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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**The Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society launches
Photo Series - “Just Ask Me”**

For Immediate Release

Waterloo, ON - The busiest season for local charity, the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (WWDSS), is here. October marks what is broadly recognized as Down Syndrome Awareness Month, with Canadian Down Syndrome Week capping it off this year on October 22-28. WWDSS has collaborated with local photographer, Hilary Gauld, for the ninth year in a row on a photo series with this year’s theme focusing on the communication skills of children and adults with Down syndrome (DS).

Through a series of portraits of 62 people with Down syndrome from Waterloo Region, Guelph, and Wellington County along with thought-provoking quotes from participants and caregivers, this year’s series "Just Ask Me" centres around communication - including the associated challenges people with Down syndrome may face.

For social interactions as an example, many don’t realize that people with DS fall across a huge spectrum of communication capabilities. It is common for their comprehension to exceed their production of language which can cause miscommunication and even frustration. As members of this photo series remind us, a person with DS may need more time to answer when someone asks them a question, despite understanding the question perfectly. Compassionate understanding is key since there could be several reasons for this communication challenge. For instance, according to [research](#), a person with DS needs to use almost twice as much energy to initiate speaking. Recognizing this imbalance can improve understanding and patience on both sides.

Turn-taking and clarifying are the foundations of any good social interaction. As members in these photos highlight, these are even more important when barriers and imbalances exist.



Even in creating this “Just Ask Me” campaign, caregivers often spoke for their loved ones with DS to help them communicate their messages. It can be helpful to clarify with the support of others, but priority should be given to the voice of the person with Down syndrome whenever possible.

Photos from the “Just Ask Me” series are released daily through WWDSS’s social media channels and are collected into a 2024 calendar that is available for preorder now at www.wwdss.ca. Follow the social media campaign throughout the month of October and join in by sharing the photos. WWDSS’s annual advocacy projects have attracted worldwide attention and have made a lasting impact on our local community and beyond. This series has a powerful yet simple message to listen with compassion and truly value the voice of people with Down syndrome.

Follow the Photo Series on WWDSS’s social media:

Twitter: @WWDSS_WWDSS

Facebook: @WaterlooWellingtonDSS

Instagram: @WWDSS_WWDSS

About the Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society:

The Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (formerly the Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society) is a charitable, non-profit organization created in 1988 by parents of children with Down syndrome. Entirely run by volunteers, every dollar raised goes towards helping fund the various programs and services provided to our members. The Waterloo Wellington 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.

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