

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER | 2024



Message from the Chair

This Fall has been an exiting one for our members.

We kicked it off with another amazing Any Which Way You Can A-Thon. The weather provided its share of uncertainties. That morning, the committee met together to come up with an emergency safety plan for the lightning storm that was predicted for the walk. In the end, the timing of the sun breaking through just as the walk began, felt like a stroke of luck, adding to the excitement of the walk. What an inspiring day for everyone involved. We raised an outstanding, record-breaking amount of \$98,000 that will go towards funding bursaries, programs and events for all our members with Down syndrome in our communities.

The Fall continued to impress with the Decade gala event, a truly once-in-a-lifetime event on Sunday October 27th at Fed Hall, University of Waterloo. It was a fantastic sold-out celebration. Family and friends, dignitaries, and our community supporters came out to help us celebrate with Hilary of One for the Wall and her 10th year celebration of the WWDSS calendar and to watch the premier of the Decade documentary produced by Digital Sabbath Film Company. We are grateful to Hilary Gauld for all the money raised to put on this fabulous event and the film production. The Decade calendar is available for sale at wwdss.ca. Be sure to get this keepsake calendar as it reflects on all 10 years of our advocacy series. It also makes a wonderful Christmas gift for family and friends.

The Christmas Party is coming up on Sunday November 24, 2024, at the Alpine Club in Kitchener. This is always a highlight of the year as members come together to have an afternoon of socializing and games, pizza and a visit from Santa. Be sure to visit to register for this event at wwdss.ca.

For any moms interested in a dinner out, please join us Friday November 29, 2024, at Del's Italian Kitchen. Please RSVP to this event by reaching out to Janice at janiceduncan@rogers.com. This is always an enjoyable evening with many laughs and meaningful conversation. It is a time for moms to relax and build lasting relationships with other moms.

For caregivers of adults with Down syndrome, be sure to register for the Caregiver Art Retreat on November 30, 2024. Please see the ad in the newsletter for more information or register at wwdss.ca.

Our Fall continues to be busy with programming for all ages. The Speech & Music Social groups have been running in Waterloo and Guelph. The cooking classes for ages 14+ began in October and are running in-person on alternating Monday and Tuesday evenings. New Parent Connection will begin with Wendy Newbery facilitating in December. We listened to the requests of new parents and are offering this program on a Saturday morning. Childcare will be provided by WWDSS. Please see wwdss.ca for registration information.

I hope everyone enjoys the fall as it comes to a close and I wish all WWDSS members and their families a wonderful and healthy holiday season!

Lisa Buurma WWDSS Chair

WWDSS Board of Directors for 2024-2025

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Director at Large Anthony Tamming Director at Large Merita Elmazi

WWDSS Committee Leads for 2024-2025

Newsletter Stacey Beattie

New Parent Contact – Kitchener-Waterloo & surrounding area Hanika Williams

New Parent Contact -

Cambridge Roopa Bose

New Parent Contact – Guelph/Wellington County Vanessa Richard

WWDSS Website Steve Nicholson

WWDSS Store Sylvia Cook WWDSS Cooking Classes Rossy Jivkova and Mary

Casagrande

Pizza Pals

Susan Powell - Older Group

Pizza Pals

Susan Lott - Younger Group

WWDSS Calendar Tara Hart

Vanessa Richard Katrina Fraser Kate Herron

Therapy Bursaries
Alison Senior

Transition BursaryMarianne Domm

Camp Bursary Sylvia Cook

WWDSS Bowling Party Merita Elmazi

WWDSS World Down Syndrome Day Celebration Roberta Thompson, Arisa Alexanian, Susan Vaz,

Brenda Garcia, Lisa Buurma

WWDSS Family Picnic

WWDSS Social Media Vanessa Richard

Lisa & Ross Buurma

Volunteer Coordinator Julie Maxwell Any Which Way
You Can A-Thon

Sarah Kelly, Janine Rorke, Janine Oosterveld

WWDSS Christmas Party Mandi Butcher

New Parent's Connection Wendy Newbery

Moms' Night Out Janice Duncan

Teen HangoutsSteve Nicholson and Arisa Alexanian

The Office Meetups (18+) Lori Maloney

Independence 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 – Catholic Alternate Gillian Hadden SEAC - Public Primary Roberta Thompson

SEAC - Public Alternate Jeff Senior **Guelph/Wellington County**

SEAC - Catholic Primary Katrina Fraser

SEAC - Catholic Alternate TBC SEAC - Public Primary Amber Barens

SEAC - Public Alternate TBC

Mission Statement

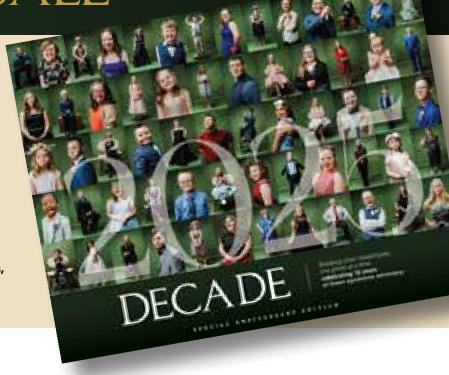
The Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (formerly the Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society) supports and informs individuals, families and the community on issues related to Down syndrome. We advocate for persons with Down syndrome to lead healthy and active lives enabling them to contribute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

NOW ON SALE

DECADE CALENDARS

Calendar sales went live October 27th - the day of the Decade event. Additional calendars can be purchased on the website with shipping or local pick up. Those who select local pick up will be contacted by WWDSS to arrange a central pick up location. The cost is \$10 per calendar.

This year's calendar reflects on all 10 years of our advocacy series and includes photos from each series, including Decade.



Waterloo Catholic SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

At our Sept. 4, 2024 WCDSB SEAC meeting, the following was discussed:

- Amendments to the Special Education plan in the areas of equipment and staff.
- The BCBA title has changed to Behavior Analyst to align with the College of Psychology.
- The PA Day included safety training, cyber security, understanding the effective of social media on mental health and self-regulation and topics for this year: math intervention, transition from grade 8 to 9, apps, FASD, mental health and wellbeing.

At our Oct. 3, 2024 WCDSB SEAC meeting, the following was discussed:

- Superintendent of Learning, Jennifer Ritsma, and Kelly Roberts, Research Coordinator, presented the Student Achievement Plan (SAP) and actions they are taking.
- Tyrone Dowling presented the "Forward Together in Christ" initiative that was initiated to help the Bishop to discern the best way to move the Diocese forward specifically by improving communication between the Parish, Board, and students and their families.
- ADHD Awareness month
- Local Community Associations and the Trustees shared their updates and upcoming events

SEAC Meeting Minutes can be found here on the Board website: www.wcdsb. ca/programs-and-services/specialeducation/special-education-advisorycommittee-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



by Rossy Jivkova

Rachel Tanner and Wendy Newbery, from Stepping Stones Expressive Arts, will be facilitating a day long retreat for caregivers of adults with DS on November 30, 2024. The retreat offers participants an opportunity to use various art media to celebrate and honour themselves and the roles they play.

Expressive Arts is not about making works of art. Rather, it is about making art work for you. No art experience is required to participate and there is never any judgement about the art we make. We use art making as a tool to help us tell our stories and express important aspects of our lives - just as we likely did as preschoolers!

Morning snacks and a simple lunch will be provided.

Registration closes on November 15, 2024 and is limited to 14 participants (caregivers of adults with DS).



Cooking Class

We are running cooking classes for ages 14+ in Kitchener, with cooking instructor Teresa Feliciano, this fall. There will be two sessions, running on alternating weeks (Mondays or Tuesdays) starting October 21, 2024. Classes will combine both Beginner and Intermediate levels. We are looking forward to running in-person cooking classes again!



DO YOU HAVE A CHILD IN GRADE 3 TO GRADE 6 WITH A SINGULAR DIAGNOSIS OF DOWN SYNDROME?



We are looking for parents/caregivers of Canadian 3rd to 6th graders with DS to share their views on their child's friendships and mental well-being.

The research survey will take 40 minutes to complete. To learn more, scan this QR code:

Or visit this link:

https://uregina.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0koFiTiAd15SgOW



PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

SUPERVISOR

Ms. Kailey DeLucry, MA

Dr. Lynn Loutzenhiser, Ph.D., R.D., Psych

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board: [2024-#650]



Mother's Night Out Dinner at Del's Italian Kitchen

Please join the Mother's Group for an evening of conversation & good food.

When

Friday November 29, 2024

Time

7:30 pm

Address

Del's Italian Kitchen 2980 King St E, Kitchener,

WWDSS will cover five appetizers for the evening Please RSVP by Friday November 22, 2024 at janiceduncan@rogers.com

Keep an eye out for our next activity - an Escape Room! More information will be available in the new year.

Online Art Group Sessions

by Rossy Jivkova

As part of the OCO's Capacity Building grant, we will also be running a series of 4 online art group sessions in February and March (bi-weekly). They will be run as a series and not individually, for up to 30 participants (caregivers of adults with DS). Participants will receive an art kit to use for the 4 online sessions prior to the first one. The sessions will be focused on connecting with others and reflecting on life experiences as a caregiver by using Expressive Arts. Registration will open in early January - stay tuned!

The Employment Skills Program

by Jocelyne Bridle

WWDSS has established a committee of volunteers working on a new employment skills program. The committee met on September 26 and brainstormed areas to address such as:

- Pre-iob coaching
- resume writing
- interview skills
- job support
- help to identify potential employers
- how to educate and equip employers to create successful hiring and employment experiences

Several different community organizations with a focus on employment readiness and placements were identified. They will be contacted to gather information on how they run their programs and to discuss potential partnerships to work toward developing employment skills for those with DS.

We will create and send out a survey to the families with adults to gain their input about our ideas and what types of support and service they would like from our committee.





Come and enjoy Socializing, Santa, Pizza and Snacks.

Anyone who wishes to attend must sign up on the events registration page of the WWDSS website. Registration is now open.

Registration is mandatory so that organizers can account for food and any dietary needs.

Keep an eye on your email for more info.

Calendars, merchandise and door prize tickets will be available for purchase.

Date Sunday November 24, 2024

Time 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Location Alpine Club

(464 Maple Avenue,

Kitchener)



Waterloo Region SEAC Report

by Roberta Thompson

During the September meeting, several important topics were discussed regarding the upcoming school year. One significant change is the Special Equipment Allowance, which can now be used for various special education needs in addition to equipment. Previously, these funds could only be allocated for equipment and could roll over to the following year. The Board plans to utilize this funding for previously used student equipment until it is required again.

The meeting also highlighted the work staff undertook over the summer. Consultants updated resources, while psychologists and speech-language pathologists conducted assessments, with the latter visiting local schools to perform their evaluations.

Additionally, there was a discussion about the Professional Development Day on Tuesday, September 3, which covered topics such as workplace safety related to chemicals and violence.

Transitioning was another key topic, focusing on both new students entering school and those changing schools. Itinerant staff—teachers who support students with specific needs across various schools—will assist with these transition processes.

Regarding transportation, efforts made in the spring and summer aim to ensure smooth operations. The Board has been communicating updates about bus delays to families, and for transportation issues, the classroom teacher should be the first point of contact.

For the 2024-2025 school year, Shannon Taylor will continue as Chair of SEAC, while Roberta Thompson will serve as Vice Chair.

Wellington Catholic SEAC Report

by Katrina Fraser

The first meeting of WCDSB discussed the budget for the upcoming school year. There was information provided about how the government funding labels had changed and how they were adapting to the changes.

Also discussed was the fact that enrollment has been up significantly over the past few years.

Upper Grand District SEAC Report

by Amber Barens

There has been a lot of discussion about changes that will be implemented for the new school year. Wendy Donaldson, Superintendent of Education - Student Support Services shared the changes to the Special Education Intervention Model for fall, 2024. One of the goals of Student Support Services, as part of the Multi-Year Plan, was to enhance the board's ability to provide early intervention K-12. The revised regional team model will enable more equitable access to services K-12 that are both proactive and responsive in nature. The model of support starts with the Classroom Environment. The next level of support is the In-School Team (IST), then the Consultant Support Team (CST), ending with the Student Support Services Staff and Teams. The changes will provide more support earlier on for students if needed. IST will include Principal, Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), Teacher, Social Work, and Child and Youth Care (CYC). CST will include IST support including Special Education Consultant, Speech and Language Pathologist, and Psychologist. Student Support Services will also include regional Social Worker, Behavior Analyst, and Central Staff. Another item that was raised by multiple SEAC members was the importance of the Educational Assistant and how we can incorporate their role within the new tier. We will be having a further discussion about EA support in our upcoming meeting.

Be a Part of Something Different!





There are friends, there is family, and there are friends that become family.



226-338-2681 lighthouseprograms.com



lighthouseprograms@gmail.com 104-1601 River Rd. E Kitchener

Volunteer Opportunity

WWDSS Representative on the DSAO Board

The Down Syndrome Association of Ontario (DSAO) is a non-profit organization that brings together local Down Syndrome associations from across Ontario. Each local association, including WWDSS, has a Director on the DSAO Board. We are looking for a volunteer to fill this Director role and represent WWDSS.

Responsibilities

- Attend and participate in monthly virtual DSAO board meetings (usually on the last Sunday of each month from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM).
- Share important discussions and updates with the WWDSS Board.

Benefits

- Help give WWDSS a voice at the Provincial level.
- Meet great people looking to make a difference in the lives of people with Down syndrome and their families across the Province.
- Your volunteer hours will count towards the hours needed for WWDSS's bursary programs.

Interested in Learning More?

If you're interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Mary Casagrande, our current representative on the DSAO Board, at publicrelations@wwdss.ca.

Registration now open at wwdss.ca

New Parent Connection

WWDSS is excited to be offering the New Parent Connection program on Saturday mornings, beginning December 2024, for 8 sessions. This free program is a great opportunity for WWDSS members that are parents of a child with Down syndrome, under the age of 6, to share celebrations, struggles, and goals with one another. It is also an opportunity to learn about timely information and resources in a comfortable and supportive environment. The group will once again be facilitated by Wendy Newbery. Free childcare is provided for the child with Down syndrome, as well as any siblings that are registered to the program.

DATE(s) December 7, 2024, and December 21, 2024

January 11, 2025, and January 25, 2025 February 8, 2025, and February 22, 2025

March 8, 2025, and March 22, 2025

TIME Saturdays, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

WHERE Grand River Unitarian Congregation

Grand River Unitarian Congregation, 299 Sydney Street South, Kitchener

COST No cost for WWDSS members, children

must also be registered if they are attending the childcare room.

REGISTER BY Saturday November 30, 2024

Fall 2024 Speech & Music Program Update

by Mary Casagrande

We're excited to share that our fall speech & music programs are off to a fantastic start! To serve our members best, WWDSS once again offered one program in Waterloo (in-person and virtual) and another in Guelph (in-person), both designed to effectively combine language and social skills with creative musical communication.

Participants are building their skills in a fun and engaging environment. It's been wonderful to see everyone thriving together!

Stay tuned for the next opportunity to register for a new block of subsidized sessions in early 2025. We look forward to seeing you there!



Waterloo Wellington **Down Syndrome** Society

is grateful for the extraordinary grant received from



John A. McLennan Family Fund

This generous grant will help WWDSS to continue to provide the much needed programs and services for those living with Down syndrome and their families in Waterloo Region and Guelph/Wellington County.



by the AWWYCA organizing committee

Our annual fundraising walk and wheel was a huge success! We had a great turnout with family, friends, and community members joining the fun at Waterloo Park on October 6th. We started the afternoon with fun activities including games, music, balloon twisters, and face painters. Our event hosts, CHYM 96.7's Brady Kingsbury and WWDSS's ambassador, Chloe Murphy, officially kicked off the event with our opening ceremony. Special thanks to the Buddy Choir for your lively performance to get us ready for the walk.

After the 2km walk and roll, we enjoyed refreshments thanks to our food and beverage sponsors along with the grill and kitchen volunteer teams! **Finally, we raised a record-breaking [drum roll, please!] \$98,403.25 thanks to our fundraisers, sponsors, prize donors, community supporters, and volunteers!** To celebrate the day's success, Erick Traplin closed off the event with a fun-filled dance party. This funding is much-needed to support WWDSS's ambitious roster of events, programs, and services. We do not receive any government funding so the generosity of our community has a significant impact on our offerings as an organization.

It takes the efforts of many - sharing their time and talents to bring this heartwarming event to life! **Special thanks to all of our volunteers**, including the set-up and take-down crew, our sound engineers, registration and store crews, kitchen (McLennan Speech and Language Services) and grill (Abdi Yasin and family) crews, route marshalls led by Ashton Hart, our thank you cards writer, and the pick-up and delivery team.

Looking forward to next year!

The Any Which Way You Can A-Thon organizing committee

Janine Oosterveld Arisa Alexanian Janine Rorke Julie Maxwell Mary Casagrande Pavneet Makkar Roopa Bose Rossy Jivkova Sarah Kelly





KW Health Connection
Landmark Cinemas, Waterloo
MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy
Martin's Family Fruit Farm

Monica Howlett Morty's Pub Zehrs Eramosa, Guelph Zehrs Glenridge, Waterloo Zehrs Hartsland, Guelph Zehrs Hespeler, Cambridge Zehrs Laurentian, Kitchener Zehrs Stanley Park, Kitchener





Thank you to our Event Sponsors!

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Media Sponsors









Food and Beverage Sponsors













by Tara Hart

On Sunday October 27, 2024, we attended an event ten years in the making!

The Decade gala was a special celebration of the 10th anniversary of the WWDSS calendar series, with exciting keynote speaker, Madison Tevlin, the premier screening of the DECADE documentary, an incredible photo exhibit and a hall full of vendors. The event took place at Federation Hall at University of Waterloo to mark the 10th installment of a powerful collaboration between photographer Hilary Gauld and the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS), celebrating a decade of this globally recognized series, challenging stereotypes and advocating for authentic representation of individuals with Down syndrome.

There were over 550 people in attendance, including our emcees Tara and Brady from CHYM 96.7, the Buddy choir, many dignitaries, and special guest speakers Moses Latino and Heather Avis. Special words from Laura LaChance (CDSS) and Ed Casagrande (WWDSS) closed the formal presentation. It was a sold-out event, and almost 100 people who could not attend in person watched the event via livestream.

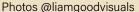
Attendees watched the premier showing of the DECADE documentary, which highlights the profound impact of Gauld's work, featuring 62 individuals aged 1 to 36, showcasing their diverse life experiences.

Produced by Gauld and Digital Sabbath Film Company, DECADE captures the journey of Gauld, WWDSS, and three families across three generations, reflecting on the progress made in mainstream media representation and the growing visibility of the Down syndrome community. You can watch the short film at www.decadedocumentary.com

The afternoon was full of heartfelt memories and joy for the future. Members featured in the Decade calendar even received their giant photo print as a parting gift. We are so thankful to Hilary Gauld and the incredible team of volunteers who made this amazing event a reality, and we look with excited anticipation to the next ten years!











Event Sponsors



ONE FOR THE WALL REES+STAGER



















We would like to thank the following businesses and families for funding the documentary, Decade.

Associate Producers

Canadian Down Syndrome Society Jennifer Sharer Insurance Group

Cook Homes

One for the Wall Photography

Building Knowledge

Caudle's Catch

Copper Bay Homes

Woodgate Family

Chervin Kitchen and Bath

Jen Ziegler Real Estate

Faze One Solutions

Josslin Insurance

Cambridge Ford

Promotional Elements

Van Del Construction

REES + STAGER

TechTown Dentistry

519 Community Collective

Jen Crowson Family

Alan Quarry

Brian Collins

Camilleri Family

Clare Hitchens

Michele Roach

Vendors















































Save the Date **Events**

Christmas Party

November 24

Mother's Night Out

November 29

Caregiver Art Retreat

November 30

World Down Syndrome Day

March 21

Save the Date **Programs**

New Parent Connection

December 7, 21 January 11, 25 March 8, 22

Cooking Class

October - December



Upcoming Meetings and events

DATE 2024	ACTIVITY	LEADER/COSTS
NOV 5	Zoom	Brittany/Telisa
NOV 19	Movies	Galaxy Cinemas Waterloo
DEC 3	Zoom	Lydia/Ren
DEC 17	Splitsville Dinner and bowling	Parents invited for dinner

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:

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 lmyc50@gmail.com.