



# Family Pulse

*Where exceptional families thrive.*

Issue 123  
July 2020

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## What's in this issue?

### What's Happening In This Issue

As the Region of Waterloo wraps up a school year unlike any other, we're looking forward to a summer unlike any other. The province is slowly opening back up and allowing small gatherings and some businesses to open. However, we must all remain diligent and maintain social distancing standards and wear masks when we will be around others.

Many summer offerings for children and families are making alterations to how they operate, or are going fully virtual. You'll find information about many of those, and many other useful items in this month's newsletter!



Waterloo Region Family Network - WRFN



@FamilyNetworkWR

## Support WRFN Today

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/waterloo-region-family-network/>

Waterloo Region Family Network  
[www.wrfn.info](http://www.wrfn.info)  
[info@wrfn.info](mailto:info@wrfn.info)

## Steph's Corner

### A "Story of Thanks" About COVID-19

By: Steph Prysruk

During the past months of COVID-19, it has been difficult for everyone. I have tried to keep in touch with people by zooming but I really miss being with my friends. I have also tried to keep positive and busy by doing projects. One of my projects was writing a story of thanks about COVID-19. I thought you might like to read it.

1. Thank you for the hospitals so people can go there when they are sick.



2. Thank you for the firefighters who are helping people when their house is on fire. They save lives.



3. Thank you for CTV News Kitchener. People can watch TV each day and find out what is going on with the COVID-19 virus.

4. Thank you for the people who work in the grocery stores. They are staying open for the people to buy food for their family. Thank you to the truck drivers who get the food to the stores.



5. Thank you for the Waterloo Region Food Bank. They help lots of families who do not have enough food to eat.

6. Thank you for the doctors. They help us to feel better when we are sick with the virus.



7. Thank you for the nurses and allied health care workers. They are looking after the people who have COVID-19 and their families.



## Steph's Corner

### A "Story of Thanks" About COVID-19 continued

8. Thank you to all the health care and personal support care workers and the armed forces. They are taking care of the older people in long-term care homes who are sick.



9. Thank you to all the essential workers in our community. They are brave and go to work so we can eat, drive our cars and be protected.
10. Thank you to the pharmacies. They stay open so we can get our medications to help us stay healthy so we don't get sick.
11. Thank you to Tim Hortons and Starbucks for keeping their drive thru open so people can get their coffee.



12. Thank you Mr. Trudeau for doing a great job leading Canadians through COVID-19 and giving money to people who have lost their jobs.



13. Thank you Mr. Ford for telling people to stay at home so this virus can go away.
14. Thank you to the teachers and educational assistants who are teaching their students on the computer and for making it fun for students while they are at home.



## Steph's Corner

### A "Story of Thanks" About COVID-19, continued

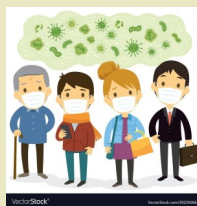
15. Thank you to the parents and caregivers who are doing their best to keep their kids busy so they do not bug them all the time when they are trying to work.

16. Thank you to the ministers in the churches for praying for us and keeping in touch with us.



17. Thank you to the people who are helping others during this time. I have a hand sewn mask, thanks to my friend.

18. Thank you to the people who are kind and check in with those who are on their own.



I hope that together we will keep following the rules so that COVID -19 will be over and I can see my friends and family again.



# Coffee Club

**An offering from a member of our Coffee Club**

## **Technology: A Gift of COVID-19**

By: Melissa Jacques with the help of Tristan Fassel

My name is Melissa, but I like MJ better. I'm 28, and for the last four years I've been a Waterloo resident - but I grew up in London, and spent some time in Stratford. Ever since moving out of my hometown in 2014, all my communications with friends and family have been remote by necessity - so the transition when COVID hit has been easier for me than for some.

I first found out about Coffee Club around the end of 2017. I was in search of connection, and a place of belonging. It's funny - at first I signed up because I thought it was a queer group! But even after I found out otherwise, I stuck around for the diverse group of people. It was rough getting there and back, though - all the 'wheelie work' (instead of legwork) limited my attendance.

In a weird way, COVID - which you'd think couldn't have any positives - has provided a solution. Coffee Club has shifted to an online format, and suddenly... all I have to focus on is the conversation. Not the bus, not my chronic pain, not trying to order and eat food. I love it! I can finally engage with my full self.

It hasn't just been Coffee Club. It's been all my social groups. It should've been like this a long time ago - this is 2020, folks, and we've had the technology for years now. It shouldn't have taken a worldwide crisis to get remote access. This is how I've been advocating to run society for years - with online options being equal to in-person ones. This should be an inclusive era, when everyone uses their brains and not necessarily their bodies for everything from socializing to the jobs that they want to pursue.

My mission is to show employers that being at home is sometimes a much better option. For those that have unpredictable medical circumstances, but who are still able to contribute to the workforce, their physical attributes should not sway hiring practices or attitudes towards co-workers. We should be valuing innovation over a person's ability to regularly show up to an office - the new viewpoint that they bring to the table. If they have to Zoom in as a video conference, that shouldn't be a performance issue - in fact, it should be put on the resume as a point of pride. Employers keep touting flexibility as an asset - well, be flexible with us! Give us options to work from home, options for limited or unusual work hours. How we work should be a conversation between the employer and the employee - not a dead end.

These are the accommodations we've been demanding for years - it just took a pandemic to finally get them. Let's keep the silver lining when we get rid of the cloud.

## SEAC Updates

### Waterloo Regional District School Board Update

*Submitted by Carmen Sutherland*

**SEAC Notes June 10, 2020**

There was a discussion about summer support, the fact that the Board was given \$150,000 for summer support staff and this will include support for Special Education. There will be special small groups or even one-on-one summer learning for grades 2 and 3 students who are struggling with reading and math. There will also be small group learning for grades 7-12. There will also be \$160,000 available for social workers and psychologists.

The Board is really trying to put good plans in place for going back to school in September. They have come up with 5 Rs to illustrate:

**Resolve:** Trying to determine what they need to do/how many people they are working with (in terms of issues such as social distancing, supports, engaging staff and community)

**Resiliency:** Making sure they are supporting each other, staff, family and the community

**Re-Imagine:** Rethinking how we thrive and change after COVID, and engaging staff community, parents and students

**Return:** What will returning to school look like?

Feedback about what the budget should be spent on included Personal Protective Equipment for staff, mental health supports for the next school year.

There was also a note about how we will be able to get more special education and itinerant staff because all of the unions have settled their negotiations.

The Equity of Access committee has also been working hard. They have made sure that all students have been engaged. There has been some transition planning done virtually so that students can meet their new teachers. There has been discussion of access to supports for students in risk including English Language learners, LGBTQ+ and Indigenous students. Technology and supplies have also been delivered to students.

A question was asked about the return of students who are medically fragile to classes in the fall. The Board is breaking down the tasks of what needs to be done for these students to determine if this is possible. In terms of IPRCs, if there is already one in place it will stay the same, if there are new ones requested, it will be done in the fall. For the summer, the IEP will be used, and if there need to be changes the teacher will reach out.

## SEAC Updates

### **Waterloo Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee Update**

Waterloo Catholic District School Board  
Special Education Advisory Committee Update  
*Submitted by Sue Simpson and Karen Kovats*

The WCDSB SEAC did not meet in June and will next meet virtually in July.

For news, updates and tips on learning at home, please visit [www.wrdsb.ca](http://www.wrdsb.ca) and [www.wcdsb.ca](http://www.wcdsb.ca)

## What's Happening at WRFN...

**As is the case with all non-essential businesses and organizations, due to the COVID-19 virus, all in-person programs and gatherings are cancelled until the health authorities deem it safe to begin again.**

**We will be listing online and virtual resources that we think will be helpful as you navigate social distancing. Also keep an eye on our Facebook Page and our Twitter account (@FamilyNetworkWR) for more!**

### **Ask A Self-Advocate**

Do you need to look at a challenge you are facing with a new perspective? Would you like to bounce ideas off someone who's been there? Cristina was diagnosed with exceptionalities as an adult, and is passionate about sharing her lived experience. Speak with Cristina to discuss your own questions and concerns to gain new insights and ideas. This program is currently available through phone, email or virtual connection to individuals with disabilities, families, or service providers.

For more information on Ask A Self-Advocate please contact Cristina Stanger at [Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info](mailto:Cristina.Stanger@wrfn.info)

To request a booking please complete the request form found on our website at [wrfn.info](http://wrfn.info)

## What's Happening at WRFN...

### **WRFN's Family Resource Coach**

During this current COVID-19 health crisis and ensuing quarantine, personal support has become paramount for many families. Erin Sutherland, our Family Resource Coach, is available by phone or email to lend a helping hand and personal guidance to families and to connect you to updated information, resources, and virtual opportunities. We encourage you to reach out. Call Erin at 519-886-9150 ext. 4 or email her at [Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info](mailto:Erin.Sutherland@wrfn.info)  
We provide support in all life stages - NO diagnosis is needed.

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### **School Issues Support Group**

This peer-led group provides support, advice and a safe environment for parents who have questions or concerns about school issues affecting their children with special needs. This group is currently meeting virtually. If you're interested in participating, please contact Sue Simpson at 519-886-9150 ext 1 or [sue.simpson@wrfn.info](mailto:sue.simpson@wrfn.info)

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### **Coffee Club**

Greetings from Coffee Club! We have been meeting on Zoom since late March, usually on Thursdays from 3:00-4:00 PM Generally, we are just catching up and chatting, mixed with a little bit of watching YouTube.

If you would like to join us, please send me an email at [carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info](mailto:carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info), and I will make sure to put you on the email list so that you receive a Zoom invite, and will also be aware if we ever change or add a meeting date.

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## Information, Resources, & Opportunities

**Kerry's Place Autism Services** has a list of resources for families with exceptional children to help deal with the current COVID-19 crisis. They can be found here: [www.kerrysplace.org/covid-19-resources/](http://www.kerrysplace.org/covid-19-resources/)

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**Recreational Respite** has been working hard as a team to find a way that continues to promote inclusion, encourage community participation and nurture social connectivity. We understand how imperative it is to stay connected. So, we are bringing you a very unique interactive opportunity, that proves innovative and offers experiential outcomes in 1:1, mini or small group virtual settings. That's right, these programs are now available online! They can be found on their website here: <https://recrespite.com/virtual-services/>

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**Carizon** is local non-profit that helps families thrive in their communities by strengthening their mental health and wellbeing. Like most places during the pandemic, Carizon is offering service virtually. Find out more about them and what they have to offer on their new Carizon for the Community website: [www.carizonforthecommunity.ca/](http://www.carizonforthecommunity.ca/)



## Information, Resources, & Opportunities

**Foundations in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)** is a basic training course intended for everyone that will come into contact with individuals with FASD including all sectors of work, families, individuals with FASD, spouses, and the general public. This foundational level training program provides the perspective of individuals who have FASD, is evidence-based, employs a culturally sensitive approach, and is presented in a way that is responsive to the learners needs. This online basic training course will take on average two hours to complete. Level 1 training will provide knowledge and understanding of:

- an overview of FASD assessment and diagnosis in Canada
- an introduction to FASD interventions and promising approaches
- the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure on the fetus
- the impact of alcohol on brain development
- issues related to stigma and FASD
- strategies for prevention and support
- barriers to prevention and support
- the signs and symptoms of FASD across the lifespan

A certificate will be provided to each participant upon completion: [estore.canfasd.ca/foundations-in-fasd](https://estore.canfasd.ca/foundations-in-fasd)

**Kidsability** is offering free virtual workshops on Understanding Challenging Behaviour that will cover information that will help you to understand and manage your child's challenging behaviours using the principles of applied behaviour analysis (ABA).

Registration and more information can be found here:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/understanding-challenging-behaviours-free-virtual-workshop-tickets-107265995480>

**Kidsability** has released their Family E-Newsletter for Spring/Summer 2020. In you can find more information about their programs and services and updated information on how they are dealing with COVID-19. All of this and more can be found here: <https://www.kidsability.ca/enews>

**Transition to Adulthood Clinic (for KidsAbility clients 15+)** Have you started to think about your life after high school? Do you have questions about services for adults with disabilities in the community? Would you like to find out about resources that are available to help you with your transition planning? The Transition to Adulthood Clinic is an opportunity to meet with the Transitions Lead who will help to guide you in the right direction with planning for your future. During Covid-19 isolation, all appointments will be occurring through Zoom. Once KidsAbility Centres have opened up again there will be the option to meet with the Transitions Lead either face to face or through Zoom.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact your KidsAbility therapist or call Intake at 1-888-372-2259, Ext 1214

**Sunbeam Centre's Brightside ABA Services** specialize in supporting clients that are 9 years of age and up to support skill development in key areas such as social skills, communication skills, emotional regulation skills, building independence in activities of daily living, and to reduce challenging behaviours. Their fee for service website is now live and can be found here: <https://brightsideabaservices.com/>

## Information & Resources



**Family Compass Waterloo Region** is a central website to guide families to services for children, youth, and families in our community.

The website offers the option to find information about general services for children and youth as well as specialized services that can help to address developmental concerns. It also offers a link to resources designed for parents through the Parenting Now website.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many community organizations and initiatives are providing various services and supports for children, youth, adults, and families. Follow the COVID-19 response link on the Family Compass website to find information and resources that are available during this time.

Go to their website for more information: <https://www.familycompasswr.ca/en/index.aspx>

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**The University of Waterloo** will be hosting free, weekly community talks on COVID-19 topics. Each Wednesday, for the next six weeks, Waterloo researchers will share information and answer your questions. Community talks will be held online using a video link that will be provided before the talk. More information and registration can be found here:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/community/>

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**Mighty Hawks Laurier** is a group of passionate student leaders from Wilfrid Laurier University that believes a developmental disability does not define the scope of one's abilities. This group holds weekly workshops to support each individual in development of work-relevant and financial literacy skills with one-to-one support from Mighty Hawk Facilitators. The Mighty Hawks support social enterprise businesses and offer experience to its members. See here for more information: <https://enactuslaurier.ca/project/mighty-hawks/>

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The Canadian Government recommends that essential support person(s) be included in 'essential visitor' policies. Ontario has not updated their recommendation around essential visitors since this updated guidance document was sent to all provinces and territories.

People and their families in Ontario still have to advocate at the local level on an individual basis to ensure that they have the supports necessary to access care. Granting this access to supports is at the discretion of the person in charge. It shouldn't have to be this way.

B.C. just updated their visitor policy to include essential support people. Ontario must do the same NOW!

**Family Alliance Ontario** needs your help get this policy changed in Ontario--it's easy just click the link below, read the open letter, sign on, then forward this email to all your family, friends, colleagues and networks.

Please Sign on Today!

[Equitable Access to Care Now! | Family Alliance Ontario](#)

## Information & Resources

**Lutherwood** is available to help people find employment during the pandemic. All of their programs are still operating and can be accessed at: [www.beemployed.ca](http://www.beemployed.ca)

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**The University of Toronto School of Medicine** is hosting a series of webinars titled: Dialogues in Diversity: Explorations of the EDI Implications of COVID-19. The series of seven webinars consists of ninety-minute expert-led, moderated panel discussions focused on five broad thematic areas in relation to the pandemic.

For more information and to register, please go to: [www.cpd.utoronto.ca/covid-19/webinars/](http://www.cpd.utoronto.ca/covid-19/webinars/)

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**Extend-A-Family** is offering fun and interactive summer camps this year! Registration is open now. Go to <https://www.eafwr.on.ca/programs/summer-program/> for full descriptions and to register!

Also: Families can choose to have **Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region** administer their Ontario Autism Program (OAP) funds. Funding applications are registered through MCCSS.

OAP is a funding resource available to children and youth under the age of 18 who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Eligibility and approvals are determined by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

Families can choose to have Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region administer their OAP funds. Funding applications are registered through MCCSS.

For information on how EAFWR can assist, please email [oap@eafwr.on.ca](mailto:oap@eafwr.on.ca)

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**KW Habilitation** is offering "LEG Up! Online" this summer which is a skill enhancement and learning experience from the comfort of your home! Delivering classes by Zoom, you will need a computer, tablet or phone with a webcam, audio and internet connection.

Descriptions and a link to registration can be found here: <https://mailchi.mp/9a5a8d5bd2fe/join-leg-up-online-this-july?e=f6112bac2e>

## Information & Resources

**The City of Kitchener** has opened registration for modified summer day camps. More information and registration information can be found on their website here:

<https://www.kitchener.ca/en/things-to-do/camps.aspx#>

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**Recharge & Play Wellness Cafe** will be running summer camps! Their STEAM-themed summer camp will consist of only one cohort of up to 9 campers & one instructor each week. They are following the guidelines of the Ministry very carefully & the entire playground will be sanitized carefully each day following the guidelines of the ministry. They are not requiring masks for our campers, as this is not a requirement of the ministry for children, and social distancing & frequent handwashing will be encouraged by our instructor. □

Look them up on Facebook or click here to register:

[https://rechargeandplaywellnesscafe.janeapp.com/?fbclid=IwAR2DWNxzUVbYYPCkw5b\\_dSFcXjI31E9qJkiX9yqzk75O1rCltz8M\\_3NRQz8#/discipline/8/treatment/126](https://rechargeandplaywellnesscafe.janeapp.com/?fbclid=IwAR2DWNxzUVbYYPCkw5b_dSFcXjI31E9qJkiX9yqzk75O1rCltz8M_3NRQz8#/discipline/8/treatment/126)

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**Bridges to Belonging** hosts a virtual hang-out on Facebook:

Are you looking for a way to meet new people, build relationships and be part of some great conversations? You can Get-Connected and Stay-Connected at our weekly virtual hangout where you will meet new people, build relationships and be part of some great conversations.

In the private group, you can access trusted COVID-19 information, resources and local services - tools and resources on a variety of topics for you to create the life you want and have a community where you belong.

[Click here to join the Facebook Group](#) to get all the details about this weekly Zoom call meet up.