



FALL NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025

A note from our Executive Director...

Happy Fall!

As you read this, I am already on maternity leave for the next year. I'm happy to be able to leave CLSMA in the very capable hands of Co-Executive Directors Kim Monden and Jayden Nancekivell. Kim brings a deep connection to our roots and values, and Jayden offers strong sector-wide leadership experience. Together, they will guide CLSMA in a way that will keep us moving forward while staying true to who we are.

This spring and summer were full of highlights—our successful Create-a-Smile Walk, a fantastic season of summer youth supports, and staff attending the Community Living Ontario Conference to learn and connect with others in the sector.

I'm excited to see all that will be accomplished while I'm away and wish you a wonderful fall season!



Becky Huffman
Executive Director

Welcome Kim and Jayden!



Events

DIW Potluck

"Food From Your Story"
Oct 8 – 4:30pm at the JPC

Tech Training

"Google Doc Talk"
Oct 8 – 6pm at the JPC

Community Dinner

Dec 1 – 5pm at St. Marys United
Church

CLSMA Holiday Party

Dec 4 – 5pm at the St Marys Golf &
Country Club

Create-A-Smile

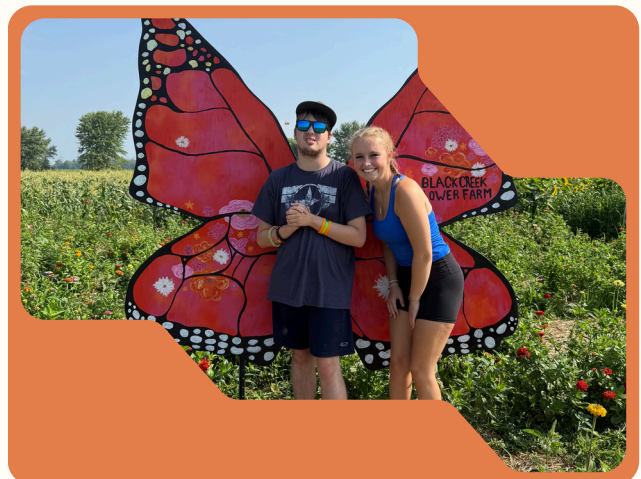


Through the generous support of our community, volunteers and participants, this year **\$28,800** was raised!

Summer Supports

This summer was filled with learning, laughter, and connection through CLSMA's Summer Supports program! A total of nine youth participated, each engaging in meaningful experiences that promoted personal growth, community inclusion, and fun. From exploring employment opportunities to developing independence and friendships, the summer provided a chance for young people to learn new skills and discover new interests in supportive, inclusive environments.

We were thrilled to welcome five summer support workers, whose positions were made possible through the Canada Summer Jobs Grant. Their energy and creativity helped make this summer one to remember! Together, participants enjoyed beach trips, visits to the Butterfly Conservatory, and countless adventures in our community. It was a season full of smiles, sunshine, and meaningful memories — a wonderful reminder of the value of connection and opportunity that CLSMA strives to create every day.





Strategic Update: Annual Training Plan

After receiving feedback through the 2025 Employee Engagement Survey as well as the Spring 2025 All Staff Meeting, it was evident that one of the areas that CLSMA could be focusing on is providing more opportunities for ongoing training and education.

We hear you loud and clear and we have put together an Annual Training Plan for 2025–26 that focuses on:

- A commitment to ongoing learning
- Opportunities for team building and leadership building
- Prioritizing values and raising our standards
- Dedication to providing service excellence

Here are some opportunities that have been available and some you can look forward to in the coming year!

Conscious Care and Support

Oct/Nov 2025 – Full Course

Generative AI Training

Spring 2026

Technology Training

DS Technology Sept 2025
CLSMA Tech training 2025/26

Leadership Training

CCS Nov 2025

Values-Based Training

Social Role Valorization Oct 2025
Improved Compass 2026

Conferences and Networking

CLO- Sept 2025



Celebrating 30 Years of Community Employment!

An important anniversary for CLSMA is happening this year!

Thirty years ago, in 1995, the sheltered workshop at the James Purdue Centre (JPC) closed its doors. It was a significant recognition that people with disabilities in our community wanted to have real jobs with real pay.

The early days of sheltered work in St. Marys began in the basement of the St. Marys Public Library in 1964. Over the years, the program moved locations, and finally settled in the James Purdue Centre that was built in 1978 with the support of the Kinsman service club. Along with contracts from local companies like Shur-Gain, participants built picnic tables and wooden and ceramic toys. As the years went by there were other spin off ventures such as a wood shop and cleaning that tried to establish viable businesses.

It was time for a change when the young people coming into the workshop began to ask for help to find jobs in the community. They found work as valued employees in many different job sites around town. The agency recognized that employment was leading people to build skills and confidence, as well as developing relationships. It was a slow process to work with every person to develop their own plan, but one by one, everyone stopped coming to the workshop. Some older individuals weren't interested in getting a job, and so found volunteer or recreational opportunities to build connections and stay in touch with friends.

The JPC workshop closed for good in 1995 – over 20 years before the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services finally announced, in November 2015, that it would begin phasing out sheltered work in Ontario. People First was one of the groups that advocated for this change based on the fact that people with disabilities were often working for less than minimum wage and never got the opportunity to move on from segregated settings.



Holiday PARTY

December 4, 2025

St. Mary's Golf and
Country Club

Save the Date

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Next All Staff

Meeting
March 12, 2026



Service Awards

Congratulations to the employees who have reached a milestone in 2025!

5 years

Sam Lamond
Joseph Varkey
Steve Strahm



10 years

Kim Boyer
Mel Thomson



15 years

Don Dingwall



20 years

Jenn Costello



Flu Season is Here

- **Wash hands often:** Regular handwashing with soap and water helps stop the spread of germs.
- **Stay home when sick:** Rest and recover to prevent spreading illness to others.
- **Boost your immunity:** Eat well, stay active, get enough sleep, and consider getting the flu shot.



October is Disability Employment Awareness Month

Watch agency social media
account for updates

**Light it Up!
For NDEAM!
Oct. 16, 2025**

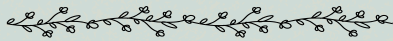
PROUDLY SUPPORTING
deam
October
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

ODEN's annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) campaign. It recognizes and raises awareness about the importance of disability-inclusive hiring, and disability inclusion in business, in employment and in our communities.

Committee Updates

DIW Committee

Looking for **1 DSP** to join – If you are interested please contact
gcarter@clstmarys.ca



Contact Info

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Remembering Stephen John Cookson

We remember Stephen John Cookson of St. Marys, who passed away peacefully on August 25, 2025, at the age of 63. Stephen was connected with Community Living St. Marys and Area for many years, where he built lasting relationships and shared his warm smile with everyone he met.

Stephen enjoyed spending time with family, trips to the trailer, and going out for lunch – simple joys that reflected his kind and happy spirit. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and all who knew him.

