



Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society

MARCH - APRIL | 2025



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Message from the Chair

March is always an exciting month with the celebration of **World Down Syndrome Day** on March 21st. It is a reminder each year of the ongoing journey toward greater inclusion, understanding, and advocacy for those living with Down syndrome in our community. It is a day to celebrate achievements and also renew the commitment to continue pushing for change.

There are many ways this year members can celebrate WDS. We are thrilled that the **KW Titans** basketball team will help celebrate. On Sunday March 16, members that purchased tickets, will enjoy an unforgettable game day experience that promotes inclusion and awareness of those living with Down syndrome in our community. In addition, one lucky member will be selected to toss the ball for a ceremonial opening tipoff. Join the party on March 21st for our World Down Syndrome Day Celebration at the **Alpine Club** in Kitchener. On March 22nd, there will be a **DECADE: Documentary Film Screening at the Cambridge Public Library**, followed by a panel discussion including WWDSS members. This event will include: guest speaker, Adelle Purdham, educator, parent disability ally, and bestselling author of the memoir-in-essays *I Don't Do Disability And Other Lies I've Told Myself*. Limited spots are available.

The theme for **WDS 2025 is 'I Can!'** We can't wait to see everyone rocking their new 'I Can' WWDSS socks! Thank you to Roberta Thompson for all her time to organize these fun new socks! A big thank you to members for submitting their photos and videos for the 'I Can' video that will be shared on social media. It is amazing to witness all the incredible things our members are achieving. We hope this video empowers and encourages everyone to reach their goals!

We also want to thank **TWB Brewing** in Kitchener for partnering with us once again to raise funds and promote awareness of WWDSS in our community. Thank you to everyone that came out on March 4th for the AJ & Zeus Launch Event at TWB Brewing.

There are many great opportunities for people to get involved with WWDSS and make a real impact in our community. The volunteer positions available are: WWDSS Storekeeper, Teen Hang-out Coordinator and Cooking Class Coordinator. For more information, please see the article in the newsletter describing each position and please reach out to info@wwdss.ca if you are interested.

The **Annual General Meeting** and **Spring Mini Conference** will take place on Saturday May 3 at RIM Park, Waterloo. Childcare will be provided. Please see insert for more information. If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors, please reach out in advance of the AGM so you can learn more about what the role entails and ways you can make a difference in our community.

Please reach out if you have any suggestions or comments.

Your WWDSS Chair
Lisa Buurma

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 Family Picnic Lisa & Ross Buurma	Teen Hangouts Steve Nicholson Arisa Alexanian
New Parent Contact – Kitchener-Waterloo & surrounding area Hanika Williams	Pizza Pals Susan Lott - Younger Group	WWDSS Social Media Vanessa Richard	The Office Meetups (18+) Lori Maloney Emily Pike Mary Pike
New Parent Contact – Cambridge Roopa Bose	WWDSS Calendar Kate Herron	Volunteer Coordinator Julie Maxwell	Independence Skills Program Jocelyne Bridle
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 Sylvia Cook	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		

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.



AJ & Zeus Lemongrass Pale Ale Returns for 2025!

by Alex Szaflarska

We're thrilled to announce that, in celebration of World Down Syndrome Day, TWB is excited to be able to partner with WWDSS once again! We are bringing back the extra special lemongrass pale ale named after Anthony Tamming (AJ) and his beloved pup, Zeus. Anthony, a dedicated team member at TWB, helped us design the beer and helps brew it every year - proceeds from sales of the ale support WWDSS. The delicious mix of bright lemongrass flavours mixed with a hoppy bitterness make for the perfect beer for springtime!

Mark your calendars for the AJ & Zeus Launch Event on Tuesday, March 4th, 2025 at 7:00 PM! Join us for a fun evening, grab a pint (or a few!), and show your support for the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society. Bring a friend and make sure you have a beer to cheers when you celebrate on March 21st!

Starting March 4th, you can purchase the beer at TWB (300 Mill Street in Kitchener) or online at TWBbrewing.com. Every sip supports a great cause, so come out, enjoy the beer, and help make a difference!



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS) will be held in-person at RIM Park, Waterloo on **Saturday May 3, 2025** at 1:30 pm.

We request WWDSS members attend this meeting. Members must register for this event by April 25, 2025 by emailing info@wwdss.ca. They will be provided with materials for the meeting by email.

The Chair will present a report, followed by a Treasurer's report. The membership will then vote on the renewal of current board members and the election of new board members.

Reminder: In order to vote at a general meeting of members, you must have a current 2025 WWDSS membership. One vote can be put forward at the meeting per paid membership (membership is available to individuals, families or organizations).

WWDSS Summer School Camp

**REGISTRATION
NOW OPEN**

Date: August 11-15, 2025

Location: Creekside Church, Waterloo

Ages: 4-21

Camp groups:

JK – Grade 2

Grade 3 – Grade 6

Grade 7 – Grade 9

Grade 10+ (up to age 21)

Come join us at a fun-filled summer school camp designed especially for our members with Down syndrome.

This program will focus on enhancing campers' capabilities in several areas:

**Art | Music | Social Skills | Fostering Friendships
Games | Fitness | Literacy | Numeracy | Printing**

TIME 8:45am - 3:45pm each day

WHERE Creekside Church Waterloo Campus,
660 Conservation Drive, Waterloo

COST \$375



Registration is on a first come, first served basis.

There are 10 spots in each age group. Once spaces are filled, a wait list will be created.

Please register your child at the grade level they are currently in.

Upon registration you will be sent an info package and detailed camper information form, which you will fill out and return.

Campers will bring their own lunch, snacks and refillable water bottle.

Support will be provided for each camper based on their specific needs.

Volunteer opportunities at WWDSS

There are many volunteer opportunities at WWDSS. Even a small commitment can make a big difference. If any of these positions are of interest to you, your family or friends, please email info@wwdss for more information.

WWDSS Storekeeper

WWDSS Store Mission Statement:

The WWDSS store plays a very important role for promoting public awareness and generating a sense of community among WWDSS members within the larger population. The WWDSS store's primary role is to provide WWDSS members and friends access to quality merchandise at a fair cost which promotes the WWDSS and Down Syndrome in general. The Board of WWDSS considers the store to be a promotional entity and thus should be operated in a manner that maximizes the visibility in the community.

Storekeeper Position Description:

- The storekeeper should have good knowledge of methods and practices used in ordering, storing, maintaining, and issuing merchandise.
- The demand on the store varies throughout the year, with peak times associated with AWWYCA (Sept/Oct), calendar release (Nov) and WDSO (March). On average, the storekeeper commits 1 hour per month. This can increase to on average 10 hours in September (AWWYCA) and November (calendar release).
 - The storekeeper needs to arrange shipping via Canada Post and personal pick up with customers. The storekeeper also coordinates with Store Location Pick Up volunteers in Guelph, Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener for customers to pickup in those locations as well. Lastly, the storekeeper needs to communicate and respond to store inquiries.
 - The storekeeper needs to be available for WWDSS events (World Down Syndrome Day, AWWYCA, conferences and special events) to help set up store and bring merchandise for the volunteers who will be running the event store. In the event, the storekeeper is not available, they will make arrangements with another volunteer to deliver the inventory and set-up/take down.
 - The store should be designed to operate with stock levels that adequately support anticipated annual sales. A review of the annual sales should be conducted prior to any new stock purchases. Since the store is intended to operate at very small margins it is important to minimize over-supply of stock.
 - The merchandise in the store should be of reasonable/ good quality to ensure the materials look good and presentable over extended use and wear. The materials are meant to be a promotion of the organization and/or encourage Down syndrome awareness.

- Pricing for store merchandise goal is to breakeven overall and keeping prices simple. WWDSS would much rather see more people purchasing items to wear/use than to be a profit centre for the organization. Storekeeper should be prepared to recommend prices for new items and price changes for old stock to the board for to the Board for review and approval.
- Stock inventory is maintained on the website store module for stock available, including different sizes where required, and photos/images.
- Some storage space is required as there are 4 large totes of merchandise to store. There is locker space available in Waterloo if that is preferred.

Cooking Class Coordinator – Ages 14 and older

This will involve:

- Coordination with the Cooking class instructor and WWDSS Chair to find times available to offer future sessions
- Secure the venue and book the class times
- Communication with the cooking class instructor during the duration of the program
- Coordinate payment for the venue and the cooking instructor with the WWDSS Treasurer

Teen Hangout Coordinator

Planning for Hangout

- Once per month, based on email call for agenda items, provide a short update to the Board of Directors (how it's going, questions for the board e.g., changes to programming, in-person events etc.)
- Based on feedback from group, decide on the activity for the month
- Book Venue and activity for monthly event
- Book Holly McIntyre and Katie Boer as support workers for event. Based on registration numbers, may need to book another 1-2 workers. Arisa can provide names of workers to contact.
- Provide website updates, email content for circulation, and registration details in advance of upcoming hangouts
- Thursday prior to Teen Hangout:
 - Check in with volunteer and Holly to confirm activity
- Sunday prior to Teen Hangout:
 - Send reminder email to info@wwdss.ca for circulation
- After hangout, remind all workers to submit their hours for payment. Coordinator will be responsible for approving their hours submission and forwarding to the Treasurer for payment.

Prior to Newsletter

- Send upcoming dates for upcoming events, photos for the newsletter, and ask teen to write an article or draw a picture.

Upper Grand District School Board SEAC Report

by Amber Barens

At our January 8th meeting there was a presentation from Jennifer Meeker, Principal of Special Education, about the role of the Educational Assistant. She noted that all of Student Support Services work is anchored in the three key areas of the Multi-Year Plan – Ensuring Equity of Access and Outcomes; Championing Health and Wellbeing; and Inspiring a Lifelong Love of Learning. Educational Assistants play a crucial role in these three areas. Wendy Donaldson added that the modelling information that was shared is also shared with the educational assistants. It's important that they feel empowered and have the skills and knowledge of the resources available to help support students. We want them to understand that

they are recognized as a critical member of the team in doing the work alongside the students they support. It was a very large and significant conversation regarding the importance of the educational assistant and the role they play within our schools.

MaryAnn Schouten, Supervisor, Communication, Language and Speech introduced Kristen Smith and Tara Ross, Speech Language Pathologists, who took on the task of producing a podcast about Declarative Language and Co-regulation that could be shared with various committees. They've discovered that these powerful strategies have had a significant and positive impact on students in the classroom as they provide a thoughtful language style to help students with

social learning challenges feel competent, connected, and understood. The podcast is live on any platform where you find podcasts. Alternatively, type in Social Learning Road Trip into Apple Podcasts or Spotify, and you'll hear the trailer. New episodes will be released every week on Monday mornings at 5:00 am.

More information about declarative language is available on Linda Murphy's website:

<https://www.declarativelanguage.com>

Tara Ross invited SEAC to listen to the entire series of their podcast on:
<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/social-learning-road-trip/id1782937194>

Wellington Catholic District School Board SEAC Report

by Katrina Fraser

We had a presentation from "The Grove" which is a youth mental health initiative designed to connect young people to mental health resources in their communities to improve access and outcomes for youth experiencing difficulties. The youth hubs are also designed to be a drop-in centre for people to come by, just hang out in a safe place, have snacks, do homework, do laundry etc. They also wanted to tell us about the new facility that just

opened on Woolwich Street in Guelph. It is exciting and has already received a lot of good feedback.

There seems like there are also going to be more potential initiatives available to our community members from the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County. Programs can be accessed at ldawc.ca/programs/.



Winter 2025 Speech & Music Program

by Mary Casagrande & Arisa Alexanian

We're excited to share that our winter 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 fall 2025. We look forward to seeing you there!



Come to the ANNUAL PWWDSS 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.



WWDSS Bowling Party

On Sunday February 23, many WWDSS families came out to enjoy an afternoon of bowling at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener. This yearly event is always fun for everyone. Members enjoyed pizza, drinks and catching up with one another. Thank you to Merita for organizing a fun afternoon.



Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC Report

by Roberta Thompson, SEAC Vice Chair, WWDSS SEAC Primary and Director at Large

Did you know that the **WRDSB Psychology staff** offers **Lunch and Learn** sessions to support families and caregivers? These informative webinars take place over the **lunch hour on Wednesdays**, providing practical strategies to help families support their children's well-being. Covering a variety of topics, these sessions are **open to everyone, with no registration required**. You can **join live or watch past recordings** by visiting the WRDSB website: Lunch and Learn Webinars: <https://www.wrdsb.ca/blog/tags/lunch-and-learn/>.

In addition to these learning opportunities, families and caregivers can connect with the **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)**—a group of dedicated advocates that support students with special needs in WRDSB. SEAC works to ensure **equal access to school supports**, offers mentorship, and helps families navigate special education services. **SEAC meets online on**

the second Wednesday of each month from 7:00-9:00 PM, where members review and make recommendations on special education programs, hear presentations from WRDSB staff and community organizations, and provide updates from trustees and advocacy groups. SEAC includes representatives from various community associations, such as **Autism Ontario - Waterloo Region, Easter Seals Ontario, and the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society**.

If your family has questions about **special education supports**, SEAC helps guide you to the resources and services that can support your child's learning journey. **Your SEAC representative is here to listen and support you**. Visit the WRDSB website to learn more, attend a meeting, **or explore the resources designed for you**: SEAC Information: <https://www.wrdsb.ca/learning/programs/special-education/seac/>

Our New Parent Connection Group

by Wendy Newbery

Our New Parent Connection group has been running since mid-December and will continue until early April. This group has seven parents. Five children under three attend with their parents and are supported by awesome child care workers.

We have discussed all kind of topics, including shared themes in their family lives, the language we use around disability issues, financial issues, self care, advocacy, and occupational therapy. In the coming weeks we'll hear about community resources, future planning, and we'll meet other families from WWDSS who have older kids and hear stories of their journeys.

This group has been so welcoming and supportive of each other. It is a reminder that some beautiful community building happens in WWDSS!





Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society

join us...

for a casual get together
to celebrate the **UP** side
of **DOWN** syndrome!

Tickets now
available at
www.wwdss.ca

Wear your **SILLY MISMATCHED SOCKS**
and join in for some dinner, dancing, fun and fellowship.

Event	WWDSS' World Down Syndrome Day Celebration	
Date	Friday March 21st	
Time	5:30 PM - 8:30 PM	
Place	Alpine Club - 464 Maple Avenue, Kitchener	

Cost	WWDSS Member	Non Member
Individual with DS	\$0.00	\$0.00
Adult (over 18)	\$10.00	\$20.00
Child (Age 0-18)	\$5.00	\$10.00



MOVIES AT GALAXY CINEMAS
MARCH 11

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY PARTY

MARCH 21, 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM
PARTY AT THE ALPINE CLUB
Tickets available via WWDSS

ZOOM - Emily and Madeline
MARCH 25

GAMES AT THE MALL
APRIL 8

ZOOM SCAVENGER HUNT - Natalie and Telisa
APRIL 22

MOTHERS' DAY AND FATHERS' DAY GIFTS

At Lori's apartment
MAY 6

ZOOM - Bandagi and Eric
MAY 20

ZOOM - Adam and Tim
JUNE 3

OUR STUDIO'S COUNTRY SHOW
JUNE 6

CAROUSEL GOLDEN GALA
JUNE 6

BECKY'S FUNDRAISER FOR THE CONGENITAL HEART ALLIANCE
JUNE 7

UPSIDE DOWN GOLF TOURNAMENT
JUNE 16
Please let Lori know if you can volunteer

CAROUSEL - MARY POPPINS AND FINDING NEMO
JUNE 17

BBQ IF SOMEBODY STEPS UP TO HOST OR THE GAZEBO AT WATERLOO PARK
JUNE 24

Waterloo Catholic SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

Jan 8/25 WCDSB SEAC meeting summary:

- Petra LeDuc, Board Math Lead shared the Math Achievement Action Plan Update.
- Ongoing planning for the Sacrament Preparation family event.

Feb 5/25 WCDSB SEAC meeting summary:

- We discussed the earlier request from the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) for targeted feedback on current issues affecting the Special Education sector to support discussion at the next MACSE meeting. An email was sent from WWDSS to members on Dec 4th detailing the specific information that is being requested.
- Immediately after the meeting, WCDSB's SEAC hosted an in-person event "Grace for All: Preparing for the Sacraments for Students with Special Needs". Registration needed to be cut off due to the overwhelming interest.
- Some needs to consider when preparing for these special days include touch, taste, sound, sight, smell and communication.

- The WCDSB has invested in the following Sacramental Preparation Planning Tool Kits:
- Adaptive Reconciliation Kit, Adaptive First Eucharist Kit and an Adaptive Confirmation Kit.
- These kits are available to be signed out from the school libraries, to support your child's sacramental preparation at home.

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 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

World Down Syndrome Day Update

by WDSO Committee

We are excited to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day on Friday March 21st at Alpine Club in Kitchener. Doors will open at 5:30 pm, and dinner will be served at 6:00 pm. Be sure to register for this event at wwdss.ca by March 14th. It will be a night filled with fun for all of our members. There will be face painting, a photo booth, a games/craft table, and of course a DJ and dancing. Come help us celebrate WDSO and don't forget to wear your new WDSO t-shirt and funky socks.

We are thrilled that the KW Titans basketball team will celebrate World Down Syndrome Day with an unforgettable game day experience that promotes inclusion and awareness of those living with Down syndrome in our community. Members were able to purchase discounted tickets to the KW Titans game on March 16th against the Jamestown Jackals. One lucky member will be selected to toss the ball for ceremonial opening tipoff. We can't wait to see everyone wearing their silly socks and WDSO shirts.

There will be a DECADE Documentary Film Screening: A World Down Syndrome Day Celebration at the Cambridge Public Library on Saturday March 22nd from 2 pm - 4 pm. The event will kick off with an introduction by author Adelle Purdham and her book 'I Don't Do Disability And Other Lies I've Told Myself'. Following the screening, there will be a panel discussion consisting of WWDSS members with Down syndrome. Seating is limited. Registration is available at eventbrite.com.

Thank you to members that shared a video or photograph for our 'I Can' video. We want to show the world how capable those living with Down syndrome are. This video will be shared for WDSO at various events and on social media.

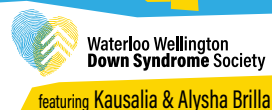
We hope our members all received the email of WDSO activities and ideas you can share with your school, teachers or facilitators. There are many links within the Google slide for books, videos and activities to help teachers and facilitators celebrate on March 21st. Teachers/facilitators are encouraged for the third year to post a photo of their class/group to our social media accounts to win a pizza party celebration. There will be a winner in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph.

Let's all come together to build awareness and celebrate the value of our members with Down syndrome in our communities.



Rock Your Socks!

Wear brightly coloured and mismatched socks. Snap a picture and submit it using the link in the Google slide for a chance to **win a class pizza party!** Registration is available at eventbrite.com or by a link at wwdss.ca.



Dance Party!

Get moving with the **3-2-1 Rock Your Socks Dance** video!



Story Time!

Listen to *Different* by Heather Avis, read by Miami Down Syndrome community.



Check out this the Google slide emailed to members for many resources to share with your school, volunteer or work placements!



Learn Something New!

Discover how to say 'Hello' in sign language.



Join the Fun!

Participate in special events and celebrate **World Down Syndrome Day** with us!

Thank you for celebrating **World Down Syndrome Day** with us. We can't wait to see your creativity and participation!

Get Ready to Celebrate World Down Syndrome Day!

Visit wwdss.ca shop for

Socks That Rock

\$15



T-shirt


\$20

Baseball Hat



\$15

Visit wwdss.ca/shop



Save the Date Events

AJ & Zeus Launch at TWB Brewing

March 4

KW Titans Game

March 16

**World Down Syndrome Day
Alpine Club Event**

March 21

**DECADE: Documentary Film
Screening - Cambridge Public Library**

March 22

**Spring Mini Conference and Annual
General Meeting**

May 3

**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

**LEG Up! Ages 13 - 25
Independence Skills Program**

Thursdays, March 20 - April 24

Summer School Camp

August 11-15

DECADE

Documentary Film Screening;
A World Down Syndrome Day Celebration!

Saturday March 22nd

at The Cambridge Library

2 to 4 pm



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 are performing again at the Kiwanis Festival in Stratford on April 15th. We are working 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 lm50@gmail.com.