



**DOWN
SYNDROME
ASSOCIATION
OF
HAMILTON**

2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT

Message From the Chair



The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is just that little EXTRA.

I am excited to be here and share in our reflection of 2024/25 and look forward to the things ahead for 2025/26. But first!!! I want to highlight the incredible dedication and invaluable time our board members contribute to DSAH and its members. Your unwavering commitment is deeply appreciated and truly makes a difference, and you are all certainly A WHOLE LOT OF EXTRA!!

I am filled with pride and gratitude for all you have accomplished this year and excited for what's to come. I am particularly enthusiastic about the OWLS reading program and ADC – Adult Dinner Club. The members are excited to come to OWLS, focusing on literacy, communication, and social connections with friends. And the Adult Dinner Club is evolving along with its members, now incorporating activity in their monthly meet ups promoting independence, physical activity and social connections with friends.

Listening to our members is at the heart of what we do. We are committed to trying new things and aligning our initiatives with your requests and needs. Your feedback is invaluable, and we strive to create programs and events that truly resonate with our community. Please reach out to any member of the board with your ideas and/or if you want to volunteer, join the board or a committee.

A special thanks goes to our Operations Director Andrea S, whose exceptional efforts have turned our ideas into reality. Your hard work, experience, and vision are the backbone of our success.

I would also like to extend heartfelt recognition to Andrea L and Andrea D for their remarkable contributions and dedication during their time on the board. Your time commitment and hard work have not gone unnoticed, and we are immensely grateful for your service.

Lastly, please join me in welcoming Natalie, who joins us as our new Secretary. Natalie is currently a Year 2 student at McMaster University studying Speech and Language Pathology. She has been volunteering with DSAH in the OWLS program for the last 2 sessions. The VIPs love her! We are excited to have you on board and look forward to the fresh perspectives and energy you will bring.

As we move forward, I am reminded of a quote that perfectly captures the essence of our board members' dedication: "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." Our board members bring their unique talents, passion, and commitment, making our association stronger and the ability to support our members and their families.

Thank you all for your continued support and dedication to our vision and mission.

Heather Gain

Board of Directors

The DSAH Board of Directors are volunteers who are dedicated to provide support in all it's forms and invested in the organization's best interests.



Fred Stremble, Vice Chair



Paul Arnold, Treasurer



Andrea Dalimonte, Secretary



Stefanie Allaire, Programming Director



Laura Stremble, Advocate

Thank you!



David Colantino, Advocate



Veronica Hannon, SEAC HWCD SB



Judy Colantino, SEAC Chair, HWDSB



Andrea Landry, Fundraising



Rebecca Hynes, - Membership Director

Provincial and National Initiatives



The Down Syndrome Association of Ontario (DSAO) is a collection of 21 local associations with representatives making up the DSAO Board of Directors.

2024-25 objectives included the continued investigation into restructuring, a provincial conference and the development of a education resource for Ontario parents.

DSAH has representatives on the Board of Directors and ad hoc committees.



The Canadian Down Syndrome Society has successfully received federal funding for a 3-year project from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to create the first Ds Collaborative in Canada, a groundbreaking initiative designed to drive positive change and impact within the Canadian Down syndrome community.

The Ds Collaborative will be a network of organizations and self-advocates, united by a common goal – to share, support, and impact the lives of those with Down syndrome and their families. Our objectives are to foster collaboration, facilitate resource-sharing, and create a collective voice that will have a greater impact, working together to transform the landscape for individuals with Down syndrome.

Stefanie Allaire represents DSAH on the Ds Collaborative

Strategic Plan

Our Mission

The Association will:

- **Support** people and families impacted by Down syndrome throughout their lives.
- **Assist** our members in accessing information, services, and supports that enhance health, development and education of people with Down syndrome.
- **Advocate** for excellent, coordinated and accessible medical, educational and recreational services and meaningful paid employment for all people with Down syndrome.
- **Create a social support network** for people with Down syndrome and their families.
- **Promote the abilities** of people with Down syndrome in our community.
- **Bring understanding** to the challenges people with Down syndrome may face and how they can be supported to reach their full potential.
- **Support local, provincial and national initiatives** that challenge stereotypes and further the health, well-being, education and economic contribution of people with Down syndrome.



How We Delivered our Mission

- **Funded over \$75K in Financial Assistance** for our members to participate in essential therapies, recreation and skill building opportunities
- Moved operations to an **new accessible location** on the mountain within the Hamilton Italian Centre
- Developed and implemented exclusive **Literacy and Speech program for members (O.W.L.S.)**
- Rebuilt our caregiver support network, offering **Parent Nights Out**
- Established a formal **partnership with McMaster University** to offer a clinical placement for Speech and Language Students
- Supported **Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS)** and joined the **Down Syndrome Collaborative**
- Sponsored the **DSAO 2024 Provincial Conference**
- Continued **Adult Dinner Club, Club GAIN** and developed other social opportunities
- Continued to contract **Operations Director** to carry out objectives

Financial Report

REVENUE

- Donations
- The Walk
- Sponsorships
- GIC Interest

\$187K

EXPENSES

- Office & Administration
- Member Support and Engagement
- Contract Services
- Community Engagement

\$241K

**TOTAL RETAINED
EARNINGS
\$270K**

Year Over Year

- 3% decrease in overall revenue
- 28% increase in expenditures
- 48% increase in Member Engagement expenses
- 58% increase in Financial Assistance to Members (\$75,000+)
- 28% decrease in Community Engagement

Fundraising

2024 Hamilton Walk for Down Syndrome



Our 12th annual event was a success! 43 teams raised over \$130,000! It was our first time hosting the event at TB McQuesten Park.

Thank you to long-time major supporters LiUNA!, Team Enrico and Global Fuels for their generous contributions.



Team ENRICO-LIUNA Lending A Hand



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Other Community Fundraisers

Thank you to **Collins Clothiers - Hamilton** for donating a portion of their **World Down Syndrome Day** sock sales.

Thank You Volunteers

Our sincere thanks to the individuals donating time and skills, making our programs and events possible.

O.W.L.S.

Monica Knott
Natalie May
Melanija Cvejetic
Veronica Hannon
Laura Stremble
Lindsay Scott
Sarah Hannon

Adult Dinner Club

Stefanie Allaire
Teresa Sanges
Laura Stremble

Club GAIN Executive

Barb Accomando
Kim Arnold
Paul Arnold

Special Events

Tracy Beck
Dundas Jr. Civitans
Stefanie Allaire
David van de Pol
Judy Colantino
David Colantino
Monica Fox
Ruby Fox



Community Partnerships

Working Together to Support Our Members

O.W.L.S.



Opportunities with Literacy and Speech



LET'S GET MOVING
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DOWN SYNDROME AGES 10+

Looking for a fun and engaging way to keep your child active this winter? Join **Kid Physio Hamilton's Winter Physical Activity Program** designed by Physiotherapist Fausta, who is passionate about supporting children with Down Syndrome.

Tailored for preteens and teens with Down Syndrome, with a focus on promoting strength, coordination, and overall fitness in an inclusive and upbeat environment. Through games and movement-based activities your child will stay active, build confidence, and have fun alongside peers.

| DATES | TIME |
|----------------------------------|--|
| SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 | 3:30-4:30 P.M. |
| SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 | |
| SATURDAY, MARCH 1 | LOCATION KIDS PHYSIO (ANCASTER) 385 WILSON ST E, UNIT 303 |
| SATURDAY, MARCH 15 | |
| SATURDAY, MARCH 29 | |
| SATURDAY APRIL 12 | |



Fausta Ferzoco
Physiotherapist & Community
Engagement Manager
MScPT, BSc

Membership

80
MEMBER FAMILIES
26 Adults
54 Children/Youth

511
NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBERS

1600+
SOCIAL MEDIA
FOLLOWERS

**UP
FROM
2024**

**+14 Memberships
+9 Newsletter Subscribers**



New Location @ The Hamilton Italian Centre

In February 2025, DSAH signed a two year lease at 420 Crerar Drive - The Hamilton Italian Centre.

In March 2025 DSAH moved operations. The lease includes the exclusive use of Rooms 104 (Program Room) and 106 (Office). We share common areas with other tenants. Rentals of gym and other rooms and fields within the centre are paid by usage at an hourly rate.

Improvements to the building in the next year include the construction of a cafe, event hall and kitchen.

WATCH VIDEO



Programs

These programs play a vital role for individuals with Down syndrome, offering chances for literacy, socialization, physical activity, and other essential skill development.



Adult Dinner Club



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| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| DATES SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 SATURDAY, MARCH 1 SATURDAY, MARCH 15 SATURDAY, MARCH 29 SATURDAY APRIL 12 | TIME 3:30-4:30 P.M. |
| LOCATION KIDS PHYSIO (ANCASTER) 385 WILSON ST E, UNIT 303 | |

Register **NOW**



**Let's Get Moving
with
Hamilton Kids Physio**

10% increase in attendance - Club G.A.I.N.

Club G.A.I.N.

Adult Dinner Club

Celebrating **Friendship, Independence & Inclusion**

Our Adult Dinner Club continues to thrive as a warm and welcoming space for individuals with Down syndrome to connect, share a meal, and build lasting friendships.

Meeting monthly at local restaurants, the club promotes social independence, community engagement, and a sense of belonging.


It's more than dinner — it's about confidence, camaraderie, and creating meaningful memories.

We're proud to support this empowering initiative and look forward to its continued growth.



dsah.ca/events

O.W.L.S.

In Partnership with 

O.W.L.S. (Opportunities with Literacy and Speech) focuses on building literacy and communication skills in a highly supportive environment using a wide variety of tools and resources. Initially, facilitators meet learners where they are at, providing a safe space to learn, as we progress the learners are encouraged to take risks and try new things which often leads to enhanced skills and a further interest in learning.

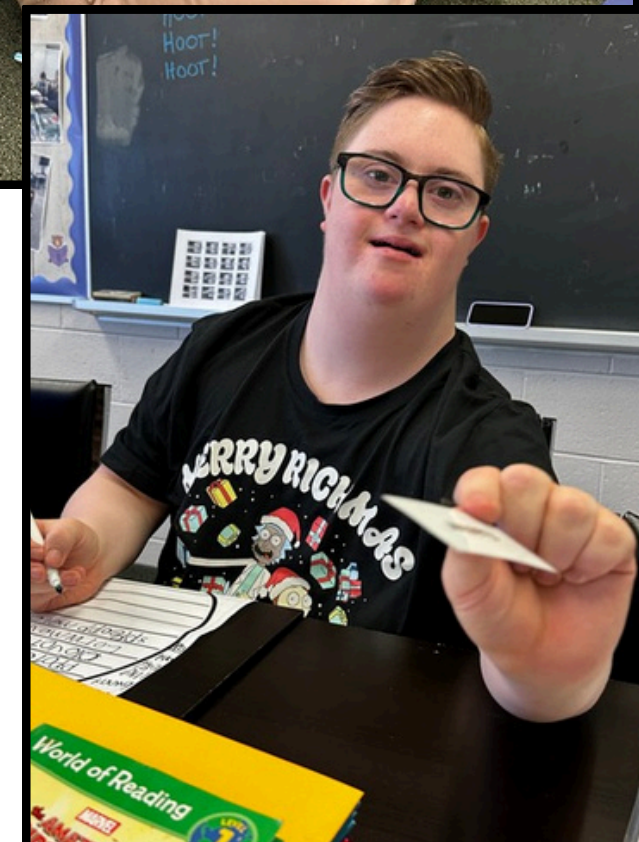
In Fall 2024 we launched and ran a successful pilot at our Dundas Location. We welcomed 23 participants ages 3 to 34.

In Spring 2025 we offered another session for 24 individuals with Down syndrome. This time, we partnered with McMaster University, offering a clinical placement for Speech and Language students. Our student, Natalie May worked above and beyond to engage our Owls, building confidence, social and communications skills.

Monica Knott facilitates and offers her SLP expertise and clinical supervision. She identifies communication barriers and presents parents with hands on strategies. Monica's experience and knowledge of working with clients with Down syndrome sets her apart from other practitioners.



Opportunities with Literacy and Speech



Special Events



Halloween Party 2024

Christmas Party 2024

Grand Opening and World Down Syndrome Day
3.21

Caregiver Nights Out

Because You Deserve It!

We know parenting is a full-time job, so we've created Parents' Night Out — a chance for moms and dads to unwind, connect, and have some well-earned fun. Learn more: dsah.ca/moms or dsah.ca/dads.

Moms



Moms' Night Out is growing , with 25 moms on our mailing list and two great events so far:

🎨 "Play with Clay" painting night — Feb 3 (12 moms)

🔑 Escape Room at The Manor in Hamilton — May 20 (6 moms)

More events are on the way — and your ideas are always welcome! Whether it's axe throwing, spa nights, patio hangouts, or something totally new, your input helps shape what's next.

Dads



Dads' Night Out has been going strong with a mailing list of 29 awesome dads and a solid lineup of events so far:

- 🍹 Drinks & Appetizers at Jack Astor's — Oct 9 (9+ dads)
- 🎯 Shooting Range — Nov 28 (8 dads)
- 🏌️ Virtual Golf — Jan 29 (8 dads)
- 🎳 Bowling Night — May 14 (8 dads)

Get Involved

Board of Directors Vacancy - Director of Fundraising

Term: 1 year until June 2026 Elections

Contact: chair@dsah.ca

Summer Drop In Volunteers

Students Welcome!

Tuesday Mornings July 8 to Aug 26 (except Aug 5)

Application: www.dsah.ca/volunteer

Walk Volunteers - One day only!

Sunday September 21st

TB McQuesten Park

Application: www.dsah.ca/volunteer

Adult Dinner Club Volunteers

19+

Monthly dinners in the community, various dates

Contact: stefanie_allaire@hotmail.com

Become a Partner

Local Businesses and Organizations that share our mission are encouraged to sign up for our Community Membership. Keep up with what's happening in our organization and advertise your programs and services to our membership and at our events.

Sponsor Us

Businesses and Corporations can sponsor our event for as low as \$250. DSAHA is a registered Canadian Charity.

Looking Ahead to 2025-2026



O.W.L.S.

Caregiver Support

Community Building

Board of Director Elections - May/June 2026

Continue to support and advocate for individuals with Down syndrome

Questions & Comments?



Thank you!