

West Toronto

**KEYS**

to INclusion

**IMPACT**

**Making a BIG Difference**



**2022/2023**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

## VISION

Full active participation in our community for our adult family members and friends with intellectual disabilities.

## MISSION

KEYS mission is to facilitate learning, social, fitness, volunteer and work opportunities for people with an intellectual disability, to maximize their potential through inclusion in our community.

## VALUES

**S**afety, **I**Nclusion, **R**espect & **R**esilience (SIRR)



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# VOLUNTEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President** - Hélène Pauly Murray

**Vice President** - Carol Layton

**Secretary** - Patricia Patterson

**Treasurer** - Patricia Curmi

**Directors:**

Maryanne Bruni, Greg Chellew,

Colleen Nunnaro,

Gail Pennington, Sanja Sekaric



## Message From the Board

**We may be a small organization, but we make a BIG difference in the lives of many. This past year, KEYS has had a tremendous IMPACT on our participants, their families, our staff and our neighbourhood. In what way you ask?**

**PARTICIPANTS:** A very positive effect on our participants was created by our three talented Program Coordinators – Anne McCallum, Julia Scaringi and Laura Danowski. Their presence taught resilience and their unique skills brought a great variety of activities in each of KEYS three pillars: learning and the arts; social, fitness and recreation; and a return to community work.

**FAMILIES:** As KEYS adults learned how to manage Covid safety rules and resumed full-time, in-person programs, families were comforted knowing that their adults were in a safe and healthy environment. Covid did not disappear entirely, but our diligent attention to safety for all meant there was minimal disruption to adults, staff and volunteers. Families told us they trusted KEYS to prioritize safety.

**STAFF:** The dedication of our staff directly impacts the quality and appeal of KEYS programs. Terrific teamwork with participants, volunteers and experts ensures that KEYS values of Safety / INclusion / Respect / Resilience are front and centre of all that we do. We are very proud to pay our staff above the Toronto living wage, as we truly appreciate their contributions. “It makes me happy to know the impact the staff and participants have on each other and we’re always learning and growing together.” *Tonya Westwood, KEYS Staff*

**NEIGHBOURHOOD:** With new community partnerships developed by Kate Manson, Program Administrator, KEYS was visible in the neighbourhood, making an impact at local food banks. We delivered donations to The Sharing Place and put in weekly shifts to help sort food at the St. Pius Food bank, proving again how capable and responsible KEYS adults are with their community work.

The Board of Directors continue to focus on KEYS top three strategies: Program Optimization, Financial Stability and the Search for a Home of our own, a place to rent where KEYS can settle in to firmly establish its roots.

We look ahead to a year full of promise and new advances based on the solid foundation KEYS has built. On behalf of the Board, I am proud to say that we are making a BIG difference in the lives of many. Thank you for your loyal support and belief in our abilities.

Respectfully submitted by *Hélène Pauly Murray Volunteer Board President*



# 2022/2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## Relationships

KEYS success continues to build because of the many strong and diverse relationships we create among our participants, staff, volunteers, experts and community friends.

The High Park Nature Centre offered KEYS its 10 week Rangers program to learn about park stewardship and how to appreciate nature. Vets from the Dundas West Animal Hospital regularly come to teach us about pets and how to care for them. Our friends from the Horticultural Societies of Parkdale and Toronto partner with us for seasonal plantings. And so many wonderful Celebrity Chefs share their joy of cooking together with KEYS...we are so fortunate for these friendships!



## Resilience

Changes are not easy at the best of times, but KEYS participants showed how strong and resilient they are in a number of significant ways this year. So much fun was had learning new approaches and meeting many new experts who came to share their talents.

"Meals have had to shift but in the last few months we have found that with a little hard work and a thirst for learning we can do anything. I have overheard multiple people say that we have been eating 'very gourmet lately'. This is a true testament to how adaptable and skilled the KEYS adults are in the kitchen" Anne McCallum, Program Coordinator

KEYS welcomed new participants and ensured they quickly felt part of the group. Of course keeping some traditional and cherished events like birthday celebrations always helped remind everyone that KEYS knows how to party and have a good time together.





# 2022/2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## Return to Community Work

With Covid still present this past year, it's been a challenge for KEYS to resume meaningful community engagement; however, Kate Manson expertly facilitated wonderful new opportunities for KEYS to emerge and demonstrate their many abilities in our neighbourhood!

In November 2022, KEYS joined Humbercrest United Church's winter food drive and donated non-perishable goods as well as over 100 pairs of socks and mittens to The Sharing Place, a local community hub that supports those in need.

In total, KEYS carried over more than 1000 lbs of food. Our participants loaded wagons and braved the icy streets to make weekly deposits to The Sharing Place. What an incredible impact our participants made helping local families.



With this partnership, a relationship blossomed with the Sharing Place. This winter, 2 KEYS adults with KEYS coach Kevin, spent Tuesday mornings there sorting clothing and personal hygiene items. A favourite job was the “organizing part” at The Sharing Place. Another great example of KEYS making a difference, developing strong local relationships and being visible and valued in our community.

KEYS has also been a tremendous help at the Bloor West Food Bank, located in the St. Pius Church on Bloor Street. Each Thursday, KEYS participants take transit with Coach Kevin to do important work. Maggie, an organizer at the Food Bank said in their newsletter below:

### Community Partners

We are delighted to be partnered with West Toronto KEYS to Inclusion. Every week this trio of volunteers (Alex and Tiera, with their helper Kevin) help us get prepared for the food bank.

Newsletter  
**BLOOR WEST FOOD BANK**  
April 2023



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## COOKING

KEYS "bread & butter" has always been cooking so how wonderful to be back chopping, slicing and dicing almost daily with our friends making nutritious lunches...over 3,000 lunches prepared by KEYS and enjoyed by many this past year!



## HIGH PARK RANGERS

Two groups from KEYS completed the High Park Nature Centre Rangers course..one in the Fall and one this spring 2023 spending over 80 hours outdoors. So many things we learned about nature and how to take care of our parks by planting native flowers...and even learning how to take of ourselves..by chopping wood, making a fire and cooking our own hot dogs!!



## PHOTOGRAPHY

KEYS was able to experience being both in front of the camera and behind it this year. Scott Ramsay, Photographer came with his professional equipment to shoot KEYS participants as superheroes and again at Halloween when we were all decked out! Then KEYS was asked to submit photos of Bubbles for the ["Thousand Words Photography Project: PLAY from Connectability in Georgia USA"](#). How exciting to see our photos published and the book for sale on Amazon!





# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

KEYS is extremely grateful to the many families, friends and foundations that generously contribute to financially support the costs of our programs, as we receive no government funding.

## Total Revenue

**\$235,644**

**Fees  
45%**

**Other  
6%**

**Donations  
49%**

## Total Expenditure:

**\$159,040**

**Program  
69%**

**Admin  
12%**

**Rent  
19%**

## Our DONORS

**Foundations/  
Trusts  
75%**

**Individuals  
23%**

**Yard  
Sale  
2%**

**Net Assets, beginning of year:  
\$331,460**

**Net Assets, end of year:  
\$408,064**

## YARD SALE

This past fall KEYS learned there is truth in the cliché: One person's trash is another one's treasure.



We put on our first yard sale: filled with trash, treasure, success and surprises. The idea was conceived when I realized I was reluctant to see our growing mound of abandoned and unloved stuff go to the dump. I hoped there were others like me in the KEYS community.



We had great joy (and a good deal of effort) wading through and sorting a myriad of donated items, some old, some brand new. Special thanks to all the participants and parents who helped to create order from the chaos. In addition, key chains designed by participants, Carol Layton's beautiful jewellery and suncatchers, Gail Burgin's charming "Rescued bears" and yummy treats from Mama Sue were donated.

The day of the yard sale was sunny and perfect. KEYS Adults provided lots of energy and enthusiasm (no surprise there). They answered questions, directed people traffic and helped with sales. We met so many people! They got bargains and we got to introduce our wonderful program and participants to the local community.

Of course awareness was not all we raised as through the hard work and generous donations of all, KEYS made \$2,000. We were all very happily amazed! This money went back into the program to enrich everyone's experiences.

*Kathryn Farbridge (KEYS Volunteer)*





# SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

KEYS is so lucky to be given the time and the talent of many wonderful community Volunteers. Our regular weekly volunteers enrich our daily program with their assistance in the kitchen, during outings and with personal development of life skills.

Board Directors are all volunteers as are many friends from businesses and services who come to KEYS to share their gifts. Here are just a few of our newer friends.



Rachel Amann - Mondays

"Coming to KEYS has been the most joyful experience. I get to spend time with such a fun and warm group of people whose focus is making each other's lives better. I only come to volunteer one day a week, so as I get to meet other staff, participants, family members and friends I really get a sense of the connected web of support that is KEYS! "



Melissa Lobo - Mondays

"You know that scene in the movie Wizard of Oz where Dorothy first walks into Oz, the movie changes from black and white to colour and she is amazed at everything around her?

That's what coming to KEYS feels like to me. I'm greeted warmly, the group always has so much energy and connectedness between members. I never know quite how my Monday KEYS time will unfold, but I know it will always be exactly what I need. I do feel privileged to learn from the many ways that KEYS members support and encourage each other. "



Maja Nordine - Fridays

"I feel a part of a community when I come to KEYS and that my skills and talents are appreciated and celebrated. The connections I make with participants, PSWs, and program coordinators enrich my life and make me overall more hopeful for the future of disability education and programming.

I'm always finding new ways of doing things that helps my personal and intellectual growth in a big way. I'm so grateful to be a part of KEYS community .

One of my favourite moments at KEYS is when I connected with one of the participants over our shared interest in music. They brought one of their favorite CDs to KEYS and we bonded over our love of the artist and their music."

# SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS



Rhys & Alison

We are thrilled to highlight our Art Therapists from the Toronto Art Therapy Institute doing their practicum hours with KEYS.



"Every session created such warmth as we created our puppets together and shared our stories. It has truly been a fulfilling and eye-opening experience to complete a student placement with KEYS."

"Having a sense of welcome is so important to me, especially as a BIPOC woman. My first Friday was so incredibly warm. Each participant shared what they love about art making and what they love to do. That was a great way to get to know them and what they enjoy. I was invited straight away to sit with them.

We have always been invited in with excitement, offered lunch and conversation before we got started. We enjoyed getting to know them and their preferences, some working with paint, crayons, some really get a lot out of the interactions. There is always a fun and upbeat atmosphere, we play music and celebrate their growth. We meet them where they are and we love that there is a positive engagement."



Celeste & Monica



"Seeing the pride in participants after the work was completed was a beautiful surprise. They all love to pose for pictures after the work is completed; seeing them so proud of their portraits was a really fulfilling thing to see.

The staff is wonderful. They all can take on different roles in a session. If one is drawing and art-making I noticed another is available to help manage materials or to support the participants. I didn't realize the affinity we would all have for each other. Art therapy is not task oriented, so I wondered how it would continue in our absence. Sounds like the projects are completed and displayed with pride! So, in my mind, after we are gone, it sounds like the messages can continue which is the sign of a great working relationship."



# KEYS TEAM

## Program Coordinators

How fortunate was KEYS to have 3 amazing Program Coordinators this past year, each of whom brought their unique skills and kindness to make every day at KEYS a positive SIRR experience for all.

**Anne McCallum's** return from Maternity leave was warmly welcomed by all. Her terrific staff team models Anne's caring leadership which set us up for a spring term full of new discoveries and learning opportunities. And of course cooking and hanging out with Anne is always magical !



**Julia Scaringi** started in September with a spectacular fall and winter that brought many theatrical moment to KEYS: masks with Teo and clowning with Leo were huge hits only to be equalled by the fantastic Scaringi family visits creating Italian feasts and hockey games for all, as well as an employment workshop to help build KEYS interviewing skills - mille grazie!



**Laura Danowski** led KEYS in April 2022 and through the summer with many a fun city excursion and a farewell boat cruise. Laura's love of fishing and fun science experiments taught KEYS a lot, including how to make ice cream - yummy!





# KEYS TEAM

## Assistant Coordinators



**Ryan Dignard**, dearly known as Rockin Ryan who makes marvellous Mondays and Wednesdays with his Celebrity Chef cooking and fun games.



**Kevin McCambridge** turns Tuesdays and Thursdays into terrific times for all, both at KEYS and when he coaches our participants at their neighbourhood jobs.



**Tonya Westwood** transforms Fridays into fantastic as she leads awesome financial and literacy games both at KEYS and when she takes a group grocery shopping for healthy recipes.



## Program Administrator

**Kate Manson** was both behind the scenes and in front as she managed office administration while building awareness of KEYS at School fairs and locally for important community work opportunities. Kate's party planning successes were a big hit with the festive Holiday party (including a surprise visitor – (ho ho ho!) and the "Together we Bloom" Volunteer Appreciation lunch.



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION



## Recreation & Fitness

### Movement

- Movement with Morgan
- Zumba with Hailey

### Yoga

- Yoga with Allie
- Yoga with Susan

### Recreation

- Community Outings
- High Park Nature Centre Rangers

### Theatre Arts

- Mask Theatre with Téo
- Clowning & Performance Arts with Léo

## Learning & The Arts

### Cooking

- Healthy meal planning
- Grocery shopping
- New Recipes
- Celebrity Chefs

### Creative Arts

- Art with Heather
- Craft Wrx with Laura
- Photography with Diana & Scott

### Music

- Andre's Music Jam
- Caitlin's Music Mania
- Drumming with Sam

### Technology

- iPad learning

### Literacy & Finances

- Banking
- Creative Writing with Laura

## Volunteer/Work Opportunities & Partners

### Community Partners

- Dundas West Animal Hospital
- EarlyON Child & Family Centre
- High Park Nature Centre
- Humbercrest United Church
- Long and McQuade
- Oxford College Dental Hygienists
- St. Pius Church Food Bank
- The Art Therapy Institute
- The Sharing Place
- Toronto & Parkdale Horticultural Society
- U of T Medical Students



# KEYS QUOTES

"It's fun being with everyone. I love the arts and the cooking, everything is great"  
-Participant



## Author Chris Higgins

(Riverstoryz: Conversations on the Humber)

"As KEYS stood on the river bank, I watched them with delight, as the river worked its magic on them."



## Staff Julia Scaringi

"The community at KEYS is proof that a supportive and inclusive environment helps all of us reach our goals. KEYS is a place of acceptance, understanding and being your best."



## Staff Laura Danowski

"Seeing their smiles and joy everyday made working at KEYS the greatest reward I've experienced in my career. "



## Musician André Tellier

"KEYS expressing themselves and gaining confidence by singing, dancing and joining in rhythmically with tambourines and percussion bring people together through the healing power of music."



## Yoga Instructor Allie

"My sessions at KEYS are the most meaningful hours of my working life. I love moving and breathing and connecting with everyone in such a warm and authentic environment. All of the facilitators are amazing and I love working with everyone!!!"







# GET INVOLVED!

There are many ways to get involved either personally or with a financial donation as our fees do not cover all of our expenses: e.g. groceries and community outings. Our fees are kept reasonable and KEYS receives no government funding.

Your commitment and support helps individuals live a meaningful, INclusive life with purpose in their community, while giving their families comfort !

## Donate

**Donations can be made easily with tax receipts issued:**

1. E-Transfer to: [payments.keystoinclusion@gmail.com](mailto:payments.keystoinclusion@gmail.com)
2. Cheque to: West Toronto KEYS to INclusion  
c/o Kate Manson - Program Administrator  
4 Olympus Ave, Toronto, ON M6S 1K9
3. Canada Helps: <https://westtorontokeys.com/donate/>

## Share Your Time / Your Talents

At KEYS we count on our volunteers to provide highly valued support to participants and staff. We so appreciate the technical expertise volunteered by Jen and Jeff Zakrzewski and Seth Barrett to manage our website; and Michaela Ferraro to design this Annual Report. If you are interested in bringing your skill, passion or talent to KEYS, please contact Kate Manson, Program Administrator at [kate.keystoinclusion@gmail.com](mailto:kate.keystoinclusion@gmail.com)

## Become a Community Partner

At KEYS we are committed to contributing to local businesses and the community! We welcome all opportunities for our participants, as individuals or as a group, to be of service in the local community.

## Help us Find a New Home

We are looking for our own dedicated space to rent in the Junction/Bloor West and/or Roncesvalles area. Kitchen facilities are desired. Please contact Hélène Paulyn Murray with any leads: [keystoinclusion@gmail.com](mailto:keystoinclusion@gmail.com)

## CONTACT

<https://westtorontokeys.com/>

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**West Toronto KEYS**



# GOOD TIMES





# OUR HEARTFELT THANKS!

