



Family Pulse

Where exceptional families thrive.

Issue 120
April 2020

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You might find this issue a bit slimmer than others given the COVID-19 crisis and the many cancellations. However, we do have some information to pass along plus a new team member to introduce!



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
info@wrfn.info

COVID-19

What the world has experienced in the past month has been unprecedented. The effect of this virus on society can't be overstated. By now many of us have likely slipped into a new, if unexpected, daily routine brought on by physical/social distancing that is now being practiced to help to stop the spread of the virus.

This "new reality" has brought with it new stresses especially for those unaccustomed to remaining at home and indoors. And children are greatly affected by this disruption. Families are forced to home school their children and design activities to keep them safe and stimulated. Exceptional families are especially challenged by the lack of routine.

There are also stories of communities coming together; of valuable lessons in sharing, cooperation, and caring for others. There have already been many innovations being made with online delivery of education as well as entertainment and art.

Waterloo Region Family Network will do our best to serve you in this new reality. We will disseminate information via social media, our website, and future issues of Family Pulse. We are still available by phone and email. Feel free to reach out and connect.

Local Order of Canada recipient and founder of the Centre for Community Based Research, John Lord, recently penned an editorial for The Record with his thoughts and ideas on how to build community and enhance well being during this crisis. It can be found here: www.therecord.com/opinion-story/9913657-four-things-to-do-during-pandemic-to-enhance-sense-of-community-and-personal-wellbeing/

And we want to hear from you! Tweet us (@FamilyNetworkWR) or post on our Facebook page how you're doing and what you're doing! What have you done or are doing to creatively spend time together! We're all in this together and we can help one another as we "flatten the curve" and come out the other side!

What is social distancing?

Social distancing means avoiding close contact with others to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and can include:



Avoiding non-essential trips in the community



Limiting, postponing or cancelling gatherings



Working from home, where possible



Conducting meetings virtually



Keeping kids away from group settings



Avoiding visits to long-term care homes and other care settings

Keep a distance of 2 metres from others when going for walks or shopping for groceries.



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19

WRFN Welcomes New Communications & Fundraising Officer, Tom Connelly

From Sue Simpson: We are pleased to introduce you to Tom, our newest WRFN team member! In his role as Fundraising & Communications Officer, he will be responsible for fund development, events and communications including the Family Pulse newsletter, our website and social media. Please join WRFN in welcoming Tom to our team. You can learn more about him through his message below. We encourage you to reach out to Tom at Tom.Connelly@wrfn.info .

From Tom: I'm originally from the US and grew up in a suburb just west of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My partner, Scott, and I moved to Toronto, from the states, in 2004. I worked



primarily in marketing while in the US. In Canada, I worked for 12 years in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario first as an Event Coordinator and then as Manager of Stakeholder Relations. We moved to Waterloo in 2016 where I started volunteering at a local seniors day program and finished a post-graduate certificate program at Conestoga College for Community and Social Service Management. I recently completed covering a maternity leave contract at Hospice of Waterloo

Region as the Coordinator of Volunteers, helping on events and fundraising. I'm looking forward to meeting new people and learning more about you and the exceptional families in the region!

SEAC Updates

Waterloo Region District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee and Waterloo Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee have been cancelled until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below are the most recent updates from meetings held in March, 2020 and some items of interest regarding the COVID-19 crisis.

Active coverage and updates will resume once they begin meeting again.

A letter of support from the Waterloo Region District School Board can be found here: wrdsb.ca/blog/2020/03/22/a-letter-of-support-to-wrdsb-families

A special message from the Chair of the Board and Director of Education, as well as the latest communications can be found here: www.wcdsb.ca/special-message-from-the-chair-of-the-board-director-of-education/

A helpful list of tips for Learning at Home from educators can be found here: schools.wrdsb.ca/athome/learning-at-home-tips-for-parents-caregivers-and-students/

Waterloo Region District School Board

**Waterloo Region District School Board - Special Education Advisory Update
Submitted by Carmen Sutherland, WRFN SEAC Representative**

SEAC Meeting March 11, 2020

To begin the SEAC meeting Cindy Benedetti, WRDSB Systems Administrator spoke about her role. She helps staff in the system problem solve and find solutions to all types of issues from educational issues (i.e. how to help students learn best), and how to best accommodate students' physical needs (i.e. how to make a classroom as accessible as possible for students with complex medical needs).

After this presentation, there was time taken to complete the Right to Read survey, which is meant to ask parents, students and educators about their experience with reading in the school system and to determine whether schools are using an evidenced-based approach to teaching students to read. For more information on this please click [here](#).

SEAC also discussed writing a letter to support Greater Essex County District School Board's SEAC letter that supported the Durham District School Board's letter of support for filling the vacant seats on the Ministry Advisory Committee on Special Education (MACSE) group. Our Chairperson Sara Penny will be writing the letter and it will be discussed and edited at our next meeting.

Waterloo Catholic District School Board

**Waterloo Catholic District School Board - Special Education Advisory Update
Submitted by Sue Simpson, WRFN SEAC Representative**

The WCDSB SEAC met on March 4 at the Catholic Education Centre. Information about the Special Education Visioning Committee was shared by retired principal Gloria Lasovich and Gerald Foran, Principal Section 23 & Learning Services.

Association updates were shared.

Please click on the link below for February 2020 updates.

www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-february-2020/

Learn@home

The Learn@home information from the province can be found on their website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home>

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.

To request a booking please complete the request form available on our website.

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

We provide support in all life stages - NO diagnosis is needed.

Coffee Club

Hi Coffee Clubbers,

I miss you so much! Please contact me to tell me how it's going at 519-500-7153 or carmen.sutherland@wrfn.info. If you have Facebook, you can friend me and we can chat. Tell me how you've been keeping busy, what you've been eating (LOL!). If you were thinking of joining Coffee Club and haven't yet, please still reach out, I want to meet you. We are currently meeting through Zoom.

Please know that however you feel during this time is OK. You can be angry, sad, bored out of your tree. You can even be loving this time, that's all right, too. As long as you are being safe and healthy and respectful of others, any feeling is allowed. We are all handling this differently.

Be well, Coffee Club, and we WILL be together again,

Carmen

Information & Resources

A message from KidsAbility - Continuing to be Here When Families Need Us Most - <https://www.kidsability.ca/news>

“[Autism in High School](#)” is a web-based guide to help students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families as they navigate the transitions and common challenges of high school. This website was developed as a joint initiative between Extend-A-Family, Waterloo Region Family Network, members of the former Autism Services Waterloo Region, the Waterloo Region District School Board, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, and the University of Waterloo with generous funding from the [Sifton Family Foundation](#)

The Healthcare Access Research & Developmental Disabilities Program has some fantastic suggestions on how to stay connected, manage stress, and stay active while we all stay indoors in an effort to try and "flatten the curve" of COVID-19. Look them up on Facebook or follow them on Twitter @heardd

The Children & Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region has a list of local resources for families looking for assistance ranging from the Food Bank to libraries. Go to childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/covid-19-resources-for-children-youth-and-families/ for full list.

The Continuous Professional Learning Committee (CPLC) is excited to bring the **Foundations in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Practice Lecture Series** to the members of the Children and Youth Planning Table. More information and registration can be found here: childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/infant-and-early-childhood-mental-health/ Their list of events, while all are TBC can be found here: childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/calendar/

Autism Ontario has a website devoted to the Raise the Flag for Autism on Autism Awareness Day, April 2nd at <http://raisetheflagforautism.com/> and are asking families for ideas on how to stay connected through a brief survey here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/AOstayingconnected

The region's YMCAs have gone virtual! Check them out at www.thisisy.ca for ideas on keeping your "mind, body, & soul" fit during this crisis.

Parenting Now has some great tips on how to talk to your children about the COVID-19 crisis on their website: parentingnow.ca/articles/tips-for-talking-to-children-about-covid-19/

This can be an especially confusing and frightening time for new Canadians. **Immigration Waterloo Region** has important resources for those recent arrivals to the region on their website: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca and Ontario has added information in multiple languages available at www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-15

Wellbeing Waterloo has a good discussion and video about challenging systemic barriers on their website: www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/equity/

Some of the world's top museums have opened up their virtual doors for online tours. A great list can be found at www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours

Information & Resources

Many education publishers and companies have made much of their resources available online for free to assist parents in helping with activities and learning for their children. Below is a list of just some of those.

kidsactivitiesblog.com/135609/list-of-education-companies-offering-free-subscriptions/

raisingwonder.com/

scholastic.com/learnathome

starfall.com

abcya.com

mathplayground.com

mathies.ca

mysteryscience.com

mysterydoug.com

classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html

blog.learningresources.com/category/learning-at-home

reading.ecb.org

funbrain.com

seussville.com

kids.nationalgeographic.com

highlightskids.com

storylineonline.net

wonderopolist.org

gonoodle.com

online.kidsdiscover.com

squigglepark.com/dreamscape

timeforkids.com