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Message from the Chair

March is here and that means WWDSS is preparing to celebrate **World Down Syndrome Day** on Thursday March 21st. We hope to see many of our members rocking their socks and wearing their WWDSS World Down Syndrome Day T-shirts at Alpine Club in Kitchener. Please also remember to check out **TWB Brewing** that is partnering with WWDSS for a third year. There was also an interactive slide that was sent that you can forward to your teachers and facilitators. It offers great links to videos, stories and activities that will help our schools/groups celebrate WDS. There is also information about the Pizza Party social media campaign where teachers/facilitators can win their class/group a Pizza Party.

The **New Parent Connection** program has been running in Kitchener with a small group of moms. There are plans to run this program again in the Fall. Stay tuned for more information. The **Teen Hangout** and **The Office** have also both been active and have activities planned for the spring. There is more information in the newsletter about events that are planned. The **Independent Skills Program** will be running a program on Self Advocacy for the 13+ age group. This program will run between April and May. Registration is available.

Registration for the **WWDSS Summer School Camp** will end on March 15, 2024. Members that are signed up for camp are asked to fill out the google form that was emailed by March 31st. The surveys will help us get to know your child and plan for any supports that will be needed. We are excited for a week of fun and learning.

The **Annual General Meeting** is planned for Saturday May 4th at RIM Park in Waterloo. We also plan to host a **Spring Mini Conference** that day with childcare and a field trip for the kids. More details to follow in an email.

Our organization is always looking for volunteers. WWDSS is solely run by volunteers. We require more hands to make light work, and to keep running the wonderful programs that we have for the DS community. Please call or email me if you have any interest in joining the Board. Please send an email to info@wwdss.ca if there are any events or programs coming up that you would like to be involved in.

Your Chair,
Lisa Buurma

WWDSS Board of Directors for 2023-2024

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

WWDSS Committee Leads for 2023-2024

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

WWDSS Representatives

CDSS Affiliate Representative
Arisa Alexanian

PAAC on SEAC
Marianne Domm

DSAO Representative
Mary Casagrande

Waterloo Region

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

Guelph/Wellington County

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

Mission Statement

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



See what those with **disABILITIES** CAN do!

by Jocelyne Bridle

I wouldn't normally do this but because of the significance of this moment, please allow me this "Mama bragging time." I'm also sharing this on behalf of all those who experience developmental challenges, to celebrate their value and abilities!

The setting: Grade 7/8 school basketball. The opposing team is a fierce competitor and gives our team a run for their money. Jonny tries dribbling and shooting a hoop several times. He tries it again, again and again. Then the moment comes...a glorious 2 pointer!

Everyone in the gym erupts in a thunderous cheer! It bounces off the walls, filling the room, so that we're encased in a bubble of love, pride, and support. Jonny does his famous handstand! Then he's overcome with emotion and is comforted by his intuitive, dedicated coach. His teammates congratulate him. An incredible moment shared by all that's forever ingrained in By's and my heart and mind.

This is a shout out to all who have disabilities of any kind as part of their

lives. Keep up the hard work and always believe in yourself! This tremendous moment reflects many years of hard work, patience, and determination. Perseverance. Never giving up. The belief in and support of Jonny. Of teammates giving him the ball. Of a coach giving him a chance. It truly takes a village.

See the ABLE, not the label, peeps. See what those with disABILITIES CAN do. If you give them the opportunities, they'll shine!





Mother's Night Conversation

Please join the Mother's Group for an evening conversation

When: Friday March 29, 2024

Time: 8:00-9:30

Virtually we will have conversation.
Taking some time for ourselves.

Please see zoom link below.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89673637898?pwd=eTVQMXE0WEZKUHVocVFvb2hiODZzUT09>

Meeting ID: 896 7363 7898

Passcode: 825130



Teen Hang Out – Bowling

For teens ages 13 to the end of high school.
Come join us for the 2 hour gathering of bowling,
pizza, drinks, and tons of fun!

DATE(s): Sunday March 17

TIME: 5:30 – 7:30 pm

WHERE: Victoria Bowl

COST: \$5.00 for WWDSS Members

NOTES: Support workers will be available – parents are not expected to stay.

Art From My Heart

by Pegan Olsthorn

"Art is something that makes you breathe with a different kind of happiness." I share artist Annie Albers' sentiment, especially when I watch my daughter drawing.

ART FROM MY HEART is Roslin Grant's latest venture. Roslin is 24 and has always been interested in the arts. She has performed in many plays and musical ventures. Sadly, health issues and the COVID pandemic took a toll on Roslin's abilities in these areas. Drawing, however, is something that Roslin has been developing over the last few years. I once read that the American modern artist Georgia O'Keeffe discovered she could say things with colour and shapes that she could not say any other way - things that she had no words for. This is why I encourage Roslin to mostly teach herself how to draw. I want her art to express the way SHE sees things, not the way an "expert" would.

Roslin uses a variety of mediums for her drawings. Her drawing skills are improving, but her drawings still seem to be hit and miss. Some are great (like the ones she has had printed on her new line of greeting cards), and some are definitely not! Overall, however, she is becoming more adept at drawing, and it is a pleasure to see her focussing her attention for long periods of time on something she loves. "Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time," according to Thomas Merton. Or, as a famous composer once said, "It's not just about creativity. It's about the person you're becoming while you are creating."





S.A.F.E. Summary

by Jocelyne Bridle

The fall LEG Up session focused on safety awareness and was enjoyed by 10 participants. Key topics that were addressed included: a definition of safety at home and in one's community, identifying safe people in one's life, as well as exploring what are one's rights and privacy. Safe practices in various environments were also touched upon, such as in the home, the kitchen, and the workplace. One of the features of the LEG Up series is the emphasis on practical learning that is taught in class and ideas for parallel learning at home are given. In relation to deciphering safe people, a visual circle chart was provided to help the students learn the different people in their life, their roles and degree of safety. The concept of trust was defined and explored, as well as steps to take when one feels unsafe. When addressing rights and privacy, the participants learned what is a right, a responsibility, what is the difference between a public and private place and how to protect one's

privacy. Self advocacy was also touched upon. With regard to safety at home, the members were taught about computer safety, what constitutes an emergency and steps to take in an emergency, such as calling 911, making a fire escape plan and becoming familiar with a first aid kit. Practical kitchen safety practices such as handwashing, decluttering and knife safety were covered. The participants were also taught how to read labels, expiry dates and how to keep food safe. When considering safety at work, terms such as employer and employee were explained, as well as ways for the participants to communicate and learn about safety processes at work and know their rights and responsibilities at work. It was a thorough session that allowed the students to engage in hands on learning in class and extend that learning to a more personal level at home with practical strategies and discussion ideas that were included on take home sheets for each family.

Self Advocacy (ages 13+)

Participants will build skills to be able to use their voices to self-advocate. Parent lessons taught at home will include activities to teach how to self-advocate.

DATES: Thursdays, April 4 to May 9
TIME: 6:00 to 7:30 pm
WHERE: KW Habilitation, 99 Ottawa St. S.
COST: \$50
REGISTER BY: March 27th

Special Notes: Maximum 10 registrants. In addition to the instructor, we will have two workers supporting participants.





We had a great time at our last gathering for Valentines Day. Thank you to The Cortina Club for donating space for us to get together!



by Lori Maloney

The Office has been having a great time getting together on zoom and in person. Emily Pike has been taking attendance and keeping a graph of our numbers. We have learned that more members will attend in person than on zoom. With that in mind, and talking together we decided to move to a schedule with one meeting by zoom and the next in person. Here is the schedule for our upcoming gatherings.

March 12	In Person - Movie Night	Becky birthday Lucas birthday
March 21st	World Down Syndrome Day Party	Look for details from WWDSS
March 26	Zoom	Ren and Bandagi Ren's Birthday
April 9	Games and Pizza night	
April 23	Zoom	Eric and Kali lead Eric's Birthday
May 7	Make a Gift for Mother's Day	
May 21	Zoom	Tim and Liam lead
June 4	Zoom	Adam Birthday Telisa and Adam lead
June 11	Carousel Theatre Production	Registry Theatre - more details to follow many friends in this performance
June 18	In Person - BBQ	Lucas and family hosting!
July & August	No zooms but want to plan an in-person swimming picnic	

World Down Syndrome Day Update

by WDSO Committee

We are excited to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day on Thursday March 21st at Alpine Club in Kitchener. Doors will open at 5:30pm, and dinner will be served at 6:00pm. 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 room, 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 hope our members all received the email of WDSO activities and ideas you can share with your school, teachers or facilitators.

Members have been given the opportunity to order posters and a lawn sign to give to their schools/ programs to help spread the awareness of WDSO. Members will be able to pick up their posters and lawn signs in addition to the t-shirts they ordered at a pick up spot convenient to them.

There are many links within the digital slide for books, videos and activities to help teachers and facilitators celebrate on March 21st. Teachers/facilitators are encouraged for the second 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.

Get Ready to Celebrate World Down Syndrome Day!

Visit wwdss.ca shop for

Socks That Rock

\$10



Lawn Signs

\$10

Baseball Hat

\$20



Visit wwdss.ca/shop

WWDSS New Parent Connection

by Wendy Newbery

In January of this year, a ten-week New Parent Connection group started up for families who have children with Down syndrome under the age of six. This time around, we chose to adopt the term "Parent Connection" rather than going with our historic name "Mother Connection". Dad's have been expressing interest and "Parent" seemed like a more inclusive description of who could participate.

It has been a great joy for me to facilitate this group in the past and I was pleased to be asked again.

Our small group of parents (three moms and a dad who has not been able to attend due to family caregiving duties) identified topics of interest to them and

we have been focusing on these topics and on getting to know each other as we learn about the joys and challenges in each other's families.

Here are some of the things we have done together over the weeks so far:

- discussed speech and language development with guest speaker Heather McLennan from McLennan Speech and Language Services
- learned about community resources with Robin Roberts from Sunbeam Developmental Resource Centre
- completed the One Page Profile tool for awareness and advocacy.
- expressed ourselves creatively with needle felting.

New Parent Connection will continue to meet until mid-March and we welcome others to join in. We meet on Wednesday mornings from 10 - noon. Childcare is provided. We gather at Grand River Unitarian Congregation on Sydney Street in Kitchener.

If you'd like to connect or learn about joining in, you can contact WWDSS or email me directly at wnewberyfacilitation@gmail.com.



Are you interested in helping us offer translation services to our members?

The board would like to offer translated documents for our new parent welcome letter and WWDSS brochure. We are looking to the membership to see if anyone would like to help us translate these documents into various languages spoken in our region. If you are interested in helping us with this project in a volunteer capacity, please contact Matt Williams with the languages you would be able to assist us in. This is a great way to use your multilingual skills to serve our community and hours can be logged for bursary purposes. Thank you!

Email: Matthew.williams027@gmail.com

Come to the

ANNUAL PWWWDSS PICNIC

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

Time: 3:00pm - 7:00pm

Location: Ross and Lisa Buurma's Farm in Puslinch

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

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



Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society

Watch your email for
registration information.



Bowling Party

by Merita Elmazi

We had another successful year getting together at the WWDSS Bowling Party at Victoria Bowl in Kitchener. Members enjoyed eating pizza, drinks, bowling and lots of smiles and laughter. Thank you to all that came out to enjoy a fun afternoon together.



Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC

by Roberta Thompson

I enjoy attending the monthly SEAC committee meetings. The meetings are welcoming and informative; the committee members are other parents of students with disabilities and the WRDSB provides presentations on board led initiatives as well as introductions to the support professionals from various departments for example, Speech and Language Therapists, Mental Health professionals, Diversity and Inclusion professionals, and the Special Education leadership team. Each parent advocate provides a unique perspective about their child's school experience through recommendations and feedback to the meeting discussions.

SEAC meetings are a great way to connect with other community organizations. Each representative shares updates and opportunities for families in Waterloo Region. At this month's meeting some great opportunities available for your family were shared, for example: 'Kaleidoscope Kids' will be starting again on February 27 at Roger Street Early ON, contact info@wrfn.info for more details. Easter Seals Ontario Summer Camp registration is open until March 31, 2024, visit www.eastersealscamps.org. Autism Ontario offers informative, on demand webinars relating to neurodiversity, mental health and sensory strategies for school aged children and youth, go to: www.autismontario.com/programs-services/webinars, for an incredible list of informative webinars.

Finally, I can't write about SEAC without mentioning our incredible Trustees. New to the Board, Joe Meissner and Samantha Estoestra, provide feedback and action to items

discussed at our meetings. Often requests for letters of support from other school boards are sent to WRDSB, we will then write letters to strengthen the action requested. These letters are reviewed by the Committee, Trustees and School Administrators and then sent to the Minister of Education. It takes many steps to create change, we are fortunate to have strong leadership and support.

SEAC includes the following associations:

- Autism Ontario – Waterloo Region
- Easter Seals Ontario
- Epilepsy South Central Ontario (Kitchener-Waterloo)
- FASD ONE (Ontario Network of Expertise)
- Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County
- Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
- Parents for Children's Mental Health – Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society

Non-Association Members:

- Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Region Family Network
- WRDSB Student Representative

Trustees on SEAC:

- Trustees Joe Meissner & Samantha Estoestra

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 at RIM Park on Saturday May 4, 2024.

We request WWDSS members attend this meeting in person. Registration for this event will be available in April. Members will be provided with materials at the in-person meeting.

The Chair will present a report, followed by the 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 2024 WWDSS membership. One vote can be put forward at the meeting per paid membership (membership is available to individuals, families or organizations).

AJ & Zeus custom brew is back!

by Janine Oosterveld

In honor of World Down Syndrome Day, we are excited to be partnering with TWB (Together We are Bitter) Brewing for a third year! Member Anthony Tamming and the team at TWB are brewing a lemongrass pale ale called AJ & Zeus with a portion of the sales donated to WWDSS. AJ & Zeus is named after Anthony (AJ) and his dog. Anthony works hard at his job at TWB and is excited to be part of this collaboration.

Save the date for a launch event on Tuesday, March 19th (more information to follow).

Purchase your beer on March 19th or after either by stopping by TWB Brewing at 300 Mill Street in Kitchener or online at TWBbrewing.com.



Waterloo Catholic SEAC Report

by Kim Murphy

At our Feb 7/24 WCDSB SEAC meeting, Antonietta Leonardo, Special Education Liaison, discussed the Ministry's new curriculum, and the Reading Intervention Strategy implemented as a result of the Right to Read report. Scarborough's Reading Rope has become an anchor for the professional development and additional student programming which has proven to be successful.

In response to the 2024 Calendar, I've been heartened to receive expressions of gratitude from our esteemed Trustees, including this note: "The theme for this year "Just ask Me" is so important when we look to support inclusion; hearing from the voices of those who are impacted." This reiterates our Trustees' steadfast commitment to promoting inclusion within our community.

It was announced that a second Project SEARCH location has been approved for Cambridge! Having a second location means more potential opportunities for our students who are entering their last year to participate in the incredible 10-month employment preparation program.

At every meeting, representatives from each local association and our Trustees provide updates on their respective areas. SEAC Meeting Minutes can be found here: <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



**Waterloo Wellington
Down Syndrome Society**

join us...

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

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

- Event** WWDSS' World Down Syndrome Day Celebration
- Date** Thursday March 21st
- Time** 5:30 PM to 9:00 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

**Tickets now
available at
www.wwdss.ca**

Save the date

World Down Syndrome Day

March 21

TWB Brewing AJ & Zeus beer launch

March 19

The Office

March 12, 26

April 9, 23

May 7, 21

June 4, 11, 18

Teen Hangout

March 17

Independent Skills Program: Self Advocacy

April 4 - May 9

Annual General Meeting and Spring Mini Conference

May 4

Mother's Night Out

March 29

WWDSS Summer Picnic

June 23

WWDSS Golf Tournament

Cancelled

WWDSS Summer School Camp

August 12

Any Which Way You Can A-Thon

October 6

BUDDY CHOIR

Buddy Choir has been meeting weekly at 109 Ottawa St. to rehearse. We will be performing with The Police Chorus on May 12 for a fundraiser for Ontario Special Olympics and have been invited to perform O Canada at the Police badging ceremonies, and the medal ceremonies for The Ontario Special Olympics this spring. Please join us! We rehearse every Monday from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. For more information lmvc50@gmail.com or 519-501-6747.

If you would like to join Buddy Choir or would like more information, please let me know. lmvc50@gmail.com 519-501-6747

