

Where Belonging Grows





For more than 50 years, KW Habilitation has been growing, working, helping and living, along the Haldimand tract, land promised to the Haudenosaunee people of Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. This land is traditional Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Chonnonton Territory.

We give thanks to and acknowledge their enduring presence, achievements and contributions to our community both here and all across Turtle Island. We are grateful to the original keepers of the land for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings so they can be shared with us today and with future generations. We will continue to work with, include and collaborate with the original stewards of the land and promise to continue to build a community where everyone belongs and participates.

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Our Vision Statement:

A community where everyone belongs and participates.

Our Mission Statement:

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

Where Belonging Grows

Belonging does not happen by chance.

It grows in the places where people feel welcomed. It grows through relationships, shared experiences, meaningful opportunities, and support that reflects what matters most to each person. At KW Habilitation, belonging is at the heart of everything we do.

This year, we continued to strengthen the spaces, supports, and connections that help people participate fully in their communities. From affordable housing and community gathering spaces to employment opportunities, early learning supports, and partnerships across Waterloo Region, our work focused on creating environments where people can build relationships, pursue their goals, and contribute in ways that are meaningful to them.

We also recognize that belonging extends beyond the people we directly support. It includes families, volunteers, students, staff, community partners, employers, educators, neighbours, and advocates. Together, we are helping create communities where everyone has opportunities to connect, contribute, and thrive.

Throughout this report, you will read stories of people finding friendship, building independence, exploring employment, accessing support, and creating new possibilities for themselves and their families.

You will also see the collective impact of a community working together.

This is the story of how belonging grows.

A Message from Ann



As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with a deep sense of pride, gratitude, and hope. This has been a year of transformation, one that has asked us to stretch, to listen more deeply, and to continue evolving alongside the people and communities we serve.

A Year of Growth and Meaningful Change

We were excited to launch our new Infant and Child Development Program, supporting children and families from the very beginning of life. This is more than a new service, it is an investment in futures, in possibilities, and in stronger, more inclusive communities from day one.

Across our Inclusive Living services, we saw people make courageous and empowering choices to move into new homes and new opportunities. These are not simply transitions, they are powerful expressions of independence, belonging, and self-determination.

At the same time, we experienced loss within our community. We said goodbye to people who were deeply valued and loved. Their absence is felt, but their lives continue to shape us. They remind us why our work matters, and why compassion must remain at the heart of everything we do.

Building Community, Creating Possibility

This past year also saw significant progress in creating spaces where inclusion can truly thrive:

- Our 18-unit affordable housing project is nearing completion, bringing us closer to a community where more people have a place to call home
- We completed Complex Care renovations, strengthening our ability to meet increasingly complex needs
- At 115 University Avenue, renovations are underway, opening the door to renewed partnerships and expanded opportunities for community participation

Our Neighbour Helping Neighbour model continues to show us what is possible when community becomes the foundation of support, where relationships, not systems, lead the way.

And we are not stopping there. We are intentionally expanding opportunities for community participation, ensuring that people are not just present in community, but truly belong, contribute, and are valued within it.

Listening, Learning, and Looking Forward

Our strategic planning process this year reflects who we are at our core. It was not rushed. It was not top-down. It was organic, inclusive, and deeply rooted in listening:

- Listening through focus groups, surveys, and open dialogue
- Listening to our staff, our partners, and our broader community
- Most importantly, listening to people with lived experience, whose voices guided and shaped the path forward

We took the time to validate what we heard, ensuring the outcomes truly reflect those who shared their insights. This was not just a process; it was a commitment to doing things the right way.

I am excited to share that our new strategic plan will roll out in June, setting a bold and thoughtful direction for our future.

A Vision for What Comes Next

Looking ahead, I see a future where KW Habilitation continues to break down barriers between sectors and build stronger bridges. A future where we deepen our intersection with health and other ministries, working collaboratively to meet people where they are and respond more fully to the complexity of their needs.

A future where we continue to expand our reach within the community, identifying gaps and stepping forward to meet emerging needs with creativity, courage, and compassion. A future where inclusion is not something we strive for; it is simply the way our community lives.

The needs are growing. The expectations are evolving. And we are ready.

Strong Foundations

Following last year's challenges, we took important steps to realign our budget. This was not easy work, but it was necessary. I am proud to say that this was done with care and discipline, and the results are reflected in this year's audit.

This gives us a strong and stable foundation as we move forward.

Gratitude

None of this work happens alone. To our staff and volunteers, thank you for the heart you bring every single day. Your compassion, resilience, and commitment making a difference in ways that cannot always be measured, can always be felt. To our Board of Directors, thank you for your leadership, your engagement, and your belief in our mission. Your guidance strengthens us. And to the people and families we support, you continue to inspire us. You are the reason we do what we do.

This past year has shown us that even in times of change and challenge, we can grow stronger, more connected, and more purposeful.

The future is not something we are waiting for. It is something we are building, together. And it is bright.



Ann Bilodeau
CEO, KW Habilitation

Board President's Report

This year marks the conclusion of my two-year term as Board President, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served in this role. It has been a period defined by meaningful engagement, steady progress, and strong collaboration across KW Habilitation. As I transition into the Past President role, I look forward to continuing to support the Board and our incoming President as we move into an exciting new chapter.



Strategic Planning and Board Engagement

A major focus of the year was the development of our new strategic plan. While the Steering Committee guided the process (with Board representation), the full Board was actively involved throughout. Board members participated in planning sessions, reviewed emerging themes, and ensured that the voices of people with lived experience were reflected in the final direction. The Board's unanimous support for the new strategic plan speaks to our confidence in its vision and the inclusive, community-driven process that shaped it.

Financial Stewardship and Stability

This year followed a period of significant budget realignment led by the organization's leadership team. The Board's role was to provide oversight, ask thoughtful questions, and stay informed as the work progressed. We are pleased with the positive audit results, which reflect the careful and disciplined efforts of leadership and staff. The Board is grateful for the accountability and

communication that kept us informed throughout the process.

I want to extend sincere thanks to the Finance Committee for their diligence, thoughtful review, and steady guidance throughout the year. Their work ensured the Board remained well-apprised and confident in the organization's financial direction. We are also grateful to our leadership team for their transparency and careful stewardship, reflected in this year's positive audit results.

Board Presence and Community Connection

This year, the Board made it a priority to be present and engaged beyond the boardroom. Members attended staff appreciation events, years-of-service celebrations, an Our Farm volunteer day, and all major fundraising events. These opportunities strengthened our understanding of the organization's work and deepened our connection to the people who bring KW Habilitation's mission to life every day.

Looking Ahead

With a strong strategic plan, a stable financial position, and a dedicated team, KW Habilitation is well positioned for the future. As I move into the Past President role, I remain committed to supporting the Board and our new President as we continue to champion inclusion, strengthen community partnerships, and respond to emerging needs with creativity and purpose.

I want to thank every member of the Board for their dedication, engagement, and thoughtful leadership this past year. It has been an honour to serve as Board President over the past two years. I am grateful for the leadership of our CEO Ann and the trust placed in us by the people and families we support. Together, we are building a future rooted in possibility, belonging, and hope.

Satish Mistry
Board President

Board Members

Satish Mistry, President
Mark Sauve, Vice-President
Bill Strachan, Treasurer
Jeff Collins, Secretary
Pat Carson
Anne Hughes
Alanna Fedak-Tarnopolsky
Patricia Moore
Abhay Patel
Lori Trumper
Ann Bilodeau

Finance Committee

Bill Strachan, Chair
Corey Bechtel
Pat Carson
Jamie Moffat
Mark Sauve
Frank Thompson
Jane Tuer
Ann Bilodeau
Ana Golobic

By The Numbers



10 Board members



44 Years of combined board experience



8 Board meetings



17 Committee meetings



3 Past board presidents serving on the finance committee



Our Services



Inclusive Living: 24/7 supports in shared homes for adults with developmental disabilities; person-directed supports emphasize choice, responsibility, belonging and inclusion.



Complex Care: Specialized environments for people with complex needs and behaviours with 24/7 support, on-site clinical collaboration, comprehensive behavioural assessment and care.



Affordable Housing: Affordable housing for people connected to KW Habilitation and those on the Region of Waterloo's affordable housing waitlist, helping people live independently while building relationships and staying connected to their communities.



Supported Independent Living: Providing flexible supports in people's own homes or shared spaces (budgeting, shopping, cooking, banking, etc.).



KW Career Compass—Supporting Job Seekers: Guiding job seekers in the right direction to find meaningful employment by matching interests, skills, and career goals to employment opportunities.



Job Readiness Programs: Building foundational work skills with classroom instruction, literacy assessments, skills evaluations with employer partners, post-course employment planning and job coaching.



Project SEARCH: A one-year, school-to-work transition opportunity for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities in their final year of high school



KW Career Compass—Supporting Employers: No-cost recruitment and on-boarding supports, job coaching, inclusive hiring resources available to employers seeking to hire people with barriers to employment.



LEG Up!: A learning and skill-building program for adults who benefit from a supported learning environment. Open to anyone 18+.



Youth Exploring Possibilities (YEP): A youth stream with three complementary components for young people with developmental disabilities. Activities fit into social, educational and summer categories.



Out and About Waterloo Region: Local community connectors work one-to-one with adults who have developmental disabilities to build natural support networks in their own neighbourhoods.



The Hangout at Grant's Café: The Hangout is a welcoming, fully inclusive community space where everyone is invited to drop in, relax, and connect with others.



The Clubs: Small groups of people with developmental disabilities who have shared interests. Groups meet Monday - Friday 9 am - 3 pm at KW Habilitation and spend time together in the community.



Our Farm: Growing organic produce at two Waterloo Region sites, provided free to people supported by KW Habilitation and our community.



Early Learning Child Care and Family Resources: Working in licensed early learning and child care programs across Waterloo Region to help build the capacity of educators to support all children in their care.



Infant and Child Development Program: Personalized supports for children from birth to school entry who have an established developmental delay or are identified as a risk of delay.

Impact By the Numbers



172 people connected to all of our housing supports



18 NEW affordable housing units about to be completed



280 people connected to all of our Community Participation services



50 people maintained meaningful employment with support from KW Career Compass



11 students participating in Project SEARCH



254 volunteers, students and corporate volunteers



\$59,327 worth of produce was grown at our farm to share with people at KW Habilitation and our community



\$5,700 worth of produce donated to partner organizations in Waterloo Region



180 new employees hired to support services across KW Habilitation



90% of Inclusive Living full-time and contract full-time positions were filled internally



233 people helped shape our new Strategic Plan



1,520 hours of extra training led by our team completed by staff, above and beyond ministry requirements.



900+ years of service celebrated at our Annual Employee Recognition Event



172 Children supported through the infant and child development program



1,105 Children accessing Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports from Early Learning, Child Care and Family Resources



250 people from across Ontario attended Connect for Success, a conference for Direct Support Professionals planned by our team

Creating Places to Connect

Belonging begins with place.

The spaces where we live, gather, learn, work, and connect shape our experiences and influence how connected we feel to the people around us. At KW Habilitation, we are intentionally creating and transforming spaces that help people build relationships, participate in community life, and feel a sense of belonging.

This year, that work took many forms. We continued to invest in affordable housing, reimagine community spaces, and expand opportunities for people to connect through food, nature, and shared experiences. Together, these efforts reflect a simple but important belief: belonging grows when people have places where they are welcomed, valued, and connected.

Reimagining 115 University Avenue

For many years, 115 University Avenue has been a place where people gathered to learn, connect, and participate in community life. The building has supported horticulture programming, learning opportunities, social activities, and countless connections over the years.

Today, KW Habilitation is working toward a new vision for the space. Important upgrades have already been completed, including a new roof and windows, and work on an accessible kitchen is underway. With continued support, the long-term goal is to transform the building into a welcoming community space that responds to the needs and interests of the people who use it.

The vision includes opportunities for horticulture therapy, community events, learning and training opportunities, supports for adults with complex needs, training opportunities, and shared use with community partners.

The goal is not to make the building larger. The goal is to make it more meaningful.

By creating flexible spaces that bring people together and respond to community needs, 115 University Avenue has the potential to become a place where people can continue to learn, contribute, connect, and belong for years to come.

Building Community at 878 Frederick Street and 108 Sydney Street

Housing is about more than a place to live. It is about relationships, independence, connection, and feeling part of a community.

Our affordable housing building at 108 Sydney Street continues to operate well with no vacancies. We also continued work at 878 Frederick Street, which will become our second affordable housing building.

While the building itself is important, the vision behind it is what makes it great. 878 Frederick Street will follow the same two ideas that guided our approach with 108 Sydney Street: the Cluster Model and Neighbour Helping Neighbour.

The Cluster Model

The philosophy behind the Cluster Model creates a balance between independence and support. This model allows people to have greater choice and privacy while maintaining access to support when needed.

KW Habilitation currently supports people through cluster living arrangements at four locations and 878 Frederick Street will expand this approach to five.

Neighbour Helping Neighbour

The Neighbour Helping Neighbour model takes the idea of inclusion one step further.

Instead of creating separate spaces, the building brings people together as neighbours.

The goal is not to create dependence on formal supports, but to create opportunities for natural relationships to develop. Where small moments help create a stronger sense of belonging and community.

This model reflects our vision of a community where everyone belongs and participates.



Home, Friendship, and Belonging

Since moving into KW Habilitation's affordable housing building, Sean Hughes has built meaningful friendships with others who live there. One of those friendships led to a memorable trip to Cuba with his neighbour Robert, volunteer Gerry, and Gerry's wife, Maryellen.

Reflecting on the experience, Gerry shared: "The trip was a highlight for my wife Maryellen and I. We know that Robert and Sean had a great time. That made us very happy."

When asked what he enjoys most about living where he does, Sean's answer reflected what matters most to him:

"What I like about living here is being with people you care about and other people caring about me." — Sean Hughes

Sean's experience reflects the vision behind KW Habilitation's affordable housing work. When people have opportunities to live near one another and build relationships naturally, friendship, connection, and belonging can grow.



Growing Connection Through Our Farm

Every Wednesday during the growing season, people from our Inclusive Living homes drop by Our Farm to pick up fresh produce.

For many, these weekly visits have become more than a stop for vegetables. They are an opportunity to connect with the land, learn about what is growing, see familiar faces, and bring healthy food home to share with others.

Those small moments of connection are part of what makes Our Farm special. Our Farm continues to connect people to the land, food, and each other through sustainable agriculture. It is a place where volunteers, staff, community members, students, and people supported by KW Habilitation work alongside one another, contributing to something larger than themselves.

In 2025, Our Farm celebrated its most productive season to date. Expanded production, infrastructure improvements, new partnerships, and volunteer support helped increase access to fresh food across Waterloo Region.

The value of produce grown in 2025 reached \$59,327, an increase of more than \$12,500 over the previous year. From that total, the farm donated nearly \$5,700 worth of food and resources to community organizations, including House of Friendship, Soup Sisters, and the Humane Society. These numbers only tell part of the story.

The rest of the story can be found in the weekly routines, shared meals, volunteer experiences, community partnerships, and relationships that continue to grow through the farm each season.

Weekly Produce Pickup

For Dan, produce from Our Farm is about more than food.

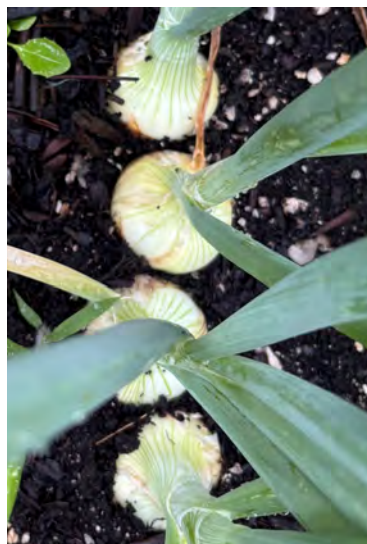
Fresh vegetables become smoothies, shared meals, and homemade gifts for family and friends. Every Thursday, Dan cooks dinner for his housemates, creating an opportunity to share a meal and connect.

“I love using fresh vegetables from Our Farm,” says Dan. “I get a lot of veggies for myself, but also for other stuff.”

The produce helps stretch grocery budgets while encouraging people to try new foods and build confidence in the kitchen. Dan recently experimented with bok choy for the first time and discovered a new favourite ingredient.

“For us, it’s a good way to save money, especially with a lot of things being pricey these days.”

For Dan, the value of Our Farm goes beyond what’s on the menu. It provides opportunities to learn new skills, contribute to the people around him, and build connections through food.



By The Numbers



765 Produce pickups from Inclusive Living and SIL



580 Pints of raspberries grown



31 Community markets



306 Community Supported Agriculture pickups



895 Pounds of zucchini grown



688 Pounds of potatoes grown



The Hangout: A Place to Connect

When Grant's Café reopened as The Hangout in April 2025, the vision was simple: create a welcoming space where people could gather, connect, and feel like they belonged.

Open two days each week, The Hangout welcomes neighbours, seniors, volunteers, community members, and people supported by KW Habilitation. Whether stopping in for coffee, a game, free bread through COBS Bread's End of Day Giving Program, or simply a conversation, people are encouraged to make the space their own.

The impact can be seen in the friendships that have formed. In one example, two people invited someone they had recently met at The Hangout to join them at a community event, helped them navigate the bus schedule, and made sure they felt included throughout the day.

In October, that sense of connection was celebrated through a Neighbourhood Welcome Party that brought together neighbours, community partners, families, and local leaders.

What began as a café has become a place where friendships grow and community happens.

Spaces matter because they create opportunities for connection. Whether it is a community building being reimaged, an affordable housing development designed around relationships, or a farm where people gather each week for fresh food and conversation, these places help bring our vision to life.

They are places where belonging grows.



Building Connection

Relationships are at the heart of a community. Across KW Habilitation, people are building friendships, exploring new interests, strengthening community connections, and finding places where they feel welcomed and valued. These connections help build confidence, independence, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Finding Community Through Out and About

Out and About Waterloo Region helps people explore their interests, build relationships, and connect with their communities. Working alongside Local Community Connectors, people discover activities, groups, volunteer opportunities, and experiences that reflect what matters most to them. The goal is not simply participation. It is connection.

The stories below show how those connections can grow into friendships, confidence, independence, and meaningful participation in community life.



Rebuilding Social Connections

One person came to Out and About after experiencing significant social isolation. At first, getting involved in community activities felt overwhelming. Through consistent encouragement and support, they began exploring opportunities that matched their interests and comfort level.

What started as a few tentative steps soon grew into a regular and meaningful routine.

Today, they participate in a weekly social group, attend a chess club, take part in skill-building activities, and continue exploring new opportunities in their community. Their family shared:

“Based on my years of experience, I was skeptical. But after only a few days, we received a list of opportunities for community participation. I had to catch up to Out and About’s speed. These activities may not seem like a lot, but they represent a huge improvement. Thank you for helping make this possible.”

For this person, these activities represent much more than a busy calendar. They represent confidence, connection, and a renewed sense of belonging.



Building Independence Through Community Experiences

For Brittany, building independence was an important goal. With support from Out and About, she learned to navigate her local community centre on her own, attended a theatre performance, volunteered in a community cooking program, and practiced everyday skills such as grocery shopping.

Over time, these experiences helped build confidence and a stronger sense of independence.

Brittany shared:

“Out and About has helped me meet new people and make new friends. I go to my Community Centre on my own now. I’ve tried different kinds of things, like going to St. Jacobs Playhouse for a play, and helping people by volunteering at the Community Cooking program. I am learning and practicing my skills by doing grocery shopping and gaining confidence to shop on my own.” Brittany Franks

These experiences show how small steps can lead to meaningful growth and greater participation in community life.



Wellness, Connection, and New Experiences

For another person, belonging grew through wellness and connection. Through Out and About, they were connected with equine-assisted therapy, meditation retreats, sound baths, and other community-based wellness opportunities.

These experiences helped them explore personal interests, build relationships, and strengthen their emotional well-being.

They shared: “Working with the team has been a dream come true. They connected me with an incredible equine-assisted therapy program that I’ve been attending for the past couple of years. With their support, I now feel genuinely connected in my community and have the supports I need to thrive.”



Creating Spaces Where Connections Happen

Relationships often begin in simple ways: a conversation over coffee, an invitation to join a group, or a shared interest.

This year, people connected through opportunities such as The Hangout, Out and About Waterloo Region, Community Participation Supports, Creative Spark, The Clubs, YEP (Youth Exploring Possibilities), the Pegasus Incredible Film Festival, and many individualized community-based supports.

Through these experiences, people built friendships, explored new interests, developed skills, expressed their creativity, and strengthened their connections to the communities around them. YEP helped young people build confidence and life skills through social, educational, and community-based experiences, while the Clubs created opportunities for friendship, belonging, and shared interests.

Community-based Passport supports also grew by 21%, reflecting increased demand for individualized supports that help people connect with opportunities that matter to them.

Reimagining Community Participation

This year, in response to feedback from people with lived experience and their families, KW Habilitation looked at how our Community Participation Supports could better meet the needs of the people who use them.

We heard that people wanted more opportunities to build relationships, spend time in their communities, explore their interests, and have greater input into how they spend their days. Families also told us they were looking for more

consistent weekday support options that reflected individual goals and needs.

In response, significant work was undertaken to develop a Community Participation Supports model where people can choose to access support Monday-to-Friday.

The vision is simple: create more opportunities for people to choose how they spend their time and to participate in activities, experiences, and relationships that are meaningful to them.

Rather than asking, “What program can someone attend?” the focus shifted to “How can we support people to build relationships, contribute to their communities, explore their interests, and spend their time in meaningful ways?”

This work reflects KW Habilitation’s ongoing commitment to adapting and evolving supports based on what people tell us matters most in their lives and we look forward to launching and continuing to adapt these supports in the months to come.

By the Numbers



59 People connected to Out and About Waterloo Region



22 Unique people accessing weekday supports through The Clubs



94 YEP Summer registrations over 9 weeks



53 YEP Skills registrations



242 YEP Social registrations

Learning, Connection, and Belonging

Belonging grows when people have opportunities to learn, explore their interests, and connect with others.

This year, LEG Up! offered 213 classes and 33 courses, resulting in 1,946 registrations. Through small class sizes and individualized support, people pursued learning opportunities that reflected their interests, goals, and aspirations.

LEG Up! also expanded opportunities for youth transitioning from school to adulthood. Through partnerships with local school boards, the LEG Up! to Employability curriculum was delivered in five Waterloo Region District School Board schools, reaching 40 students preparing for life after high school.

In recognition of its impact, LEG Up! received Gold for Best Adult Education in the Waterloo Region Record Readers' Choice Awards.

By the Numbers



213 LEG Up! classes offered



33 LEG Up! courses delivered



1,946 LEG Up! registrations



40 Students reached through LEG Up! to employability



7 People received individualized tutoring through LEG Up!

Leadership through Lived Experience

Belonging also means having a voice. This year, KW Habilitation continued to build on the principles of Inclusion International's Listen, Include, Respect initiative, which promotes accessibility, inclusion, and meaningful participation in decision-making.

A key outcome of this work was the creation of a council led by people with lived experience. The vision of the council is to help people build leadership skills and have an active voice in conversations that shape KW Habilitation.

The broader goal is to strengthen opportunities for people with lived experience to be heard, respected, and involved in shaping the supports, services, and communities they are part of.

Sharing Their Experience

This year, Simon Garcia and Sean Hughes shared what they learned through Inclusion International's Listen, Include, Respect initiative with staff, the Senior Leadership Team, and the Board of Directors.

Their presentations highlighted the importance of ensuring people with lived experience are heard, respected, and involved in decisions that affect their lives.

By sharing their perspectives, Simon and Sean helped strengthen conversations about accessibility and inclusion across KW Habilitation.

Relationships help transform places into communities. These relationships create the foundation for belonging. This year, people found new opportunities to connect, contribute, and participate in the communities around them.

Those connections continue to grow every day.



Opening Doors

Meaningful opportunities help people discover their strengths. Through employment supports like KW Career Compass and Project SEARCH, people are exploring career pathways, developing workplace skills, and connecting with meaningful opportunities in their communities. Job Developers continued to work alongside employers across Waterloo Region to create inclusive employment opportunities and support people in achieving their employment goals.

Work, volunteering, internships, and community participation all help people build confidence, develop relationships, and discover new possibilities. This year, people supported by KW Habilitation continued to pursue employment.

Finding Her Place: Darien's Story

Sometimes belonging starts with finding the right place. For Darien, that place was The Hangout. What began as a co-op placement through St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centre became a part-time job. With support from KW Career Compass and a job coach, Darien discovered new skills, built confidence, and became a valued member of the team.

“I can cook, I can bake. I never practiced baking before, but now I'm good at it.”

The biggest change was in how she saw herself.

“I used to be nervous. Now I talk to everyone.”

For Darien, employment has been about much more than earning a paycheque.

It has been an opportunity to build confidence, contribute to her community, and discover what she is capable of achieving.

Opening the Door to Employment

When Ryley joined Project SEARCH, he was looking for an opportunity to gain workplace experience and build confidence in a professional environment.

Through internships in Distribution, Endoscopy, and the Medical Device Reprocessing Department at Cambridge Memorial Hospital, he developed new skills, built relationships with coworkers, and demonstrated a strong work ethic.

As his confidence grew, so did the trust placed in him by his supervisors and other hospital staff. Through hands-on experience and support, Ryley continued to show what he was capable of achieving.

His hard work paid off. After completing Project SEARCH, Ryley secured paid employment as a Casual Materials Handler at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

“Project SEARCH helped me learn lots of skills to get a paid job. My favorite part of my new job at CMH is getting to work a paid job.” Ryley Ewen

Ryley's journey highlights the impact of meaningful workplace experiences and the importance of creating pathways to employment where people can learn, contribute, and succeed.

Opportunity Begins Before Employment

Not every opportunity begins with a job.

Many people first build confidence through community participation, volunteering, learning opportunities, and social experiences.

Across KW Habilitation, people are developing skills in real-world settings every day. They are volunteering, navigating public transit independently, participating in community activities, exploring personal interests, and taking on new responsibilities.

These experiences help people build confidence, discover strengths, and develop the skills needed to pursue future goals.

Every opportunity matters because every opportunity creates the possibility for growth.



By the Numbers



116 People received employment supports from KW Career Compass



50 People maintained employment throughout the year



70 Employer partners creating inclusive employment opportunities



11 Students graduated from Project SEARCH



Creating Opportunities from the Start

Opportunities begin long before adulthood. Across Waterloo Region, Early Learning and Child Development services are helping children participate, learn, and build the foundations for future success.

This year, KW Habilitation supported inclusive environments where children could learn alongside their peers, explore their strengths, and access supports when needed.

The Tier 1 Pilot demonstrated the impact of providing support for all children, regardless of ability, early. Six child care programs participated in the pilot, helping educators build capacity and strengthen inclusive classroom environments.

The results were significant. Referrals from participating centres dropped from 65 during the previous year to 21 during the pilot period, a 68% reduction.

The pilot demonstrated that when educators are supported and inclusive practices are strengthened, children can often receive the support they need within their everyday environments. These early opportunities help children build confidence, develop skills, and participate more fully in their communities.



Meaningful opportunities help people discover what they can do, what they enjoy, and how they want to contribute. Whether through employment, volunteering, learning, or community participation, these experiences create pathways to confidence, independence, and belonging.

This year, people across KW Habilitation continued opening new doors, pursuing new goals, and building futures filled with possibility.

Building a Good Life

Belonging looks different for everyone. For some people, it means having the confidence to take the bus independently. For others, it means finding the right child care placement, receiving support during a health transition, building a more accessible home environment, or knowing there is someone to help navigate a difficult situation.

At KW Habilitation, support is never one-size-fits-all. Support evolves as people's lives change. It responds to new goals, changing circumstances, health needs, family situations, and opportunities for growth. This year, that support helped people build independence, strengthen connections, access community resources, and navigate important life transitions.

Supporting a Good Life Through Inclusive Living

Inclusive Living supports people to live meaningful lives in homes and communities that reflect their goals, preferences, and support needs. This year, 120 people received Inclusive Living supports and 31 people received Supported Independent Living (SIL) supports.

In 2024, the average age of a person receiving Inclusive Living supports was 50 years old. As the people we support age, their needs and priorities continue to evolve. This is shaping how we think about housing, health care, community participation, and long-term support.

KW Habilitation is taking a proactive approach to aging by strengthening partnerships, building staff knowledge, and planning for future support needs. This includes helping people stay connected to their communities, supporting health and wellness, and exploring housing options that reflect changing needs.

This year, staff completed assessments for all 31

people receiving SIL supports. The assessments helped identify opportunities to strengthen supports and contributed to planning that helped four people move into housing that better reflected their needs and goals.

By planning ahead and adapting supports as people's lives change, we are helping people continue to live meaningful, connected lives at every stage of life.

Going Places

For Robert, belonging has grown through independence.

With encouragement, practice, and support, Robert built the confidence to use public transit on his own. Today, he regularly travels throughout the community, giving him more opportunities to explore his interests, make choices about how he spends his time, and connect with others.

When asked if he enjoys taking transit to get out into the community and explore things that interest him, Robert enthusiastically replied,

“Yes!”

For Robert, riding the bus is about more than getting from one place to another. It is about freedom, confidence, and connection.



Supporting Families Through Early Learning

Families often reach out during times of uncertainty. They may be navigating developmental concerns, looking for child care, preparing for school, or trying to understand what supports are available. Early Learning and Child Development services help families access information, navigate systems, and find supports that meet their needs. Through coaching, consultation, and capacity-building, Resource Consultants help create inclusive environments that benefit every child attending licensed child care programs across Waterloo Region.

This year, the team delivered 153 workshops with 1,568 participants, received 94 referrals through the Special Needs Access Point (SNAP) and 87 Crisis Child Care referrals. Together, these supports helped children participate more fully in early learning environments while increasing the confidence and capacity of the adults who support them.

Early Learning supports also extended to 77 Home Child Care providers, helping create inclusive environments for 438 children across Waterloo Region. Behind each of those numbers is a family with a unique story.

The Infant and Child Development Program also joined KW Habilitation this year. Between August 2025 and March 2026, the program received 114 referrals and supported 172 children and their families. By connecting families to support early, the program helps children participate more fully in their homes and communities.

Supporting a Family Through Recovery and Transition

A mother in Waterloo Region was recovering from injuries resulting from domestic violence while caring for her child.

Finding child care close to home was essential. Without it, attending physiotherapy appointments and planning for future employment would have been difficult.

Working together, Infant and Child Development Consultants, SNAP Coordinators, and community partners helped identify child care options within walking distance of the family's home.

This support allowed the child to access quality child care while giving the mother the time and flexibility she needed to focus on her recovery and future goals.

The impact went beyond child care. It helped create stability and reduce barriers during a difficult period of transition.

By the Numbers



94 SNAP referrals



87 Crisis Child Care referrals



1,568 Workshop participants



172 Children supported through ICDP



77 Active Home Child Care providers



438 Children connected through Home Child Care

Supporting Health, Aging, and Complex Needs

As people age, support needs often become more complex. This year, KW Habilitation continued to strengthen its work in aging, dementia care, health partnerships, palliative support, and specialized accommodations.

Through partnerships with Waterloo Hospice, Ontario Health atHome, Waterloo Region Family Network, and health-care providers across the region, people received support that reflected their changing needs and goals.

For the first time at Hospice Waterloo, three people supported by KW Habilitation were able to access end-of-life hospice care. This was the first time Hospice Waterloo had ever provided end-of-life support to people with developmental disabilities and it led to the opportunity for thirty staff members to complete palliative care training. This strengthened our ability to support people and families during some of life's most difficult moments.

This work reflects a commitment to ensuring people continue to receive compassionate, person-directed support throughout every stage of life. Through partnerships, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, KW Habilitation also continues to contribute to stronger supports for people with complex needs across the broader community.

By the Numbers



120 People supported in Inclusive Living homes



31 People in Supported Independent Living



31 Assessments completed in SIL



4 Housing transitions supported



30 Staff trained in palliative care



1 major renovation complete in our Complex Care Space



7 agencies using Virtual Home



17 agencies in the Dementia Community of Practice



30 Community of Practice members



4 people directly supported through Complex Care

Support is most meaningful when it responds to what matters most. **This year, KW Habilitation helped people build confidence, strengthen relationships, access opportunities, and participate more fully in their communities.**



Growing Together

Belonging does not happen alone. It grows when people come together around a shared purpose. It grows through partnerships, collaboration, volunteerism, advocacy, and a willingness to listen and learn from one another.

At KW Habilitation, our work is strengthened by the people and organizations that walk alongside us. Staff, families, volunteers, students, donors, community partners, people with lived experience, sector leaders, and supporters all contribute to creating a community where everyone belongs and participates.

This year, that collective effort was especially important as we began shaping the next chapter of KW Habilitation's future.

Shaping the Future Together

This year marked an important milestone as KW Habilitation began developing a new Strategic Plan. Rather than starting with assumptions, we began by listening.

People with lived experience, staff, families, Board members, and community partners were all invited to share their perspectives, experiences, priorities, and hopes for the future.

The result was one of the most comprehensive engagement efforts in recent organizational history. In total, 223 people participated through focus groups, interviews, surveys, and planning workshops.

Their feedback helped identify what is working well, where opportunities exist, and what matters most as we continue building a stronger and more responsive organization.



The process reinforced something we already knew: the best ideas come from the people closest to the work. People with lived experience, families, staff, and community partners who collaborate alongside us all played an important role in shaping the future of KW Habilitation.

Together, these voices are helping shape a future that reflects the needs, hopes, and aspirations of the community we serve.

By the Numbers



223 Strategic Plan participants



91 focus group participants



81 survey responses



15 interviews



36 workshop participants

The Power of Volunteers and Students

Volunteers and students help expand what is possible at KW Habilitation. This year, 254 volunteers, students, and corporate volunteers contributed their time and talents to KW Habilitation. Their contributions supported programs and initiatives across the organization. In Early Learning, volunteers created 1,475 social narratives to help increase capacity and improve accessibility for children, families, and educators. Students from Wilfrid Laurier University helped translate Early Learning resources into French, improving access for bilingual child care environments.

At Our Farm, volunteer participation increased by more than 75%, resulting in over 600 pledged volunteer hours supporting planting, harvesting, community markets, trail maintenance, and infrastructure projects.

Together, these contributions strengthened programs, created new opportunities, and helped build a stronger community.

A Place to Play and Connect

Since February 2026, Monday afternoons at The Hangout have brought people together for games, conversation, and connection.

What started as a volunteer opportunity for Bill Nguyen has grown into a weekly gathering where people play games, spend time with friends, and build new relationships. Some weeks, as many as 15 people stop by.

For Bill, volunteering has become about much more than games.

“This experience reinforced the importance of being mindful, patient, and willing to help others, even through small acts of kindness. It showed me how meaningful social connections can be.”

What began around a game table has become another way belonging grows through shared experiences and friendship.

By the Numbers



254 Volunteers, Students, and Corporate Volunteering Groups



1,475 Social narratives created



600+ Volunteer hours at Our Farm



53 Student placements



70 Corporate volunteers



Strengthening Community Through Partnerships

Partnerships help create opportunities that no single organization can achieve alone.

Throughout the year, KW Habilitation worked alongside organizations across developmental services, health care, child care, housing, education, agriculture, and community development.

These partnerships helped strengthen support for children and families, improve access to health care, expand affordable housing opportunities, advance aging and dementia initiatives, support food security efforts, and create new opportunities for community participation.

Collaboration was central to work involving Waterloo Hospice, Ontario Health atHome, Waterloo Regional Health Network, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, the Special Needs Resourcing Collaborative, school boards, municipal partners, and many others.

KW Habilitation also continued to share knowledge and resources with organizations across the sector. This included supporting a Dementia Community of Practice with 30 members from 17 agencies, sharing Virtual Home with seven organizations, and participating in collaborative initiatives such as the Belonging Collective, which helps connect people to opportunities, resources, and community events across Waterloo Region. Developed by KW Habilitation, Virtual Home is a knowledge-sharing resource that supports the planning and care for people with complex behavioural support needs. Experience to date has also highlighted benefits as a resource to organizations supporting people that are aging and/or experiencing dementia.

These examples of our partnerships (and so many others) help reduce barriers, strengthen community connections, and create more opportunities for people and families to access the supports they need.

Community Support Makes a Difference

Throughout the year, community members, donors, service clubs, businesses, foundations, and volunteers helped create opportunities that strengthen belonging across Waterloo Region.

Their generosity supported projects such as affordable housing initiatives, improvements at 115 University Avenue, Our Farm, and community spaces like The Hangout. Community support also helped create opportunities for connection, learning, employment, and participation for the people we support.

Many of these projects would not be possible without the ongoing commitment of people and organizations who believe in a community where everyone belongs and meaningfully contributes. To every donor, volunteer, sponsor, service club, foundation, community partner, and advocate who supported our work this year, thank you. Your generosity, partnership, and belief in our mission continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people and families we serve.

Belonging grows when communities come together.





Looking Ahead

Everything in this report reflects a shared effort.

The homes being built, the spaces being renewed, the opportunities being created, the relationships being strengthened, and the support being provided are all the result of people working together toward a common goal.

Staff, volunteers, families, donors, community partners, people with lived experience, and supporters each play an important role in helping create a community where everyone belongs and meaningfully contributes.

As we look ahead, that shared commitment will continue to guide our work.

Our new Strategic Plan will provide direction for the next chapter of KW Habilitation and help shape decisions, investments, and priorities in the years ahead. We will continue advancing projects that create more opportunities for belonging, including welcoming people into the new affordable housing development at 878 Frederick Street and continuing the transformation of 115 University Avenue into a vibrant community space.

We will continue strengthening Community Participation Supports, supporting inclusive early learning environments, growing opportunities through Our Farm, and working alongside partners across housing, health care, education, and community services.

While our work continues to evolve, our purpose remains the same: helping create a community where everyone belongs and meaningfully contributes. We will continue creating opportunities for people to connect, contribute, and build meaningful lives in their communities.

Because when belonging grows, communities grow stronger too.

Inspiring
Abilities.
Enriching
Lives.

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