

# SPRING NEWSLETTER



May 2026

Community Living St. Marys & Area

## A note from our Executive Directors...

As spring unfolds around us, it brings a welcome sense of renewal, possibility, and growth. The longer days and warmer air remind us that change can be energizing and that fresh starts are always within reach. It feels like the right moment to reflect on where we've been and look ahead to all we will accomplish together in the coming year.

These past months have not been without its challenges. As an organization, we faced a profound loss—one that continues to be felt across our community. We carry this loss with us, and we recognize that healing is ongoing and looks different for each person. In the midst of this, we have also seen extraordinary compassion, strength, and care for one another. That spirit continues to guide us forward.

We also want to take a moment to sincerely thank all of you for the warm welcome and support you have shown us as Co-Executive Directors. Stepping into these roles has been both a privilege and a responsibility we hold with deep respect. We are truly grateful for the trust you have placed in us and for the collaboration, openness, and encouragement we have experienced across the organization.

Across our organization, the past months have also been filled with meaningful work and steady progress. Every day, your dedication supports people in engaging more fully in their communities and living rich, self-directed lives. Whether through new opportunities, strengthened relationships, or quiet moments of encouragement, the impact of this work is real and lasting.

With thanks,  
Kim and Jayden



**Co-Executive Directors  
Kim & Jayden**

## Upcoming Events

- Create A Smile Walkathon  
*May 31, 10:30am-12:30pm*
- Annual General Meeting  
*June 15, 4:30pm with summer picnic to follow at 5:30pm at JPC*
- DIW 'Super Food Super Gifts'  
*Sept 11, 11am-1pm*

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### Create A Smile Walkathon



### Join Us!

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Create A Smile walkathon will be on May 31, 2026, 10:30am-12:30pm at the Milt Dunnell Park (the Flats).

Pledge sheets are available in Central Admin, or to donate click on the 'donate now' button through Canada Helps!



RAIN OR SHINE!



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## CLSMA Committees/Groups

### Employee Management Relations Committee (EMRC)

Beverley Belcher-Besenyodi (Co-Chair), Carly Geiger (Co-Chair), Jenn Costello, Jennifer Lamondin, Kim Monden, Kim Melville

### Diversity, Inclusion and Wellness (DIW):

Gwen Carter, Don Dingwall, Jennifer Lamondin, Jen Leslie

### Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC):

Kim Monden (Co-Chair), Paul Williams (Co-Chair), Mallory De Leon, Jennifer Lamondin, Mel Thomson, Gavin Rawalay

### Quality Assurance Committee:

Alice Mainland (Chair), Elia Forte, Ruth Lamond, Jennifer Leslie, Kim Monden

### Fundraising Committee:

Kim Monden (Chair), Kelly Boudreau, Jennifer Leslie, Sheri McDonald, Candace O'Hearn

### Gift Guidance Group:

Laura Cannon, Malibe Campantero, Jennifer Leslie, Sheri McDonald, Edna Willows

JOIN  
NOW

Looking to Participate?

EMRC is in need of new members - email at [emrc@clstmarys.ca](mailto:emrc@clstmarys.ca)

DIW is in need of new members - email Gwen at [gcarte@clstmarys.ca](mailto:gcarte@clstmarys.ca)

## Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

All CLSMA Employees have access to EAP benefits!

You can review the full coverage and login details through the google drive:  
ALL STAFF--> Benefits-EAP (Employee Assistance Program)



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## Community Living St.Marys & Area



### Advocacy in Action: 2026 Community Living Day at the Legislature

On Wednesday, May 6, 2026, I had the privilege of attending the annual Community Living Day at the Legislature at Queen's Park.

**Mallory De Leon, Director of Support Services**

This event is a cornerstone of Community Living Month, bringing together self-advocates, families, and sector leaders to ensure the voices of people with developmental disabilities are heard at the highest levels of provincial government.

**Bringing Critical Issues to the Table:** Another highlight of the day was spent in a direct meeting with a Member of Provincial Parliament, Aislinn Clancy, Kitchener Centre (MPPs). Although not from our riding, Aislinn is dedicated to supporting solutions to housing in Ontario. It was a vital opportunity to move beyond statistics and share the real-world impact of current policies. In our discussions, I focused on three urgent priorities:

- **Affordable Housing:** I highlighted the desperate need for inclusive, affordable housing solutions.
- **ODSP Rates:** We pushed for a significant increase to Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) amounts.
- **The Waitlist for Services:** I shared the sobering reality of the current waitlists in Ontario. With over 50,000 people waiting for essential developmental services, we emphasized that "waitlist" is not just a number—it represents years of lost opportunities for growth, independence, and support for families.

**Moving Forward:** While the 2026 Provincial Budget recently included some new investments for the sector, our message to the MPPs was clear: the work is far from over. Attending the Day at the Legislature reminded me of the power of our "Connections That Count." By showing up together, we ensure that the rights and dignity of people with developmental disabilities remain a priority at Queen's Park.

## Update on Conscious Care & Support (CCS)

There is so much to learn from CCS!

The learning is about how to provide the best quality of service possible for the people we support while at the same time being kind to ourselves and each other.



The agency first became involved with CCS through a research project in 2016 funded by the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services. Reconnecting with CCS began with new training in late 2026 and then a presentation at the All Staff meeting in March 2026. We are focusing on three supported individuals and their teams to begin with. For each person, teams will be taking a close look at the six needs areas and creating a unique plan to support growth in health and emotional wellness. We're also learning about each of our roles as supporters and the impact our self-awareness can make at work and in the rest of our lives. Stay tuned for more updates! Over time, the process will be rolled out to more people supported and teams across the organization. If you are eager to learn more, visit the Conscious Care and Support Institute website <https://centreforconsciouscare.ca>

You can also reach out to Jennifer Leslie, as the lead for this project at [jleslie@clstmarys.ca](mailto:jleslie@clstmarys.ca)

## 2026 Employee Survey Highlights

**39% Employee Response Rate**

5% of employees have worked for CLSMA for up to 20 years

35% of employees have worked for CLSMA for less than 5 years

19% of employees have worked for CLSMA for less than 10 years

**Employees Feel They Have Purpose in Their Work! 72%**



### ***What gives you pride in your work?***

- "Creating meaningful connections with people"
- "Seeing relationships grow"
- "Belief that the work I do makes a difference in someone's life, making meaningful connections and support relationships"

### ***Main themes for improvement or barriers were:***

- More team meetings
- Training and Learning Opportunities
- Funding
- Communication

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## Annual General Meeting & Summer Picnic

You are invited to the 2026 Annual General Meeting on June 15.  
Meeting at 4:30 at JPC followed by a summer picnic

RSVP

RSVP to  
[centraladmin@clstmarys.ca](mailto:centraladmin@clstmarys.ca)  
by June 10



## Remembering Teaghan Wittwer



Teaghan's smile had a way of lighting up every room, and her laughter brought joy to those around her. She greeted people with warm hugs that made others feel instantly loved and welcome. Her kindness and bright spirit left a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know her.

