



CELEBRATING A 70-YEAR JOURNEY  
OF INCLUSION AND BELONGING

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Joe Obermeyer  
Board Chair



Sylvia D'Intino  
Executive Director

**This year, Community Living Hamilton celebrated a 70-year journey to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. It was also a year defined by intense advocacy efforts to be more responsive to the evolving needs of the people we serve. So many people were instrumental in making this year a beautiful year of community activism and togetherness.**

May 8, 2023 marked Community Living Hamilton's 70th anniversary. When reflecting on the past 7 decades, one thing has remained constant and that is our ability to persevere. We listened, learned, and embraced the challenge of making our work more diverse,

equitable, inclusive, and accessible. This past year has been no exception. For Community Living Hamilton (CLH) along with the entire Developmental Services (DS) Sector, it was a year defined by intensive advocacy efforts.

CLH, like other developmental services agencies was severely stretched for resources and facing rising inflation, skyrocketing costs and a human resource crisis, it was becoming challenging to meet the needs of the people we are committed to supporting.

This year, we stood alongside our colleagues across the region and province in a united effort to call on the government to provide an immediate 5% boost to developmental services agency core funding, as well as Passport and Special Services at Home. The #5ToSurvive Campaign brought together a united group of advocates comprised of people who have an intellectual disability, their families and loved ones, and allies all deeply concerned that the sector is facing critical challenges that require urgent action.

For Community Living Hamilton, as we reflect on our 70-year journey, we recognize and value the instrumental role our employees play in the inclusion movement, and their vital role in the community.

The **Special Needs Resourcing team** (also referred to as Children's Inclusion Services) is ensuring that they are supporting children's development and inclusive practices in the classrooms. So that all children, regardless of diagnosis or developmental need are fully included in their learning environment, where they have roles and responsibilities and meaningful connections to their peers.

The **Community Participation** team, **Group Living** and **In the Know, and On the Go** teams stand in support of people with lived experience each and every day, helping them to achieve their personal goals, providing outlets for exploration in arts and recreation, building confidence and independence. They make a house a home. Many have been with our agency the longest. They know the people they support inside and out. People supported trust them, they can count on them, and they show-up for them each day.

Parents are an important pillar in our community, they are caretakers, they are advocates, they are leaders, and our **Respite team** gives them the much-needed break they need and deserve. Allowing them to recharge their batteries so they can continue their important place in the community.

Our **Supported Independent Living** team works alongside individuals to continue to foster independence, they help navigate complex social systems and supports, they play an important advocacy role in the community, all to create opportunities for people to live independently in their community.

We all know the important role that employment plays, not just in society, but in our lives. It gives people meaning and purpose. Our **Employment Access** team help people obtain and maintain meaningful employment, they offer skill development, training opportunities and coaching. Advocating for equal opportunity in the work force so that the workforce is a reflection of the community people live in.

That's not all. We run a thrift store called **Drop 'n' Shop** that offers inclusive employment, and for which the proceeds are reinvested in our programs. This year, Drop 'n' Shop received platinum in the Hamilton Spectator Reader's Choice award for favourite thrift store. We have a world-renowned **Drum Corps**. We have special programs like **Dragonfly Summer Adventures** and so much more...

On behalf of Community Living Hamilton we'd like to thank everyone in our community for their continued support and contributions to our movement. Together, we can combine our collective knowledge and experience and build the future we've always dreamed of, where everyone belongs, is valued, and has the freedom to live the life they choose.

Here's to another 70 years of inspiring possibilities for authentic inclusion in Hamilton.



# MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

## MISSION

Dedicated to providing opportunities and support to help people with special needs build great lives.

## VISION

All people with special needs achieve their full potential and are included in our community.

## OUR G-R-E-A-T VALUES



### G - Growth That Exceeds Expectations

1. We value personal growth and support our clients and staff by offering them opportunities to have new experiences and expand their skills. At Community Living Hamilton, we are all life-long learners.
2. We are growing the scope and volume of services we provide. We're doing this by building capacity and pursuing excellence.
3. We are growing the number and range of partnerships we have - partnerships that enable us to do more for the clients we serve. Those partnerships are with government, other agencies, community organizations, funders and advocacy groups.



### R - Respect for All

We have the greatest respect for the people we serve and the people we work with. That means honouring their abilities, qualities and achievements.



### E - Excellence and Safety in Everything We Do

We are committed to the pursuit of excellence in our work and are continually improving the way we serve our clients and their families. We also hold ourselves accountable for maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety in all our practices.



### A - Abilities First

Above all else, we see people first - we see their abilities first. We believe everyone can make unique contributions to our community and we're dedicated to enabling and empowering them to do just that.



### T - Trust and Integrity

We are honoured that our clients and the community trust us, and we are committed to maintaining that trust by demonstrating integrity, transparency and compassion in everything we do.

## THE RIGHT SUPPORTS BUILD RESILIENCE AND INSPIRE POSSIBILITIES

Leah Maharaj's journey with Community Living Hamilton (CLH) is a testament to how the right supports can build resilience and inspire possibilities.

Leah received support from our Supported Independent Living (SIL) program. In mid-2023, she struggled in her living situation and reached out to Lorraine Owen, Direct Support Facilitator with CLH for help. In collaboration with her colleagues in SIL, Lorraine was able to provide a swift move to a new residence. At first, Leah was excited about the move, but loneliness and health setbacks challenged her, she began to sleep day and night, became unsteady on her feet, and experienced constant emotional distress, leading to a 60-day eviction notice.



Lorraine jumped into action, advocating with the lodging home and St. Joseph's Healthcare to ensure Leah received the medical attention she needed. Multiple evaluations revealed that medication interactions were the cause of her distress. Once this issue was properly identified, Leah had a new outlook on life.

But Leah's transformation didn't stop there. Lorraine's contacts in the community generously donated clothing to support Leah in her newly identified goal of sustainable employment. With new confidence, and the support of SIL, Leah signed up for employment support through Community Living Hamilton's Employment Access program.

She enrolled in the Power of Possible workshop, and is now embracing new opportunities with optimism. On the day of her workshop interview, Leah radiated joy and self-assurance, dressed in clothes that made her feel confident.

Leah's transformation continued as she paid forward the kindness she received by donating clothes to other women in need.

Leah's journey signifies the power of community and support services in empowering individuals to thrive. Our work at CLH impacts people in ways we sometimes cannot imagine and it's people like Leah who inspire all of us.

## MAKING IMPORTANT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Shawna is a young woman who lives in a brand new place she calls home in downtown Hamilton. She has been a client in our inclusive living residence since 2017. Shawna is a creative, fun-loving woman with a sarcastic sense of humour. Shawna attends CLH's community participation programming during the day and she's taken part in our evening In the Know/On The Go program, and this summer she attended our Dragonfly Adventures program.

On one particular day of Dragonfly Adventures, we had a visit from Triple C Farms, they brought along many animals including goats, mini ponies and bunnies. Shawna is what we would call an "animal lover" the joy on her face as she cuddles up close to the goats was heartwarming. The staff at Triple C Farms took an instant liking to Shawna as well and after that day of programming Shawna went back home and shared the news of the joyous day with our staff at the residence. Our staff connected with Triple C Farms to explore if there were other opportunities for Shawna at their farm. Indeed, there was! Shawna soon after began volunteering at Triple C Farms. Now she gets to be close to and care for the animals that give her so much joy.

These are the kinds of community connections that are so meaningful for the people we support. They are made possible thanks to the support of so many including United Way Halton & Hamilton, who funds Dragonfly Summer Adventures. And, because our staff, (including students from Canada Summer Jobs) put wonderful programming together that supports community connections, builds partnerships and allows the people we support to **build great lives.**



## MAKING FRIENDSHIPS AT THE COMMUNITY POOL

“Come on everyone, it’s swim time” Norman calls out.

Twelve-thirty is one of the participant’s favourite times of the day at our community participation program at Huntington Park Recreation Centre. Each day 4-7 participants go swimming during the adult swim, independently from Community Living Hamilton staff. When the group first came back to program after Covid, staff supported the group to integrate back into the pool. Gradually staff removed themselves, until the group was doing this activity independently. And that independence has grown into friendships with the lifeguards and community swimmers who attend each day.

Cassie, Norman, and Dave love playing ball in the hot tub with Eva and Jim. Amber does exercise each day with Julie, Mary, and Debbie while Cole floats around on his pool noodle. And all of this under the watchful eye of Sandy, who doesn’t like to swim but enjoys watching her friends in the pool.

These moments of independence are made possible by the support of the City of Hamilton Huntington’s recreation staff and the individuals from the community, who have embraced our group as one of their own.



## EVERY CHILD DESERVES TO EXPERIENCE ACCEPTANCE AND INCLUSION

Facing challenge after challenge and then finally, hope. Annie Beckett shares her struggles and relief in finding childcare for her son Thomas with the support of Community Living Hamilton. Then she became an author, and shared her family's story of love, support and inclusion with the world.

“When deciding to write **Special Adventures With My Little Brother** I was motivated by two things. One, by my then three-year-old son Harrison, as the narrative of this book was inspired by his actual words and interactions with his brother Thomas. His unconditional love for his brother, his effortless inclusion and his wild imagination motivated me to capture our family's set of circumstances through his eyes.

My second motivation was my experience that most daycare programs are not inclusive. The agonizing truth, as I evidently learned quickly, was that Thomas was repeatedly denied access due to his physical and intellectual impairments. Often informed “we don't think he is ready” yet through all the din all I heard was “they were not ready”. I remember clearly the day I received a phone call from Lorraine at the Sir William Osler Y.M.C.A. Child Care Centre informing me that a spot had opened. Emotionally defeated, I explained that my son had both a cognitive and physical disability, was nonverbal, non-mobile (at the time), and required assistance with feeding. I waited to hear the inevitable “sorry, we can't....” but instead I heard “bring him in”! My experience, and more importantly Thomas' experience at the daycare has been nothing short of amazing. My gratitude, respect and appreciation for the staff is immeasurable.

Every child deserves to experience acceptance and inclusion and so I started writing my story. I strongly believe that with understanding comes empathy.”

CLH's Special Needs Resourcing (also referred to as, Children's Inclusion Services) is a highly skilled team that includes Inclusion Facilitators and Resource Consultants who work directly with the childcare center to support the inclusion and belonging of the child in the classroom. It's stories like Thomas' that remind us we are on the right path to creating a sense of belonging. The key is connection and thoughtful planning. Getting to know children and their families (diversity), eliminating barriers (access) and then planning to include them at every opportunity (inclusion) means that we are on the correct path to provide supports to those in need (equity). Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) play a crucial role in this planning. Hats off to all of them!



Special Adventures with my Little Brother are available for sale on Amazon.





## A POEM BY HUNTER COX

Autism is  
unable to speak, or maybe  
speaking too much!  
Hugging everyone, or disliking touch  
Escaping outside,  
or trying to hide  
Excitedly flapping  
Inappropriate clapping  
Autism varies so much!

won't wear a coat, or wear's one all  
year round  
Fussy eater or would eat dirt from  
the ground  
Screaming or humming  
Annoyingly drumming  
Toys in a line  
The same way every time  
Autism varies so much.

Struggling to learn or has  
wonderful gifts  
Obsessions of numbers, or cars,  
film's or lifts  
Spinning around  
Throw's things on the ~~ground~~ ground  
Constantly spitting  
Aggressively hitting  
Autism varies so much!

Alone without friend's or contrails  
every game  
Always look's different, always  
dressed the same  
Swinging on door's  
head banging on floor's  
Creak's at the dryer  
Keep's climbing higher  
~~Keep's~~ Autism varies so much

Can't answer question's won't do  
as they're told  
In their ~~own~~ own world or bossy and  
bold  
over prepared  
Anxious and scared  
A spectrum so wide  
But they all bring us pride  
When Autism touches our lives!

Written by  
Hunter Cox

Hunter Cox is a person supported  
by Community Living Hamilton

## BIG SUMMER ADVENTURES BRING BIG FUN FOR CHILDREN

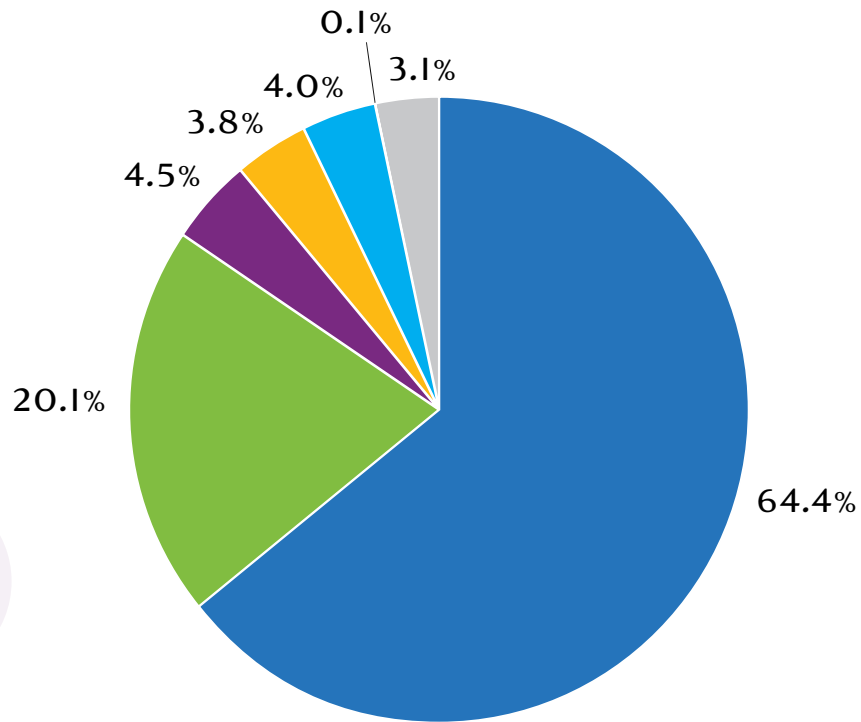


Children in our summer program were delighted to be able to experience some major adventures out in the community. These include big adventure day trips such as Safari Niagara, Ripley's Aquarium, and the Butterfly Museum. For some of the children, this is their very first opportunity to explore these settings as they are often excluded from attending school trips. Often families don't feel they have the supports and resources to take them. This is the best way, alongside their peers, in our very inclusive Children's Respite camp. This experience was all made possible thanks to Children's Miracle Day and our local CIBC.

We're so grateful for opportunities like this that create places for all children to belong.

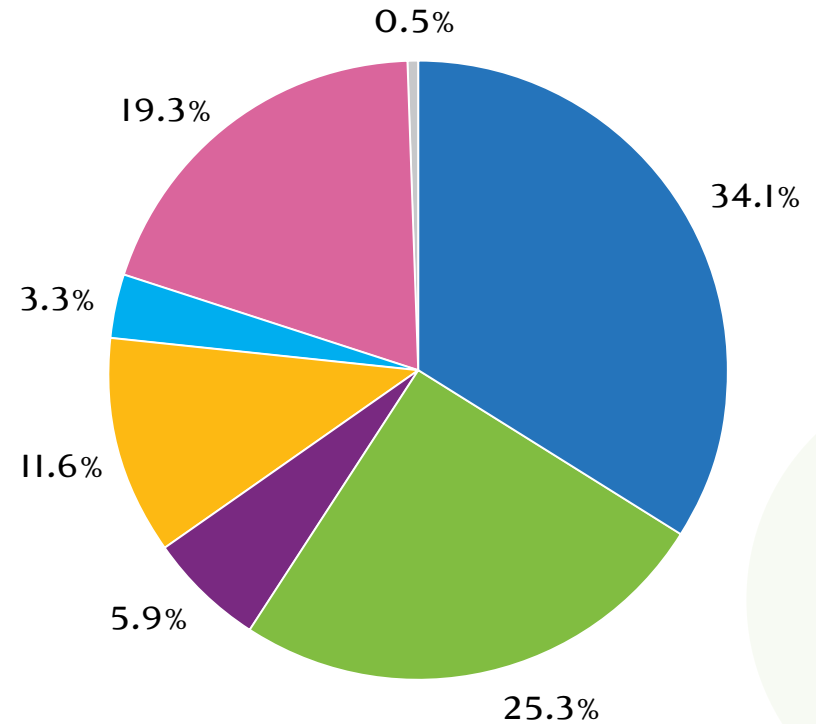


## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM



- 64.4% Provincial Government \$10,415,556
- 20.1% City of Hamilton \$3,252,887
- 4.5% Contract & Retail Sales \$722,087
- 3.8% Lodging Fees \$616,292
- 4.0% Program Fees \$645,653
- 0.1% Government of Canada \$16,003
- 3.1% Other revenues; such as United Way Halton & Hamilton, and donations \$499,664

## WHERE THE MONEY GOES



- 34.1% Adult Accommodation \$5,392,569
- 25.3% Community Participation \$3,997,949
- 5.9% Respite \$941,343
- 11.6% Administrative Services \$1,833,253
- 3.3% Employment Supports \$529,814
- 19.3% Pre-School \$3,053,132
- 0.5% Leisure & Recreation \$78,597

## A YEAR AT A GLANCE

**1181** People Served

**250** Staff Members

**83** Children Supported in Respite & Music Therapy

**552** Children Supported in Inclusion Services

**214** Licenced Childcare Providers

**68** People supported in SIL

**48** Adults Supported in a Group Living Setting in the Community

**19** Adults secured meaningful Employment

**6** Group Homes/Community Living

**279,258** Staffing Hours

# YEARS OF SERVICE AND AWARDS NOMINEES

CONGRATULATIONS TO STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & RETIREES WHO REACHED MILESTONES IN 2023 AND TO THE AWARD NOMINEES!

## EMPLOYEES

### 5 Years

Amanda Gibbons  
Hailey Hiltz  
Marcelle Kyei  
Amanda Lohnes  
Suzana Serravalle  
Alyssa Volpini  
Lesley Walls  
Raghad Yaseen  
Kelly Zerebny

### 10 Years

Christopher Coughler  
Malanie Dani  
Claude Di Fruscia  
Kate Love  
Nancy Santini

### 15 Years

Sandra Harse

### 20 Years

Rita Baldini  
Leah Clarke

Christopher Lambert  
Ria St. Pierre

### 25 Years

Karen Ratcliffe  
Brenda Wilkinson

### 30 Years

Jonathan Costello

### 35 Years

Nikki Coulson  
Christine Gray  
Clare Sandig

### 40 Years

Patti Harvey  
Heather Krick

## RETIREES

Terri Beattie  
Susan Bell  
Yvonne Bernardo  
Carol Myke  
Laurie Richard

## VOLUNTEERS

### 10 Years

Ernie Lipsit

### 15 Years

Joe Obermeyer  
Jake Simpson

### 20 Years

Robyn Garnier  
Doris Lewis  
Barry Randal

## AWARD NOMINEES

### HELPING BUILD

### GREAT LIVES AWARD

### NOMINEES

Ethar Ibrahim  
Denise Kidd  
Pam Longboat  
Sheri Noblett

## PRESIDENT'S AWARD NOMINEES

Gary Consunji  
The Drop 'n' Shop team  
Karen Pavao  
Sarah Pennington  
Suzana Serravalle  
SIL Team  
Rebecca Sinning

## CONGRATULATIONS TO WINNERS:

*Denise Kidd*  
*winner of the Helping Build*  
*Great Lives Award*

*and*

*Suzana Serravalle*  
*winner of the Presidents Award*





Suzana Serravalle (left), winner of the Presidents Award and Denise Kidd (right), winner of the Helping Build Great Lives Award





## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Hamilton is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Today, the City of Hamilton is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America) and we recognize that we must do more to learn about the rich history of this land so that we can better understand our roles as residents, neighbours, partners and caretakers.