

# 2023

# ANNUAL REPORT





# 2023 IN REVIEW

The Astley Family Foundation (the Foundation) supports projects and programs which encourage the personal development of vulnerable youth in Waterloo Region to help them realize their full potential. This report highlights the Foundation's activities supporting youth. The Foundation includes a donor-advised fund which is not covered here.

The Foundation supported 17 organizations, the largest number ever, with grants totalling \$696,500. These grants aligned with our mission by promoting youth engagement and belonging as well as emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of our community's youth.

The pandemic highlighted the extent of support needed for youth in the Waterloo Region. In response, over the last three years, the Foundation has granted more than \$2,000,000 to support youth. For the third consecutive year, our grants for youth programs have exceeded 6% of the Foundation assets. For a summary of grants and assets over the last five years, see page 11.

Giving youth a voice within the community that is heard and meaningfully acted upon is key to our mission. Grantee organizations have been engaging youth through gathering feedback/thoughts on programming, youth councils and teen programs run by teens. Often, much of that meaningful feedback from youth drove changes and enhancements to youth programs.

Working directly with youth to strengthen their mental health and coping strategies is another key to our mission. Grants in this area allowed youth to have transformational experiences like living and experiencing life on a university campus while engaging in STEAM programs and building a life-long network. Other youth programs saw previous youth program participants act as leaders and mentors in both volunteer and paid positions at community centres in Kitchener.

All of these programs promoted a sense of belonging and the building of community for youth of Waterloo Region.

We've learned, alongside our grantees, that it can be hard to find ways to encourage youth to come forward with their opinions, thoughts and feelings. Some of the programs we support intentionally start with recreation programs as a way to encourage youth to participate and build trusting relationships with organization staff. This often leads to drawing youth into other programming to support not only their physical health but mental health and wellness. We expect to learn more about engaging youth as organizations continue to expand their work in the area of youth engagement.



Youth say a major gap in programming is at transition times, especially as they « age out » of youth programming or come to the end of a time-defined program. The stress of « what now? » and seeing trusting relationships come to an end can be overwhelming. On pages 7-8, you will read about one organization that created a youth transition support program to respond to that gap.

On a different side of our work, we were instrumental in the creation and development of the innovative website Waterloo Region Apply ([wrapply.ca](http://wrapply.ca)) with four other funders, the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, Social Venture Partners WR, the Waterloo Region Community Foundation and the United Way Waterloo Region, that launched early 2024.

The goal of this site is to provide a centralized location for not-for-profit organizations to search for available grants from the five funders while providing links to individual funders' sites for more information, specific criteria and assistance. This website has been a resounding success with positive feedback and other local funders requesting that their grant opportunities be added to the site.

We continue to address needs locally so we can be a part of creating an inclusive and equitable community for youth here in Waterloo Region. These programs and organizations still need more support to ensure all youth feel they belong and are valuable members of our community. We invite you to join us in elevating the youth in our Region.



Jennifer Astley-Kinsey, Executive Director

Robert Astley, Director

Judith Astley, Director

Derek Astley, Director



## **SUPPORTING VULNERABLE YOUTH**

The Foundation granted \$696,500 to support vulnerable youth in 2023 to the following organizations.

### **Adventure4Change**

Adventure4Change's model involves: creating experiences and opportunities, fostering peer culture, creating safe spaces, facilitating mentorship, and enabling contribution. With that goal in mind, the Foundation supported two programs:

- Waterloo Youth Initiatives, which includes a number of youth programs, seeks to instill in young people positive self-esteem, an understanding of the value of their own lives and the lives of others, leadership skills and a capacity to make change in their own world.
- A basketball program in partnership with a former KW Titans player and coach. This pilot project was created to help teen boys learn skills in team building, communication, and conflict resolution. It is known that sports, like basketball, are universal languages, opening doors to interactions and relationships with others who have different ways of thinking and approaching life. This project has provided a less traditional form of counselling and mentorship for community youth in a safe and collaborative environment.

### **Capacity Canada**

- This project trains and matches youth with Boards aligned with their interests and directly serve the community. By becoming involved in Boards, youth offer their perspectives to directly solve the issues that most concern them.

### **Child Witness Centre**

- With funding from the Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) and the Astley Family Foundation, a new full-time Intake Worker was added to the staff. The Intake Worker provides one-on-one sessions tailored to each client's needs. This connection with the Intake Worker begins the building of relationship early, quickly becoming a trusted ally who is neutral and willing to listen and advocate for youth needs.

### **Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington (CMHA WW)**

- This grant improved the eating disorder intake process for youth by adding a designated Intake Coordinator so that youth are triaged and provided treatment faster based on priority, need, and risk. The dedicated Intake Coordinator allowed mental health clinicians to focus on providing treatment rather than intake, enabling youth to move from the waitlist and into treatment faster.

### **Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) and Muslim Social Services (MSS) Partnership**

- Through this funding, CJI and MSS, worked alongside teens and caregivers to implement a menu of opportunities to build teens capacity to better manage conflict and ultimately assist the teens to form positive connections with caregivers and peers, increase their life skills, feel empowered to have a meaningful voice in decision-making and thrive through stressful situations.



## **House of Friendship**

- This grant supports the House of Friendship Neighbourhood work that focuses on providing programs for vulnerable youth in five priority communities in the Kitchener-Waterloo area - Sunnydale, Chandler Mowat, Courtland-Shelley, Kingsdale and Victoria Hills. These free programs are designed to support educational development, such as Reading Buddies and After-School Tutoring, build leadership skills and capacity, such as Girls+ and Boys In Leadership and build meaningful connections and relationship, through programs such as sports drop-in, art and gardening programs.

## **Keep Your Head Up (KYHU)**

- Keep Your Head Up is a new organization providing community-based education and support for individuals impacted by traumatic brain injury, including concussion. This was the Astley Family Foundation's first general operating grant. The grant is helping the organization grow its capacity and programming with the addition of a paid Executive Director. Read more about this organization on pages 9 and 10.

## **KidsAbility**

- This grant allowed for the creation of a permanent Youth Engagement Lead role. The Youth Engagement Lead makes strong connections with the youth they work with as well as supporting them through their transition from KidsAbility to adulthood. Read more about the Youth Engagement Lead on pages 7 and 8.

## **Kitchener Public Library**

- The Mel Brown Festival and Symposium, now called Grand River Black Music Festival and Conference, responds to the systemic issues of under-representation of Black artists and musicians in the Region via an intentional celebration of Black excellence in the arts.

## **Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG)**

- The KWAG Youth Council incorporates youth voice by empowering participants to guide the programming. Key choices, in terms of Youth Council projects, are made by the youth themselves. One key goal of these Youth Council projects, is to assist participants in building valuable leadership skills, through collaboration with youth groups facilitated by other organizations.

## **Lutherwood**

- The Emergency Department and Diversion Team (EDDT) makes connections to appropriate brief and intensive community services for youth who seek support from local emergency departments and the regional Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatry unit to free up valuable hospital beds and resources for youth and families in acute crisis who are most in need of hospital-level care.

## **Muslim Social Services**

- The Hear Me Out program consists of educational workshops to support and promote youth resiliency, community engagement and positive mental health including establishing community capacity, managing change, and positive psychology.



Program facilitators along with youth formed a youth-centered community engagement committee to apply concepts from the workshops within interactive in-person events. All members in the program sessions proactively cultivate a shared sense of belonging which is seen through regular attendance, openly sharing reflections, full participation in discussion questions and actively celebrating the successes and growth of members.

### **Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services**

- This grant is for peer-to-peer support groups with a specific focus on creating community spaces for marginalized youth in Cambridge. It is peer-driven and the therapy team ensures program curriculum is flexible and directly responds to the wants and needs of individuals. Therapeutic tools can address many of the concerns youth identified such as: stressful relationships with parents, friends, or romantic partners and high expectations related to school, work, and other responsibilities.

### **Shad**

- Shad is a Canada-wide experiential STEAM and entrepreneurship summer program for youth in grades 10 and 11, offered at universities across the country. Youth spend one month at a university campus that is typically not in their hometown so it's a fully immersive experience. This grant provides bursaries to some Waterloo Region youth, in partnership with Adventure4Change and Pathways to Education Kitchener, to attend the in-person program, thus increasing access to the SHAD program.

### **Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region (SVP WR) - SVP Teens**

- SVP Teens is a leadership and community-development program for youth ages 13-19. It is a program to engage youth in philanthropy, giving them a formal opportunity to learn about the Waterloo Region community and its needs. It allows the youth to turn their ideas and ambitions into tangible action, through fundraising, events and a yearly grant to a local organization.

### **Woolwich Counselling Centre**

- Pre-COVID this grant was to provide some hours of one-on-one counselling at the Elmira District Secondary School. During COVID the services shifted to all virtual. Since COVID restrictions have been lifted, there have been changes in the school board policies that have impacted the ability to offering individual counselling in the school. Instead, they have been offering classroom-wide workshops and strategies.

### **YMCA Three Rivers**

- This grant supports youth Drop-in Basketball program at all three YMCAs in the Region facilitated by Youth Workers. The Youth Workers develop relationships with the youth and help the youth connect with other opportunities and programs at the YMCA in addition to referring youth to mental health and wellness resources in the broader community.



## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



### Youth Engagement Lead Role

The Youth Engagement Lead (YEL) has been integrated as a valuable member of the KidsAbility Community Based Rehabilitation Services Team. There are many positive impacts of this integration including education for therapists around what supports and programs the YEL can provide for youth, informing the Services Team of lessons learned through engagement of youth and advocating for youth to ensure a well-rounded positive experience for youth in all aspects of their healthcare, social lives and community participation.

The YEL has successfully implemented support at various transition times through the creation of Youth Transitions Support consultations to guide youth to have a well-planned and person-centred transitions to adulthood. Their approach involves actively engaging with youth to identify their unique goals and aspirations. The team provides opportunities to learn and engage while empowering young individuals to become strong advocates for themselves. The youth are equipped with tools and knowledge needed to navigate their journey independently, enabling them to fully participate in community. Learn more about this program at [Youth Transition Support program](#)



Past KidsAbility client, Sarah (centre) with Youth Services staff and Youth Engagement Lead at National Accessibility Week. Sarah was one of the speakers at the event.

## Volunteering

To help youth meet their high school volunteer requirements the YEL has developed a four-session Volunteer Navigation Course. This course teaches youth about volunteering and prepares them to apply for volunteer positions within the community.



# Making Connections

Series in partnership with the City of Kitchener and Guelph in which youth clients share their lived experience through public speaking. Youth also participated in the Youth Impact Project, a joint initiative between Smart Waterloo Region Innovation Lab, Children and Youth Planning Table with support from United Way. This initiative saw several youth teams from organizations across the Region inspired to innovate, create solutions around social challenges and present these ideas at a Pitch Party for the opportunity to receive funding to implement these ideas.

KidsAbility has seen the importance of youth engagement work and they continue to innovate and grow this role while helping youth reach their potential.

The YEL has facilitated connections with the community through a number of initiatives such as the Speak Up



Co-facilitated event between the City of Kitchener Youth Council and KidsAbility Youth, including the Youth Engagement Lead Lindsie Driver (second from right).



Over the last year that we've provided general operating funds, Keep Your Head Up (KYHU) has lived their mission of supporting traumatic brain injury recovery, through education, empowerment and social connection. The general operating funds were used to hire one of the co-founders as the Executive Director. As a result of having paid staff, the organization has the ability to increase their presence, outreach and reputation in the community. This has led to an increased demand for their programming and expertise.



Their

upstream

youth education program reached over 1,300 youth in the 2023/2024 school year and there continues to be high demand for the program as well as extremely positive feedback from teachers and students. The Youth Mindful Moments program, has grown from five participants to 20 participants attending consistently.

They've successfully developed several partnerships to address the numerous challenges faced by individuals recovering from concussions, emphasizing why community support is essential while navigating recovery.

### Partnership Development

#### Centre for Family Medicine Family Health Team

They led a Lunch & Learn for 15 family physicians to educate them about the support KYHU can offer their patients and the new guidelines for concussion management.

#### Depth Training and Physiotherapy

They established a partnership with this local rehabilitation and sports training centre. Their rehab team is actively referring youth clients to KYHU programs.



## **Brain Injury Association of Waterloo-Wellington**

They actively collaborate at community events and cross-refer between the organizations to ensure clients are connected to the most appropriate local resources.

## **Conestoga College**

They hired an eight-month placement student from the Social Service Worker program and will continue to mentor placement students moving forward.

## **SHIFT Concussion Management**

They've established an ongoing referral pathway and have worked in collaboration at in-person events to increase awareness.

## **Explore Waterloo Region**

They established a partnership with the Sport Hosting Office. This team connects KYHU with opportunities to do outreach at sporting events hosted by the Region.



Co-founders Felicia and Allie at a community event.

## **KinBridge Community Association**

They were invited to manage a booth at the Newcomer Fall Fair to share resources.

## **Living Guidelines for Pediatric Concussion Care**

KYHU was asked by University Hospital Network and Children's Hospital Eastern Ontario to get involved in the development of their family-facing version of the concussion management guidelines. Co-founders, Allie and Felicia are now members of their Transcendent Concussion Community Advisory Committee.

Their focus going forward is to expand their education and outreach programs, develop and launch a youth ambassador program as well as engage with local high school leadership classes.

Learn more about Keep Your Head Up [here](#).



## A LOOK AT THE PAST FIVE YEARS - KEY METRICS

Year	Total Assets (year end)*	Total Mission-related Grants	Percentage Disbursed for Mission-related Grants
2019	\$10,842,028	\$388,658	3.58%
2020	\$11,109,811	\$436,650	3.93%
2021	\$11,590,055	\$710,000	6.13%
2022	\$9,343,028	\$633,000	6.78%
2023	\$9,778,780	\$696,500	7.12%

\*excluding assets for donor-advised granting