fall session.

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: 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 were held twice a year in the Fall and Winter. The Fall session ran from September to November and the Winter session began in January

Summer School Camp

The WWDSS Summer School Camp was held for the first time since the pandemic. It was held at Creekside Church in Waterloo during the week of August 12 - 16. It was offered to members in Junior Kindergarten to age 21. The camp had 3 classes and was attended by 27 members.

Teen Hangout

The Teen Hangout is for members who are age 13 to the end of high school. In March they gathered together for bowling. In May the teens enjoyed a movie night. The teens enjoyed a summer BBQ in June. In August, the teens enjoyed a night at Bingemans playing mini golf and eating pizza. In November, they hung out for a karaoke night and pizza.

The Office - Meet-ups for Adults

Adults with Down syndrome ages 18 and up meet up twice a month virtually and in-person. Participants took turns leading the meetup. It was a great way to remain connected, build friendships, share ideas and have fun. They meet each month for one in-person meet up and also for one zoom meet up. In March they met for a movie night and at the World Down Syndrome Day party. In April they met for a game and pizza night. In May they gathered together to make a Mother's Day gift. In June they went to Carousel Theatre Production to watch their friends in a performance. They also had a summer barbecue in June to celebrate the summer. They had fun at a Halloween party and then a Christmas Party in December.

FUNDRAISERS

Any Which Way You Can A-thon

On Sunday October 6th 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 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.

Seasons Retirement Community

A group of residents, called Seniorosity, hosted a fundraiser for World Down Syndrome Day.

TWB Brewing

TWB Brewing and their employee, Anthony, who is also a WWDSS member, once again 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

The Annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament was put on hold for 2024.

GRANTS

Ontario Caregiver Grant

The OCG was received for a one-day caregiver art retreat which was held on November 23, 2024. Six members attended this event. This session was run by Stepping Stones. There were also 4 online art sessions for caregivers of adults with DS included in the grant. They will be held in 2025.

EVENTS

Bowling Party

The Bowling Party was on Sunday February 25th. The party was a success and everyone had a great time. It was held at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener.

Christmas Party

The Christmas Party was held Sunday November 24th at the Alpine Club in Kitchener. Many families came together for the annual Christmas Party. The event included: a visit from Santa, pizza and snacks, cookie decorating, raffle baskets and music.

DECADE Event

On Sunday October 20th, over 550 members, Dignitaries, family members and friends came together for a very special gala event to celebrate 10 years of calendars and advocacy with photographer Hilary Gauld of One For The Wall. This Decade event was held at Federation Hall, University of Waterloo. Guest speakers were: Madison Tevlin, Moses Latino, Heather Avis, Laura Lachance (CDSS) and Ed Casagrande (WWDSS). A documentary of the lives of 3 WWDSS members was produced by Digital Sabbath Film Company and was released at the Decade event.

Fall Mini Conference

The Fall Mini Conference was not held in 2024.

Spring Mini Conference

The Spring Mini Conference was held on Saturday May 4th at RIM Park in Waterloo. The conference began with Self Advocate Anthony Tamming sharing about "His life so far". Parents were offered two different morning sessions: Ed Mahony on IEPs and School Advocacy or to attend a workshop on "Life after 18" facilitated by Roberta Thompson. Topics that were discussed: housing, employment and volunteer opportunities, life planning and social opportunities. There was childcare provided at the conference. Children over the age of 6 went to Funvilla.

Summer Picnic

On Sunday June 23rd, 100 members came together at the Buurma Family farm in Puslinch. The kids enjoyed a swim in the pool, had a lot of fun on the bouncy castle and playing outdoor activities. Thank you to FreshCo for being the food sponsor for the picnic for another year. The hamburgers and ice cream were a hit!

WWDSS World Down Syndrome Day - March 21st, 2024

Over 200 of our members came out to celebrate at Alpine Club in Kitchener. 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 with DS were offered a free WDS Rock your Socks t-shirt. These shirts were popular. The WDS committee offered members similar school packages to previous years: lawn signs, bracelets, CDSS and WWDSS posters and letters and a google slide for teachers to celebrate WDS. 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. In Guelph, two of our members partnered with the Guelph Public Library and set up a display at the main branch and organized a children's program for the morning.

BURSARIES

Adult Programming Bursaries

The adult programming bursary was new for 2024. It supports adults with Down syndrome over 18, who are no longer in school full time. The adult programming bursary is designed to provide additional financial support for the high costs of post-school programming. WWDSS supported 16 families.

Camp Bursaries

The Camp Bursary assists families with costs involved to support our children (ages 4-17) to be able to attend and participate in camps. WWDSS supported 22 families through the Camp 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 2 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. The Therapy Bursary can be used towards: Physio, Speech, Music, Occupational and Alternative Therapies. This year WWDSS awarded bursaries to 34 families.

EXTRAS

Annual Calendar & Portrait Series

WWDSS partnered for a 10th year with local photographer Hilary Gauld of One for the Wall on a portrait series, social media campaign and calendar. The campaign for the 2025 calendar was DECADE and it reflected on the past 10 years of calendar photos from each series. The photos were released twice daily through the month of October along with thought-provoking questions asked to members.

Question #1: How did it feel being photographed?

Question #2: What perceptions do you think have changed in the Down syndrome space in the last 10 years? What changes have you noticed in our communities towards those with Down syndrome? What is the single biggest change you have seen in the Down syndrome space in the last 10 years?

Question #3: What is next? What changes would you like to see in the Down syndrome space in the next 10 years? Is there something you feel people still need to know about people with Down syndrome?

Annual General Meeting

WWDSS held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday May 4th at RIM Park in Waterloo.

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 newsletter is also included on our website. 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, Wellington Catholic and the Upper Grand District School Boards.

Website

The WWDSS website was updated Fall 2024. This included significant enhancements to our member portal for ease of access, registration, volunteer hours, bursary claims, etc.

New Parent Connection Winter 2024/25

by Wendy Newbery

Last December, a group of parents of children under age 6 with Down syndrome began meeting for a series of 8 sessions. The New Parent Connection group (formally New Mother Connection) included five moms and two dads. Since the series has just concluded, we thought you might like to hear a bit about the group and what we did when we met on alternate Saturday mornings through the winter.

The five families brought their lovely children ranging in age from 4 months to 3 years. Children had the option to go to the church nursery where they were cared for by three conscientious carers.

We are grateful to Grand River Unitarian Congregation on Sydney Street in Kitchener for permitting us to rent their space again this year.

Each week, families had time to chat and visit over hot beverages and baked goods. Over the weeks, we delved into specific topics of interest identified by the group. Sometimes we welcomed guests who provided information and resources.

This series focused on the following themes:

- self-care
- financial planning
- child development from the perspective of Occupational Therapy
- resources available through the Waterloo Region Family Network
- stories of success
- advocacy

We thank Barry Ames, Laura Ruby, Sue Simpson, and Rachel Tanner for sharing their expertise and for being our guests.

Our final get together was a "social" shared with three WWDSS parents who have older children. We are grateful to Arisa Alexanian, Mary Casagrande, and Matt Williams for joining us.

As someone who has facilitated this group a number of times over the years, it is always a privilege for me to watch community and connections grow in this way. There is a special kind of magic that happens when families come together to share their stories. We need each other. How fortunate we are to have this lovely group of families joining us. Welcome to you all!

Come to the ANNUAL PWWWDSS PICNIC

Date: Sunday, June 22, 2025
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.



World Down Syndrome Day at Guelph Public Library

by Jocelyne Bridle

Friday, March 21, 2025

It was a great time had by all involved! There was joy in the socializing between the participants of the two local organizations that were represented, J.O.E (Jobs. Opportunities. Enterprise,) and Community of Hearts (COH). Both parties were able to showcase their talents and skills by serving coffee and selling their artisan candies,

respectively, while informing the patrons of the important work that their organization does.

The people who showed interest in our event learned about Down syndrome and World Down Syndrome Day, as well as J.O.E. and COH, and they were eager to support us! Jonny was thrilled to be able to share a short presentation about Ds, especially the slide that featured his

interests and accomplishments. Another one of our friends who has Ds was also able to share about his activities in the community.

Overall, it was a very positive and reaffirming time for everyone to advocate for and educate about their abilities and contributions to our community! Everyone is excited about doing it again next year!

by Susan Vaz

Avery was excited to make her second appearance as a special guest at the Guelph Public Library to recognize World Down Syndrome Day. Once again, Avery read the book, "Different - a Great Thing to Be" by Heather Avis which was enjoyed by the audience of toddlers and their parents. Avery was delighted to share our new WWDSS video, "I Can" which features our community members showcasing all their talents. The video was expertly put together by Sebastien Meunier with the song, "Yes I Can" written and sung by Jason Barry. Avery helped the toddlers create colourful sock prints and create ribbon wands as Taylor Swift music played in the background. Once again, we are so grateful to Lauren Contini and all the staff at the Guelph Public Library for opening their doors and highlighting our kids on their special day.





the **Office**
WWDSS
Social Group

by Lori Maloney

The Office continues to meet both online and in person. So far this year, we've enjoyed a Valentine's Day party, gone to the movies, and met at the mall for a treat and some games. We love spending time with our friends, whether online or in person!

We've also begun sharing ways we're becoming more independent and making plans for the future. Most recently, Natalie talked about staying with Kim at an Airbnb as she prepares to eventually move out on her own with support.

We'd love for you to join us! If you have any fun activity ideas or topics you'd like to discuss, please reach out to the organizer and brains behind it all—Emily Pike—at emilyp91@hotmail.com.



Track 3 Skiing Program at Chicopee

by Tara Hart

The snow was great and the company was even better at Chicopee this season thanks to the awesome volunteers who run the Track 3 skiing program! Many of our WWDSS members participated. Students had fun and worked hard practicing their skills each week, and the season ended with a poutine and pizza party!





Save the Date Events

Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament

June 16

Summer Picnic

June 22

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

September 28

Save the Date Programs

Speech and Music Program

KW groups are set for

September 15, 22, 29

October 6, 20, 27

Guelph groups are set for

September 13, 20, 27

October 4, 25

November 1

Summer School Camp

August 11-15

The Office

May 6, 20



11th

Annual Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament

Monday June 16, 2025

12:00 PM Shotgun

Rebel Creek Golf Club - Petersburg, ON

Registration available online at

www.wwdss.ca

Stay tuned for more information at

www.wwdss.ca or via



Facebook



Twitter

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



Buddy Choir continues to rehearse on Mondays from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM at Our Studio - 109 Ottawa St. S. We performed at the Kiwanis Festival in Stratford on April 15th. We worked on the song Rainbow Connection for this performance.

A choir for the entire family - please join us!

For more info call Lori Maloney
at 519-501-6747 or email her
at lmec50@gmail.com.