



**KW Habilitation**  
2022-2023 Annual Report

**We acknowledge that the land on which we gather and work at KW Habilitation is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe and Neutral People. We acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land today, their achievements and their contributions to our community. We offer this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.**

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# Our Vision

A community where everyone belongs and participates.

# Our Mission

Together with our community, KW Habilitation inspires abilities to enrich the lives of children, youth, adults and families.

# Our Values

## Equality and Choices

We treat each person with respect and recognize their rights, choices and contributions.

## Inclusion and Community Participation

We are committed to promoting inclusion through public awareness, community involvement and citizenship

## Collaboration and Partnerships

We value collaboration and promote effective partnerships that enable the community to share in the responsibility of ensuring participation for everyone.

## Leadership and Excellence

We believe that dynamic leadership, continuous learning and innovation are essential to achieving excellence.

## Integrity and Accountability

We embrace the values of fairness and honesty in all that we do to ensure our integrity and accountability.

Inspiring  
Abilities.  
Enriching  
Lives.



# A Note from Ann

After weathering the storm of COVID-19, KW Habilitation continues to be resilient. Throughout the pandemic, we have gained numerous valuable life experiences and insights that we are dedicated to utilize as we continue to move ahead with a strong focus on fostering inclusivity in our community.

The dedication of KW Habilitation employees to the individuals that we serve is truly exemplary, and I extend my gratitude to every single staff member for all that they do for our organization and the community.

One exciting change includes the redesign of our Senior Leadership Team to meet the present and future needs of our growing organization. We are also extremely happy to offer more in-person activities and services as we experience a new world with lifted restrictions.

I want to also thank our Board of Directors for their ongoing support and I look forward to what will be next for KWH as we persevere in our initiatives. We will continue to be guided by our strategic priorities which are to **STRENGTHEN**, **CREATE** and **ALIGN**.

In a world that thrives on diversity, the importance of fostering a sense of belonging for all individuals cannot be overstated. We continue to expand and collaborate with other Developmental Service Agencies in Ontario as we embrace the Journey to Belonging framework which is dedicated to promoting choice and inclusion. Having a good life is defined by what is important to each individual person and their definition is the path that we must follow.

Overall, taking the time to heal and reflect has allowed for the creation of many new innovative ideas that we have proudly put into practice over the past year. Please take the time to read more about each department at KWH and join me in celebrating all the accomplishments of the 2022-23 year.

Together we can create a world where everybody belongs and participates.

Cheers,

Ann Bilodeau  
Executive Director



# Board of Directors

The Board of Directors acts within a policy governance model and is responsible for overseeing the execution of our mission and mandate. Board Members meet bi-monthly during the fiscal year. The board provides leadership within the organization in advocacy supporting our mission to better the lives of the people we support, providing financial accountability and overseeing the planning and implementation of our Strategic Pathways guided by three pillars: Strengthen, Create, and Align.

In the 2022-23 year, the Board of Directors worked diligently to update the articles and by-laws for KW Habilitation. The government of Ontario released the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, also known as ONCA, that we need to be in compliance with by June 2024. KWH is poised to meet all obligations this year.

The Board also undertook a yearly self-evaluation, as well as the yearly review of the Executive Director. From that review, it was determined that the Executive Director title will be changing to Chief Executive Officer to better reflect the work and leadership that is being undertaken by KW Habilitation.

We would like to sincerely thank all members of the Board for their support and dedication to KW Habilitation as we complete another very successful year.

Corey Bechtel, President  
Satish Mistry, Vice-President  
Ian Labelle, Secretary  
Bill Stachan, Treasurer  
Jane Tuer, Past President

Rick Willaert  
Patricia Moore  
Lori Trumper  
Patrick Carson  
Jeff Collins  
Mark Sauve

# Finance Committee

The Finance Committee's main responsibility is to provide financial oversight for KW Habilitation. These tasks include the review of financial information concerning their annual budget, monitoring adherence to the budget, monitoring COVID-19 financial risks, and setting long term financial goals. The Finance Committee reports and recommends actions concerning the financial position and risk management to the Board of Directors and gives direction to where fundraising activities should be applied. During our 50th year, all fundraising went toward our affordable housing initiatives.

Bill Strachan, Treasurer  
Corey Bechtel  
Jane Tuer  
Mike Staub

Frank Thompson  
Pat Carson  
Mark Sauve  
Ann Bilodeau

# Volunteer Updates

Since the pandemic, the opportunities for volunteer and student placements remain steady at KW Habilitation, however, nationally, volunteerism is down. We notice at an organizational level there have been less individual volunteers but a huge surge in student volunteer placements.

Currently, we are working with a total of 64 students and volunteers who provide ongoing support in our community by promoting social inclusion. Volunteers have been helpful in supporting all areas of our organization including everything from helping out with our Leg UP! classes to assisting staff at local child care centres.

We are also grateful to all of our corporate volunteers including Ricoh Canada, and The Athletics and Recreation Department at Waterloo University for their support on Our Farm. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Vidyard for their ongoing support and help at events like our Annual Spaghetti Dinner.

Overall, we appreciate each and every one of our volunteers for their support in assisting KW Habilitation in creating an inclusive community for all.

## Volunteer Testimonials

“This volunteer has been wonderful! The kids love playing with her and she has made a great addition to our team in the mornings. We will truly miss her when she leaves.” *-Daycare Provider*

“She was a great asset to the team and I know that the educators thoroughly enjoyed having her present to help and support the busy program.” *-KW Hab Resource Consultant*

“She will still be studying psychology in the fall, however, she has changed her main focus to children! Her placement has had a positive impact on her. Thank you!!” *-High School Co-Op Teacher*





# Inclusive Living

The stark contrast of living with rigid restrictions to once again being able to live life supported by one's community and support networks has shown that we cannot take the smallest of assumptions in life for granted, and that mental health and wellbeing is so very important. Living an inclusive life has never been more crucial.

That being said, this past year in Inclusive Living has been a year of excitement and celebration as we slowly moved away from the COVID-19 restrictions that limited people's abilities to fully participate in their communities and all the activities that made life meaningful. The resilience of making it through the pandemic is finally paying off.

Once again people are making choices and deciding where they want to go, they are meeting up with family and friends in person, and attending functions such as KWH's 50th Anniversary Gala. People are taking charge of their lives again, exploring their communities, getting back to volunteering, connecting with people, attending and participating in friendship groups and sports teams, some going on much anticipated vacations. The smiles on everyone's faces as they have gotten back out into their communities to participate in activities of their choice says it all, they are **getting back to belonging**.

## Inclusive Living Testimonials



Amber participates in a lot of activities in her community. "I go to classes to meet people and make friends". Amber participates in swimming, rock climbing, Zumba, and theatre classes at local community centres. She is happy to be able to make her own choices about the programs she participates in. Amber is a regular at Aquafit and has made lots of friends that help support her to learn the exercises. Amber recently performed at the Registry Theatre as part of the Big Feelings Project through Growing in the Arts. She expressed that she was feeling butterflies in her stomach, but she did a great job! Amber's mom came to see the show and was proud of her daughter for stepping out of her comfort zone and trying something new. Amber is building connections with her community at each of the programs she goes to.

Richard loves all kinds of music and can talk to anyone for hours about his favourite bands. He is a regular at the local library where he goes to look for CDs. Richard always knows what is going on in the community and often looks for current events that are music related. Many people at the library know him by name and he has a strong network that he knows he can trust to help him find what he's looking for.



Susan's family is very important to her. In 2022, Sue's sisters planned a trip to the United States so they could all be together. While there, they took lots of pictures and Sue's sisters made a scrapbook of their adventures for her. Susan was very excited to show everyone and talk about her vacation. The scrapbook is a great tool for Sue to communicate and share her experiences with others.



Ron is the number one Elvis fan at KW Hab. To celebrate his 70th birthday he has commissioned a local tailor to make a custom Elvis suit. Ron has met with her a few times since to discuss exactly what he wants to make sure he gets a suit that fits his needs. Ron says that it's going to be his best suit and that everyone will like it!

Chris celebrated his 50th birthday at the start of 2023! Anyone who meets Chris quickly learns that one of his biggest passions in life is listening to his favorite radio station Chym 96.7fm! So as birthday plans were starting to be made, the staff who support Chris thought it would be a lot of fun to surprise him with a birthday shout out on his favorite radio station. While organizing the birthday shout out, they asked if a studio tour would also be possible and were delighted to find out that Chris would be able to go and see where all the radio magic happens. This surprise made Chris's day and for weeks; after any time someone came to visit he showed off the mugs he received from his visit to Chym 96.7fm.



One of Angela's goals this past year was to get baptized. Angela found a fantastic congregation who welcomed her with open arms.

Richie is a proud volunteer at "Worth a Second Look" on Victoria Street. He keeps the store tidy, helps to price items and ensures that their stock is in good condition. Richie looks forward to working every week and shares his love of music with the community when he exchanges his CDs at the store. For Richie, his volunteer placement is a place where he is needed. Richie says that people know him there and he has made very good friends in the community.

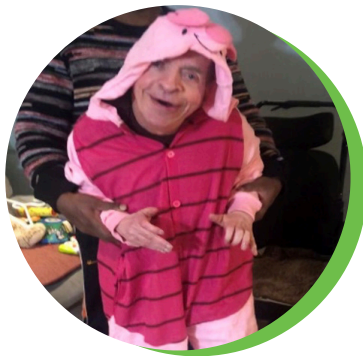






Patricia is very friendly and enjoys taking part in social outings, activities, and gatherings. In her free time, Patricia likes to go shopping, going out for dinner with her family, playing with animals and listening to oldies music. Patricia has gone on outings with her friends to the movie theaters and bowling alley. She likes to visit the Humane Society to see the animals and has created some great connections with the staff there. She is currently brainstorming more activities for this coming year and is looking forward to attending concerts with friends, going to the African Lion Safari and the Kitty Café, and possibly going on a trip to the city of Ottawa.

**At Inclusive Living, we offer individualized and person-centered supports that focus on self-determination, personal choice, responsibility, contentment and inclusion.**



Richard, John and Colin all belong to a friendship group that could not meet during COVID-19. Last year, they were able to start their weekly meetings in person once again. Even more exciting was the first Halloween party they were able to attend in several years. There was lots of pre-event anticipation as everyone got dressed up in their costumes and made ready to leave. Once at the event, they enjoyed listening and playing instruments to the music. They also created Halloween art then topped the evening off by enjoying delicious pumpkin cookies with coffee.



Gary and Paul were very excited to hear about the Gala that was going to occur for KW Hab’s 50th anniversary celebration. Both gentlemen took great preparations for the event. They went shopping for their evening wear to get new suits and shoes, and got haircuts for the occasion. Their favorite part of planning was selecting a limo to get them to and from the event. They invited their longtime friend Richard to join them in the limo, picking him up on the way to the Gala. Gary was chosen to participate in the “parade”, led by our in-house bagpiper, Dylan Whittemore, of those having long time involvement with the agency. He has been supported within the agency for the past 40 years. The evening was filled with friends, food, coffee and beer. They enjoyed catching up with everyone, danced with friends and staff and had their pictures taken in the photo booth. They are still talking about the event, reminiscing about the limo ride, reenacting their Chicken and YMCA dance moves.

**Together, we continue to provide opportunities to participate in and contribute to activities in the community to help create a good life.**



Naffe, Christina and Mel had a very busy summer doing as much as they could after having spent so much time inside during COVID-19. They were so excited by the prospect of finally being able to get out and move freely that they all opted to go together on any available activities. Some of their more memorable excursions included touring on the Waterloo Central Historic train, going to the Butterfly Conservatory, going on as many rides as they could fit in a day at the fair, participating in a ceramics class, and enjoying meals out.

# Complex Care

With the COVID-19 pandemic decreasing its day to day impact in 2022/23, developmental services, including Complex Care, have been able to re-focus our efforts towards KW Habilitation's vision; *a community where everyone belongs and participates.*



At Complex Care, this focus begins with the people we support and targets both reductions in behaviours that are an obstacle to community engagement and promotion of positive behaviours that foster community participation. These efforts are collaborative and include direct CCP supports, KWH BCBA and BTA clinical assessment and treatment, accessing community based multidisciplinary supports as needed, and leadership advocacy efforts at a regional and provincial level to secure additional resources. Collectively, these efforts have resulted in tremendous success for persons we support this past year. As an example with one person, we saw a 50% reduction in behaviour and as result, this person has been active in their community in a way that they have not been for years. In another example, efforts resulted in a return to significant community activity for a person new to KWH supports, following an extended period of time where they did not leave the family home due to behaviour.

Efforts extend beyond the persons supported at Complex Care locations, and have improved behaviour support capacity across the organization. Beginning in 2019, clinical support at Complex Care has intentionally worked to improve KWH practice specific to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) understanding as it applies to the Behaviour Support Plans utilized by the agency. This work began in 2019 with evaluating agency practices and identifying both strengths and areas of development. This was followed in 2020 and 2021 by developing and implementing training that was applied to 16 agency Behaviour Support Protocols and that promoted the strengths and improved upon areas of development highlighted in the 2019 evaluation. In 2022, KWH partnered with Durham College to research the result of our efforts since 2019. In 2023, we look forward to publication of these efforts.

Efforts also look to bridge gaps between sectors and promote best practices at a regional and provincial level. As an example, KWH collaborations with Health have recently resulted in a new community children's psychiatric clinic in Waterloo region. In addition, in 2022/23 KWH launched the Specialized Accommodations Networking Group (SANG), a collection of DS Agencies across the province that specialize in supporting persons with complex needs.

At Complex Care, we understand the need in community, where people with complex behaviour support needs are not adequately supported by the provincial Developmental Services (DS) sector resulting in over-representation in the justice system, inappropriate placements in hospitals and long-term care facilities, and family breakdown. We recognize that through growth we will be able to assist more families and promote increased capacity in the DS sector. We have recently expanded our clinical team with an added contract Behaviour Therapy Assistant and transition of our Behaviour Analyst into a Clinical Manager position. We have also recently expanded the roving positions with Complex Care to assist with instances of staff shortages or when additional support is needed. In addition, in 2022/23 we worked towards positioning ourselves for expansion by planning and costing new environments and work towards next steps that will allow for team growth and increased capacity in 2023/24.

# Community & Employment Supports



KW Career Compass (KWCC) continues to provide supports for people with barriers to employment while working with employers to create a diverse and inclusive workforce across Kitchener Waterloo.

## KWCC Success Stories



Colin has been a loyal employee of Zehrs (Loblaws Inc) since 1992. In September 2022, Colin was honored for 30 years of service with the company. He attended a formal gala where he was recognized for this milestone achievement.

James keeps himself busy during the week with a full time shipping and receiving position at Onward Manufacturing, and also occupies his time in the evenings and weekends working part time at Old Navy in Conestoga Mall. He keeps the store sparkling clean on the weekends, and on weekday evenings he can be found providing exceptional customer service with a smile. James won the “Brand Associate Of The Month” in February 2022 in addition to multiple other times during his 5+ years tenure at the Old Navy Conestoga location.



## Future Plans in KWCC

As part of our expansion in offering pre-employment training, KWCC is excited to partner again with Project READ and the Literacy Group to present LEG Up! to Material Handling this fall. This course, modeled after our employment fundamentals training LEG Up! to Work, will focus on the roles and responsibilities of material handling including moving parts or raw materials, sorting through waste for recyclable metal and other materials, and helping get things ready to ship. This new course is the 3rd industry specific training offered along with LEG Up! to Retail and LEG Up! to Hospitality.



# Project SEARCH

Something amazing that has happened at KWCC is the launch of Project SEARCH. This is a work immersion program that oversees six students from the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) complete internships at St. Mary's General Hospital. The students' cycle through three internships in a school year amidst a work-based school curriculum at the beginning and end of their school day. Some of the tasks they are learning are: stocking, shipping and receiving, data entry, portering, patient registration, customer service, sterilizing medical equipment, inventory control, safety audits, food preparation and delivery. Some of the soft skills they are building are: time management, social skills, pivoting to meet pace demands, how to build relationships with coworkers, communication and understanding workplace culture.

The biggest impact on the success of Project SEARCH has been the collaboration of three passionate partners: the staff at St. Mary's, the instructor from WCDSB, and the students. The staff at St. Mary's have opened up their departments and mentored the students in a safe and supportive manner. The instructor from WCDSB and the skills trainers from KWH have provided guidance and leadership to the students, managers, mentors and fellow staff members. What is perhaps the biggest impact to the success of Project SEARCH has been the students. They have adapted what they have learned in class to their internships. The students have also learned everything about health services from the St. Mary's staff who know it best. They are a motivated group; eager to learn, open to constructive criticism and have added a bundle of energy to the hospital.

Project SEARCH has given six students the opportunity to build their work skills in the hospital's classroom. The opportunity to learn has been the opportunity presented and the gift has been the chance to experience many different work environments. What the students get out of each department is entirely up to them. It has been exciting to watch the students mature and the confidence bloom.

The work at Project SEARCH matters. These six students are more prepared for employment, have a leg up in career development and better understanding of their futures than their peers. Project SEARCH has plans to grow from six to eight students in the fall of 2023.



# LEG Up!

LEG Up! continues to fill people's desire to be out and connecting with others in the community. LEG Up! offers relevant, and meaningful learning for people to build, experience and form goals to live their best life.

The KWH Shop now offers online registration to our program which has helped us provide better customer service as we can analyze the data from the Shop in real time to add and support additional learning. Our ability to create learning that is relevant and in demand has also been a key to our success. We are constantly seeking feedback from learners, families and colleagues to build our program.

Our LEG Up! program content fosters independence, self-awareness and self-advocacy which provides a foundation for taking next steps to building personal success. For example, cooking and baking class, Relationship 102, first aid preparation class, safety at work, as well as educational learning in science and arts. Baking courses in particular have exploded; we have had 9 courses over 4 sessions! In the winter session, we presented a course called Super Heroes 101. The group that signed up were all women. Discussion revolved around how the superhero genre reflected the historic evolution of a woman's role in society and generated great discussion for the entire class.

We have welcomed 4-5 volunteers/students with open arms through the fall winter and spring sessions. We continue to be a place that supports learning for university, college and community learners. We also love to include new guest instructors both internally and externally including Our Farm, and JJ Woven Co.

LEG Up! plans to continue to keep growing and offer impactful, meaningful learning that can enrich our community at large.

## Statistics for LEG Up! Registration



**953** Spring Registrations  
**9** Youth Social Events  
**14** Spring Courses  
**12** Spring Classes



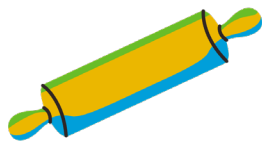
**891** Winter Registrations  
**5** Youth Social Events  
**20** Winter Courses  
**19** Winter Classes

# LEG Up!

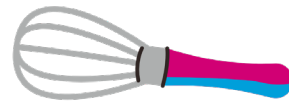
Learning Experience Goals



## Baking Supply Statistics for LEG Up! Holiday Baking Courses



- 40.5** cups of flour
- 34** cups of butter
- 6** cups of coconut
- 21** cups of oatmeal
- 18** eggs
- 2** cups of cocoa



- 10** cups of icing sugar
- 22** cups of white sugar
- 34** cups of semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3** cups of crushed peanuts
- 9** cups of brown sugar

# OAAWR

The Out and About Waterloo Region (OAAWR) program at KW Habilitation has made significant progress in 2022. We have formed partnerships with Mill Courtland and Inclusion Services, as well as collaborated with outside vendors such as GITA (Growing in the Arts), Artshine, and JJ Woven. Our program has encouraged individuals to step out of their comfort zones and try new activities including theatre classes, performing in front of audiences, axe throwing, beer festivals, trampoline gyms, escape rooms, scream parks, laser tag, and playing pool. By collaborating with other agencies, community members, and associations, we can maximize knowledge, resources and capacity and continue to discover and foster more opportunities for the people we support.

Due to COVID-19, the closure of the traditional day programs left a void in the lives of many of the people we support, and for many, they had lost their purpose. What we do is important because if it were not for OAAWR, many people would still be at home and not getting out and connected to their community. As Local Community Connectors (LCCs), we have gotten to know the people we support, the people who are important in their life, and have helped them articulate their interests, aspirations and goals for their life by using person-directed and individualized supports. We are here to help people explore new possibilities and get connected to their community in meaningful and sustainable ways, whether that be through activities, clubs, services, or associations.

Last year, we had the chance to present at KWH's 2022 Connect for Success Conference discussing the work that LCC's and OAAWR team members do revolving Journey to Belonging (J2B). We have also benefited from other various resources and learning opportunities, including Local Area Coordination, citizenship, person-directed/person-centered supports, safe waiting, EPIC training, smart goals, Helen Sanderson training, facilitation, Asset Based Community Development, and advocacy. Our Tamarack membership has also assisted us in acquiring knowledge, shaping staff mindset, and evaluating the program.

Our future goals at OAAWR include Passport Funding Coordination, expanding the roles of our LCCs and accommodating more volunteers. We also plan to cement more community partnerships and special focus club cohorts (Ottawa Club and University Club). We aspire to continue to assist individuals by helping them use their gifts and talents where they have an opportunity to participate and are given a sense of belonging.

## Statistics for OAAWR

**30** people were re-connected with, who used to attend our traditional day programs and are currently living at home with family

**51** total of activities/sessions ran in 2022

**85%** of individuals and families Out of our initial list of contacts, have participated in our program and have been receptive to new service

# Early Learning, Child Care & Family Resources

During the 2022–23 calendar year, our Early Learning Department continued to grow as we made changes to our program supporting children up to the age of 12-years old, in licensed care. The Ministry of Education for Ontario, in partnership with the Federal Government's Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Plan provides a roadmap for the future of Early Learning in the Educational sector. The five-year plan for CWELCC will be implemented in stages, to make child care more accessible and affordable. Fees will reduce every year, reaching an average fee of \$10/day by 2025-26. As a result, our region will see more affordable and quality licensed child care spaces being made available. This initiative will help to support the early childhood workforce through enhanced compensation, training, and professional learning opportunities. By addressing barriers to provide both inclusive and flexible child care, we will see improved accessibility for all members of our community. Working with this new plan for child care in our region, collaboratively with our provincial partners, and seeing the impact across our country as all provinces and territories have signed onto this agreement, we can collectively focus on the healthy development of all children.

## Entry to School (ETS) Program

Over this last year we have had the great opportunity, once again, for a community collaboration. We have partnered with KidsAbility in providing two Resource Consultant positions to work directly in the classroom setting with the Entry to School Program - supporting classrooms in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph, Ontario. The ETS program is a 6-month intensive group-based skill building opportunity for young children (aged 3-5 years), who are registered with the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) and entering school for the first time, which could be kindergarten, or grade one. As the children who are registered in these classrooms participate in the unique skill building activities that it provides, the staff can work with the Waterloo Region and Guelph Wellington District School Boards to support in the transition planning for these children to help lend to their success as they move into the public-school board programs. The ETS program is a multidisciplinary program that includes a Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst, Intervention Therapist, Autism Assistant, Speech and Language and Occupational Therapist, as well as the Resource Consultant position. This multidisciplinary team is working hard to ensure a successful pathway and the best possible outcome for children living with autism as they transition to their community schools. This pilot project will continue until March 2024, and we look forward to our continued partnership with KidsAbility.





## Collaborating with Kids Brain Health Network & Early Learning

Early Learning has engaged in an exciting partnership with Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN) at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. This partnership will allow KW Habilitation's Early Learning Program to collect data that we can utilize to support children and families moving forward during this exciting time of growth in the Early Years Sector.

***To achieve this goal, Kids Brain Health Network will be responsible for the following:***

- a) Creating a secure, online database for storing the confidential, anonymized information received from KW Habilitation
- b) Data analysis and interpretation
- c) Confidential and ethical handling of all data collected
- d) Funding of all research related expenses, including stipends for trainees and travel of research personnel to/from Waterloo Region for the purpose of supporting data acquisition
- e) Helping to create a "story" from the data that can be used by KWH to advocate for family-centered early intervention and improved infant mental health services

***KW Habilitation will participate and be responsible for the following:***

- a) Primary data collection
- b) Confidential and ethical handling of all data collected
- c) Secure storage of the primary data sources (e.g., screening tools, questionnaires), to which KWH retains full ownership
- d) Using the "story" that emerges from data analysis to advocate for family-centered early intervention and improved infant mental health services, Public Information, Outreach and Openness

KBHN and KWH are committed to improving the level of public understanding about child development and family-centered interventions. Stay tuned for further information as we work on this project.

# Mental Health First Aid

During the spring of 2022 we had the opportunity to have one of our Early Learning Supervisors, Tracy Stroeder, enroll in the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training program for instructors delivered by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This was sponsored through the initiative Cultivating Community Wellness, sponsored by the Provincial Network on Developmental Services. As defined by the commission, “Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing the worsening of an existing mental health problem, or in a mental health crisis. Just like physical first aid is provided until medical treatment can be obtained, MHFA is given until appropriate support is found or until the crisis is resolved.”

Moving beyond the pandemic we realized the need for our families, children, professionals that we support, and our very own staff, in Early Learning and throughout our entire agency, for additional support in mental health first aid. This understanding was apparent after our work with Conestoga College students involved in a Capstone Project with KW Habilitation, determining a strategy to support our staff with the growing concern for mental health, arising from the pandemic and the restrictions placed on all of us. Information was collected through surveys, focus groups and follow-up activities, as part of this work. Our agency is committed to supporting mental health and the well-being of all our team members across the organization. Having a trained instructor on staff, our goal is to reduce the stigma around mental health and well-being. We strive to increase our awareness of this growing concern across our communities and hope to build confidence in opening doors to further conversations that are important to the well-being of our staff, and all those we support.

Having a certified instructor “in-house” will allow us to engage in this training for all staff, with the aspirations of supporting our community in the work that we do every day.

**KW Habilitation is committed to supporting mental health and the well-being of all our team members across the organization.**



# Facilities

In 2022, we continued and expanded our partnership with the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region. We currently have a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom unit dedicated to women transitioning to the community at our affordable housing building.

## Renovations

We completed several substantial renovation projects throughout the agency. With a focus on accessibility, safety, and upgrading, projects included, complete basement renovation, kitchen, and bathroom renovations and many flooring projects. Septic systems at DFR and Pinnacle also had to be addressed this year. Once again, the Kinsmen stepped up and absorbed the cost for projects completed on homes owned by the Foundation.

## Affordable Housing

We remain shovel ready for our second Affordable Housing project. Our 18-unit mass timber construction project unfortunately has been unsuccessful at a couple of funding attempts. We continue to investigate opportunities through the Rapid Housing Initiative or other opportunities available to us.

### Statistics for Facilities

- 5** tenants moved out of 108 Sydney St.
- 7** tenants moved into 108 Sydney St.
- 46** Partner Facility Renewal (PFR) Projects submitted to Ministry
- 30** total vehicles in our fleet (this year we removed one vehicle and added one lift van)





# Day on the Hill

On March 27th, our Executive Director Ann Bilodeau and our Director of Facilities and Project Management Brian Pitts were honoured to represent KW Habilitation at 'Day on the Hill' at Parliament Hill in Ottawa for the Intentional Community Consortium's (ICC) Advocacy Day. Here, alongside several MPs and Senators who came to show support, Waterloo Region was well-represented, and KW Habilitation connected with government leaders surrounding the need for affordable housing for people in Canada with developmental disabilities.



# Our Farm



“Our Farm” added two new structures this year including a shed for storage, workplace, and respite from the heat. A second “trailhead” structure was added as an introduction to the walking trail (it will offer information about the trail, and sponsors). In addition, “100 Women Who Care Wilmot” have given a significant donation that is being put toward a sustainable irrigation system at DFR.

# IT & EMH Ware Updates

The IT Department at KW Habilitation has remained committed to supporting the organization's mission of empowering individuals with developmental disabilities to lead meaningful and inclusive lives. Throughout the year, we have made significant progress in various areas, including expanding our team, actively participating in inclusive living programs post COVID-19, and implementing new technology systems to improve efficiency and data management.

## Staff Expansion & Expertise

One of the major highlights of this year was the addition of a new staff member to our IT department. Recognizing the growing demands and needs of our IT infrastructure, we hired a skilled individual to strengthen our team. Wes Gordon has brought valuable expertise and experience, enabling us to enhance our support services and tackle emerging challenges effectively. This expansion has significantly improved our capacity to provide reliable and efficient IT solutions to all departments within KW Habilitation.

## Active Participation in Inclusive Living Programs

As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic started to subside, the IT department recognized a need to get back out to programs more actively. The IT Department developed a plan to reengage all the programs. We provided technological support for virtual communication platforms, ensuring seamless connections between program participants, staff, and families. Additionally, we facilitated the implementation of innovative digital solutions to enhance remote access for and participation in inclusive activities. Our department's contributions have fostered an environment of inclusion and engagement.

## Training & Adoption of EMHware & Electric Records Systems

In line with our continuous efforts to improve data management and streamline processes, the IT Department spearheaded the training and adoption of EMHware, an electronic records system for the Inclusive Living Departments. Although it was being used in our Early Learning program, it was a necessity for the rest of the agency. This implementation has allowed for more efficient recording, tracking, and reporting of client information. By digitizing our records, we have reduced paper usage, minimized errors, and enhanced data security. Our staff are receiving comprehensive training on the new system, ensuring a smooth transition and maximizing the benefits offered by EMHware. This achievement has significantly increased our ability to provide person-centered care, while also enabling us to generate accurate and timely reports to support decision-making processes.

# Future Growth & Expansion

Looking ahead, the IT Department is dedicated to supporting the future growth of KW Habilitation. We have identified several areas where our department can play a pivotal role in driving progress and innovation:

**Technology Infrastructure Upgrade:** We plan to invest in upgrading our technology infrastructure to ensure a robust and reliable IT environment. This includes improving network security, and implementing advanced cloud solutions for enhanced data accessibility and disaster recovery.

**Data Analytics and Reporting:** We aim to leverage the power of data analytics to gain valuable insights into program effectiveness, resource allocation, and client outcomes. By employing advanced reporting tools, we can better inform decision-making and measure the impact of our programs.

**Digital Accessibility Initiatives:** Our department is committed to ensuring that KW Habilitation's digital platforms and services are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their abilities. We will continue to prioritize accessibility guidelines and work towards achieving compliance with applicable accessibility standards.

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** We recognize the value of collaboration and partnerships in fostering innovation. We will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with external organizations, share best practices, and leverage collective expertise to further enhance our IT systems and services.

The IT Department at KW Habilitation has made significant strides in supporting the organization's mission, enhancing services, and embracing technological advancements. The addition of new staff, active participation in Inclusive Living programs, and the successful adoption of EMHware have positioned us for continued growth and success. We are excited about the future year to come.

# Human Resources

On behalf of the Human Resources here at KW Habilitation, we are excited to share some of the initiatives and accomplishments we have implemented over the past year. We have participated in many job fairs attracting new talent to our organization. As a result, we have successfully hired 260 individuals between April 1st, 2022, and March 31st, 2023 with around 83 people leaving our organization.

One notable achievement was the implementation of group interviewing for Complex Care positions, which has proven to be highly effective. This approach has streamlined the hiring process and ensured that we select the most qualified candidates for these critical roles.

Looking ahead, our future goals include continued collaboration with internal and external partners to enhance the development of our staff. This involves initiatives such as Enhancing People's Individualized Choices (EPIC) training, Mental Health First Aid Training, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training. This also includes our partnership with Fanshawe College's Developmental Services Worker (DSW) Apprenticeship program that continues to thrive, with 12 employees currently enrolled in the program.

At KW Habilitation, we recognize the importance of investing in our employees' growth and creating a supportive and inclusive work environment. Through our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), we continue to provide accessible resources to our staff. Equitable Life, our benefits provider, has increased coverage for paramedical expenses based on feedback from the Benefit Survey conducted among KW Habilitation staff. This positive change is a reflection of the Employee Resource Council's efforts to advocate for improved benefits for our employees' well-being. Through Equitable Life Insurance, all employees also have access to articles, tools, and resources from Homewood Health.

Human Resources also played a vital role in co-facilitating the Operational Leader Training Program, developed by the Developmental Services Workforce Initiative subcommittee. This program aimed to improve employee retention and leadership capabilities to advance new workforce models and enable diversity in-service models.

To promote community wellness, we participated in the Cultivating Community Wellness initiative, which offers monthly wellness webinars. This program encourages employees to prioritize their well-being and engage in activities that promote a healthy lifestyle.

We are also proud to announce that the Equity Council is actively working on an Inclusion Action Plan that was developed based on the CCDI's definition of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) which focuses on policies, programs, initiatives, events, education and awareness sessions to promote EDI.

We are proud to demonstrate our commitment to supporting and developing our employees at KW Habilitation. We firmly believe that the work our staff members do in our community matters, and we will continue to prioritize their well-being, growth, and inclusion within the organization.



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