# Fall Newsletter

*October 2026 | Community Living St. Marys & Area*



## A Season of Gratitude and New Beginnings...

As we settle into fall, it's a great time to reflect on the past year and look ahead to what's next.

This past year has been filled with both highs and lows, and I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Jayden Nancekivell and Kim Monden for their leadership, unwavering support, and dedication to CLSMA. We've been incredibly fortunate to have them guiding the organization through this time.

I'm happy to be back in the Executive Director role and excited for the season ahead! There is so much great work happening across CLSMA, and I'm continually reminded of the strength of our team and the dedication of people at every level of the organization.

Looking ahead, we'll be reviewing our strategic plan, continuing to focus on quality supports for the people and families we serve, and ensuring our employees have the resources and processes they need to feel supported and successful.
I'm looking forward to reconnecting with everyone and continuing the great work we do together. Wishing you all a wonderful fall season!

***Becky Huffman, Executive Director***

# Conscious Care and Support:

## An ongoing commitment to mindfulness, emotional well-being & providing proactive, compassionate support.

One of the main pillars of the Conscious Care and Support (CCS) model is healthy nutrition.

We all know it's not easy to make lasting changes to our diets, but a 2025 Canadian study funded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation found that more than one third of all cardiovascular events (38%) were associated with eating ultra-processed foods.

A practical way to identify these items is to check to see if the list of ingredients contains at least one substance that is rarely or never used in our own kitchens. This is the first Canadian research that has linked the risk of mortality and disability to the consumption of ultra-processed foods.

Thank you to the teams who are supporting those people who are being supported through the CCS lens! There have been so many positive outcomes, including better digestive health, increased activities outside of the person's home, improved communication, and less anxiety. These teams are learning a lot and will be able to support sharing the process with others supported by CLSMA.

*Did you find Mindful Mike's presentation at the September All Staff meeting helpful?*

*Mike is developing an exciting resource for CLSMA full of short videos and tools that should be available by mid-November. He will be focusing on supporting our ability to respond to everyday stress in new and better ways.*

*More details will be coming soon!*




The DIW Committee's **Super Foods and Super Gifts** event welcomed 26 people supported and employees for a fun, drop-in opportunity to explore personal wellness in a comfortable and inclusive setting, aligned with Conscious Care and Support.

Participants enjoyed a variety of interactive stations, including all-abilities yoga, tips on growing sprouts and microgreens, and samples and recipes for healthy smoothies and chia pudding. Each station included helpful information to take home.

A special gift station encouraged everyone to reflect on their purpose and consider the gifts they can share with others. It was a great opportunity to try new things, connect with others and have fun!



*After over five years with CLSMA, Janet Thomson will be retiring from her role as Administrative Assistant on December 11, 2026.*

*Janet has been a valued member of our team, and she will be greatly missed! We thank her for her contributions over the years and wish her all the very best in her retirement!*





*We are excited to welcome Heather Anderson to our team as our Community Support Administrative Assistant!*

*You will find Heather in our Central Admin office on a daily basis. Please pop in and introduce yourself!*

# Celebrating 39 years of dedication: Thank you Chris!

After more than 39 years with CLSMA, Chris Bibby has retired from her role as a Disability Support Professional (DSP)!

Chris has shown incredible dedication to the people she has supported throughout her career. She truly understands our values and the historical importance of the work we do, and her commitment to the people and the organization has made a lasting impact. She will be missed more than words can say by the many people she has worked alongside over the years.

Thank you for everything you have done for CLSMA Chris! We wish you nothing but happiness, relaxation, and all the very best in this well-deserved next chapter!








## Summer Supports: Building Skills and Community Connections



This summer, CLSMA had the opportunity to work alongside eight amazing families to ensure youth had access to meaningful supports throughout the summer months. Two students worked 31–33 hours per week over eight weeks, providing opportunities for fun, skill-building, and gaining valuable work and volunteer experience within the St. Marys community.

These supports were made possible thanks to funds raised through CLSMA's annual Create A Smile Walk! This is a wonderful example of how community generosity directly impacts local families and helps CLSMA remain a present and active support in our community. Thank you to everyone who helped make these opportunities possible!

## Four Decades of Making a Difference: Celebrating Jen!

This December, Jennifer Leslie celebrates an incredible 40 years with CLSMA! Starting as a part-time Support Worker, Jen has held many roles over the years, including Team Leader, Coordinator, Planning Facilitator, Planning Manager, and even Executive Director!

Throughout her time with our organization, Jen has been a trusted leader who truly embodies CLSMA's vision, mission, and principles. From navigating the years of deinstitutionalization to championing Core Gifts and sharing its approach across Ontario, her influence has helped shape our organization and the lives of so many people.

With over 83,000 hours dedicated to CLSMA, we are incredibly grateful for Jen's commitment, leadership, and the knowledge she continues to share. Congratulations on this amazing milestone Jen! Thank you for all you continue to bring to CLSMA!



"I have always loved working with people and their families. There was so much autonomy to help them advocate and create the support they needed. I think about all the amazing people I supported who have passed... they were the true leaders in this organization." - Jennifer Leslie

# CLO Conference 2026

***Submitted By Damon Campbell (DSP)***

My name is Damon Campbell and I had the privilege of attending Community Living Ontario (CLO) Inspiring Possibilities AGM & Conference, held in Markham, Ontario from September 15-17, 2026, alongside Tracy Aylward, Sheri McDonald and Andrew Fox.

This annual gathering brought together executive directors, board members, support staff, families, and individuals with lived experience from across North America for workshops, panel discussions, and keynotes focused on disability inclusion and belonging.

Maayan Ziv's keynote speech was very heartfelt as she never let her illness get in the way of achieving her goals, nor advocating for those in need. Maayan is the CEO of AccessNow which is a crowdsourced mobile app and digital platform that maps and rates the accessibility of locations worldwide. The app includes accommodations for support dogs as well as for environmental factors like "scent-free," "lighting levels," and "sound levels". Everybody needs access to be included.

There were breakout sessions, which was a nice change in dynamics for Andrew and I. One of the sessions was individual based care. It was a great opportunity to hear personal lived experiences of this type of support as well as the challenges faced and what to look for in the future.

One lady gave an example, she was supporting someone to go shopping in the winter who refused to put on a coat. If they didn't go out, he wouldn't have any food to eat. I could sympathize and agree with her that, although we respect people's own decision-making, when it interferes with health and completing daily tasks it can become a problem.

I am a new employee with CLSMA, but I was surprised that other community living organizations in Ontario still have group homes.

There was a lot of talk about inclusion and many community living organizations have transitioned or updated their name to say "Inclusion" to better reflect a broader vision of full citizenship, belonging, and human rights for people with developmental disabilities.

On September 16th, there was a dance after the conference. The DJ was playing a variety of old and new music. Andrew wanted to stay until it was over and we loved getting our groove on on the dance floor.

We really enjoyed the social aspect of the conference. Most of the time we found that the challenges that we face are the same regarding inclusion, accessibility, housing and poverty, as well as steps that we need to take to improve the quality of support for the people that we care for.



# CLSMA Committees/Groups

**Employee Management Relations Committee (EMRC)**
Jennifer Lamondin (Co-Chair), Carly Geiger (Co-Chair), Jenn Costello, Becky Huffman, Kim Melville, Ellyse Moyer, Ashley Schofield, Kim Hogan

**Diversity, Inclusion and Wellness (DIW):**
Gwen Carter, Don Dingwall, Jennifer Lamondin, Jen Leslie, Kim Hogan

**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:**
Jennifer Leslie (chair), Alice Mainland, Elia Forte, Tracy Aylward, Marilyn Haywood, Becky Huffman

**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




Looking to Participate?

DIW is in open to new members - email Gwen at gcarter@clstmarys.ca if interested!

## Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

**All employees have access to EAP Benefits!**

**You can review the full coverage and login details through Google Drive: ALL STAFF –> Benefits-EAP (Employee Assistance Program)**

GreenShield Health

## SAVE THE DATE!



What: CLSMA Holiday Dinner
When: Thursday December 3, 2026
5:30pm - Social
6:15pm - Dinner
Where: St Marys Golf and Country Club

