

Child Witness Centre



Strengthening
the Community
Together

STRENGTH thanks SMILE HEALING
Success motivate COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY believe SUPPORT HOPE thanks
hope gratitude thanks ENCOURAGE grateful
SUPPORT inspire HAPPINESS CONFIDENCE hope
thanks SMILE GENEROSITY support
HEALING inspire THANKS
believe confidence
STRENGTH
success
hope

Annual Report
2019-20

OUR VISION

A community where children and youth are safe, valued and heard, empowering them towards strong futures.

OUR MISSION

We provide support, education and advocacy for children and youth who are or may become victims or witnesses of abuse or crime in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County.

We are a team of caring, compassionate professionals who walk with children, youth and their families on their journey through the criminal justice process, helping them have a voice and fostering healing, hope and wellbeing.

"I am a retired primary teacher from WRDSB and recognize how crucial it is to support children in their trauma. For 25 years I have been speaking out to friends and others about my own family's sexual abuses. My four siblings and I were born in Kitchener to a sexually and physically abusive family in the 1950's when no supports were available. I wish there had been an organization like this for us. I am grateful that you continue to provide services to help children find their voices and grow into emotionally healthy adults.

I give back by donating throughout the year, many from special occasions – Father's Day, celebrating my 70th birthday and so forth, so that I can do my part of helping children to overcome their undeserved circumstances.

Thank you for doing this meaningful work and know that you make a huge difference in the child's life and in our society!"

~ Linda Rose, Donor and Supporter since 2003

2019-20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you to our wonderful Board of Directors, who give their time and expertise to provide guidance, leadership and support. We are privileged to have many talented people on our Board.

OFFICERS

Lisa Allen (Chair)
Lisa Goertz (Vice Chair)
Laura Park (Secretary)
Dianne Romano (Treasurer)

DIRECTORS

Bernadette Behm
Melissa Crowley
Sloden Lackovic
Susan Malcolmson

Jean Markovich
Kelly McLachlin
Olivia Rogalla
Alice Schmidt Hanbidge

Sharon Seifried
Laura Shoemaker
Doug Tyson

Thank you...

from the Board Chair & Executive Director



The words **Thank You** seem almost insufficient to convey our gratitude to you. Thanks to donors, volunteers, funders, community agencies and corporate entities, we were able to provide information, support, and advocacy to those who needed it most.

Helping the most vulnerable on their journey through the criminal justice system, ensuring they have a voice, standing by their parents and caregivers, is what we are most proud of. It takes strength to come forward and be one of the nearly three young people in our community each day, who tells someone what they have experienced or witnessed. The children and youth we serve embody strength. Strength in managing their vulnerabilities and frailties as they heal, and strength, in difficult circumstances, to change their trajectory supported by the services the Child Witness Centre provides.

This year we saw that strength played out with over 1,500 children and young people who received services tailored to their unique needs.

Our leadership saw change this year. After an inspirational journey of 7 years, Laura Muirhead retired in January 2020. Laura was responsible for many incredible accomplishments including the Safe Hands-Strong Futures...Hearing, Helping, Healing Community Campaign which raised over \$2 million dollars during her tenure. The Child Witness Centre will long remember the passion and dedication Laura brought to this role and we thank her.

A critical focus of the Board of Directors was to find a strong, collaborative leader to continue to strengthen our connections with our partners and in the community. We welcomed Executive Director, David Morneau, early in 2020. While the first months of his tenure have proved challenging as we navigate a

pandemic, we are confident that we will meet the challenges in front of us and emerge stronger.

We have had a strong financial year thanks to a community that has allowed us to continue to deliver support to children and youth experiencing abuse or crime, and their families. We are especially grateful for critical core funding from organizations such as the Ministry of the Attorney General, local United Ways, and seed funding from the Department of Justice supporting our work.

Forward movement is essential for the strength of individuals, organizations, and the communities in which we live. For those we support, those who support us, and our community, the future is what we wholeheartedly embrace. The building blocks for this future come from the strength of the children and youth we serve, the Caseworkers and Advocates who they meet on their journey so they feel less alone, the behind the scenes team of staff, parents and caregivers, and you, our supporters. As such, in the coming year you can expect to find us working towards our new Strategic Plan, forming new community partnerships, strengthening community collaborations, providing additional communication pieces specific to your interests, while continuing to do the important work of supporting children and youth.

We have the strength, passion and skills to meet the challenges and opportunities that change brings us while we focus on our reason for continuing this journey – for almost four decades – the children, youth, families and caregivers we support, with your help.



David Morneau
Executive Director



Lisa Allen
Board Chair

A Parents Journey

Strength, Reflection and Gratitude

“For myself and my husband from the beginning, we were happy to have a connection who could walk us through the process and answer any general questions we had. Our journey started with the CYAC in a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere to do our police interviews. We were grateful for the Advocate who occupied my daughter when I was being interviewed and put her mind at ease about what was happening. When my daughter was being interviewed, she kept me calm, by allowing me the space I needed to talk through everything that I was feeling. From there she arranged post-disclosure counselling for my daughter and followed up with me every two weeks to ensure our family had all the supports that were needed. Starting our journey at the CYAC definitely helped provide comfort in what could've been a very traumatizing situation.

Once we were connected with our worker through the Child Witness Program, I felt like I had found our person who was going to make this process survivable. She was our point of contact for everything regarding court - I knew that if I had any questions or was panicking about anything, all I had to do was make one phone call. From the preliminary hearing to the trial, to the jury's verdict and the sentencing our Caseworker was with us every step of the way. The hardest thing we've ever had to do as parents was have our daughter testify and not be able to be with her, but because of the relationship we had built with our Caseworker and knowing that she would be sitting beside our daughter and advocating for her as we would, it was manageable to let her do what needed to be done. No parent ever wants to or should ever have to find themselves in this situation, but to have the support of someone standing beside you and guiding you is worth everything.

We will forever be grateful to the Child Witness Centre, especially for seeing us through one of the most difficult journeys we've faced as parents.”



Photo by Jelleke Vanooteghem on Unsplash



MEANINGFUL IMPACT...

THANKS TO YOU!

Child Witness Centre



6,743
people were
impacted by
our programs



1,528
children and youth

1,035
parents and
caregivers

4,180
students and
teachers

DID YOU KNOW?

There is significant work that happens in assisting parents and caregivers on how to best support their child through the processes and facilitating positive communication between them. Examples of this include providing psychoeducation and coping strategies on how to best support their child, what their child may be experiencing emotionally, etc. It is recognized that young people who have been victims or witnesses of abuse or crime are better positioned to thrive when their caregivers receive support as well.

Child and Youth Advocacy Centre of Waterloo Region



580
investigations



948
children involved
in investigations

DID YOU KNOW?

The Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) location and interview space has continued to be where many of the interviews are occurring. 51% of the children and youth were interviewed at the CYAC, compared to 44% the previous year. This is considerable, considering the percentage of interviews that occur at schools/daycare or individual homes.

Core Partners in the Waterloo Region CYAC



"Thank you so very much. I truly believe that it could be the difference between life and death for some young people who have already gone through so much." ~ A Grateful Parent

MEETING THE DEMAND..

THANKS TO YOU!



For the first time ever, we supported **over 1,500** young people across our victim-centred programs! Overall, we saw an increase of **9%**. In new referrals only, we saw an overall increase of **16%**. Our goal is for our clients to feel well supported, informed, connected and cared for, while we walk with them for however long they need us on their journeys towards healing.



Photo by Renee Fisher on Unsplash

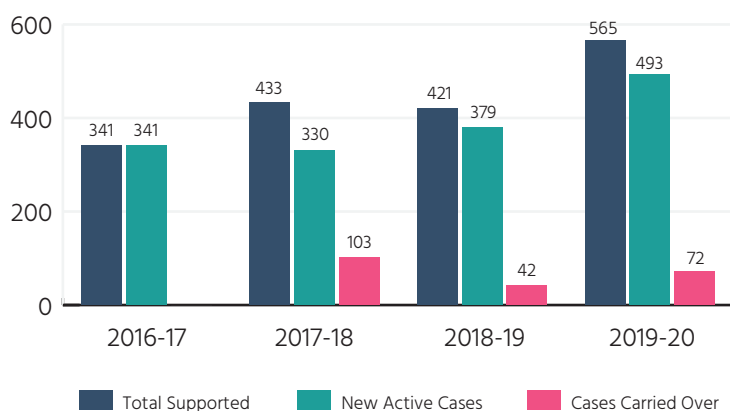
Child and Youth Advocate Program – Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC)

Providing Support Through the Investigation

The Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) is a collaborative, best practice model and one of more than 40 in Canada either open or developing. Through our work, we collaborate with our core partners as well as many other service providers creating a wraparound experience for young people and their caregivers, regardless of whether charges are laid.

In 2019-20, there were **580** investigations of child abuse handled through the CYAC involving **948** young people and the Child and Youth Advocate Program (CYAP) supported more than **493** of them. These represent increases in each category of 16%, 10% and 30% respectively over 2018-19. What is more is that the number of young people supported by Advocates during the investigation rose from 44% to 52%, demonstrating the support amongst partners.

Children & Youth Supported Through CYAP



In total, we provided support to **565** children and youth, compared to **421** the previous year, representing a **34%** increase overall.

Testimonial from the Advocates...“It often does not take long for us to see the positive impact and changes that the work we do with clients can have on their self-esteem and self-confidence levels, ability to cope, and circles of support around them. We feel that we are able to empower the children we work with to face current and further challenges when we provide psychoeducation on trauma, help develop safety plans and coping strategies, and increase both their professional and personal support systems.”

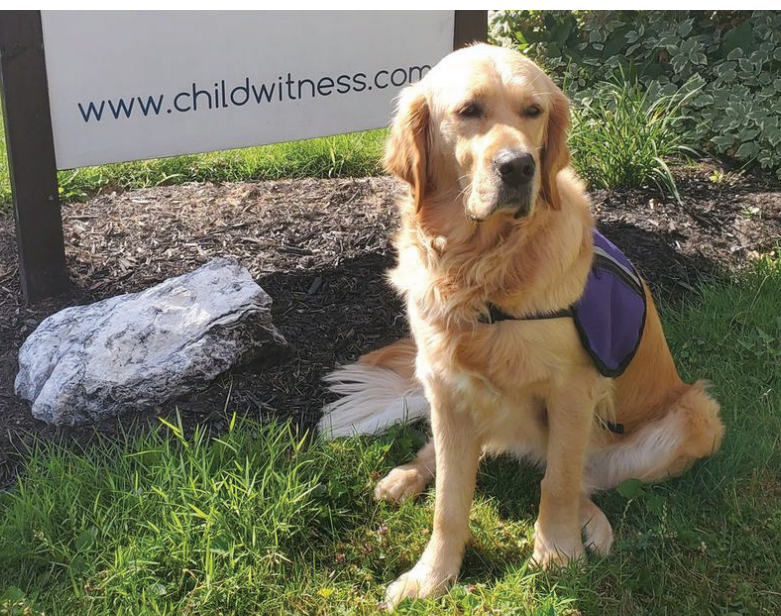
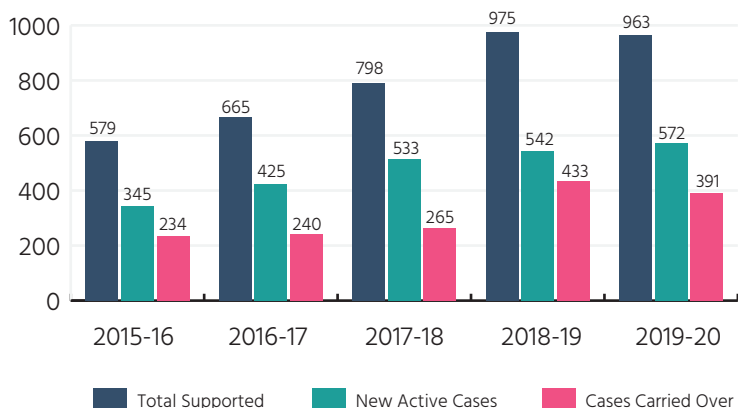
Child Witness Program (CWP)

Providing Support Through the Criminal Court Process

When criminal charges are laid, young people are referred to our Child Witness Program (CWP), supporting victims and witnesses in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County.

The demand for this program continues to grow. We supported **963** young people who were victims or witnesses of crime. We saw an increase in the number of new referrals. We had **572** new referrals compared to 542 the previous year, a 6% increase.

Children & Youth Supported Through CWP



Before being involved in your program,
“I thought it could destroy my child to have to relive what she went through.”

After my involvement,
“We felt as if we had someone who was there for us every step of the process, including follow-up afterwards, in a different way from the police and lawyers. She spoke common language and was super-relatable for my teen daughter. She was kind, compassionate, angry for us when appropriate, sad for us when appropriate. She took care of (or explained) confusing details to us, which was very helpful. I can't imagine how anyone goes through this process without...you!”

~ A Parent

“The Child Witness Centre helped by making sure all of my questions were answered and I knew what was going on 100% of the time. My worker made sure I was prepared for the court dates and stayed with me when I had to testify and it made it a little less scary”.

~ A Child

DID YOU KNOW?

We have expanded our mental health supports! Meet Monet, a beautiful golden retriever who joined our professional team at the end of February 2020. Monet was generously provided to us by National Service Dogs (NSD), as an accredited Canine Assisted Intervention (CAI) dog. The use of Facility Dogs with young people through the court process is one of the emerging, evidence informed best practices.

Youth Symposium Program

Education, Empowerment and Conversation

The Youth Symposium is an inspirational day-long community outreach initiative for Grade 8 students. Up to 11 well-informed and engaging presenters speak to issues like bullying, personal accountability, substance abuse, resiliency and healthy dating. Presenters use stories and humour that resonate with the students on topics that are important for students' social, physical, emotional and mental health.

Due to its popularity, 2019 was the first year we expanded our program from two to three days to accommodate an additional 1,200 students. In 2019, over 4,100 students and teachers were welcomed to the Youth Symposium. Since its inception, over 39,000 grade 8s have had the benefit of participating in the Youth Symposium.

Here is what's unique about this one-of-a-kind program:

- Utilizes Galaxy Cinemas in Guelph and Landmark Cinemas in Kitchener to offer a different experience.
- Students are provided with ideas and strategies to build resilience and help them embrace life's opportunities.
- Each presenter uses a different style and approach that adapts to different learning styles, ensuring the day's messages resonate with everyone.
- Reinforces many key classroom messages.
- Sparks continued learning at this pivotal time, as students prepare to enter high school.

DID YOU KNOW?

Part of the program includes educating the students on the work of the Child Witness Centre so that they are aware of community supports available to them if they ever become victimized.

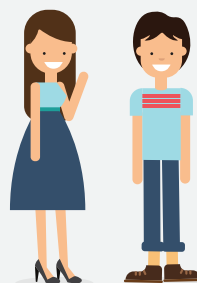
Adults tell us that they get just as much out of the day as students.



3,910
students



270
teachers



63
volunteers



67
schools

Thank You to our Sponsors...



“Your contribution to this incredible event is an investment in our future leaders and also fosters a forum to bridge the gap between older adults, community leaders, enterprise, academia, and our youth. Inclusion and diversity in a learning way.” ~ A Volunteer

Key Learnings from Students

- Use your voice!
- Small things matter and make a difference!
- Believe in yourself!
- Let go of the negative!
- Consent is important!
- Don't take things for granted!
- Always try your hardest!
- Always be mindful about your choices!



Photo by Melissa Askew on Unsplash

Teachers Say...

“I believe in the importance of our students receiving positive, inspiring messages to help them grow into a positive adulthood.”

“The use of humour really helped to hook the attention of the students. They had fantastic messages for our students.”

“I loved having true topics with strong messages that the students need to hear.”

“Loved today and look forward to this trip above all we have.”

“A valuable experience for youth, giving them some tools for coping with their lives now and moving forward.”

Photo by Randy Tarampi on Unsplash

“I feel inspired to be an even better person than I am now.”

~ A Student

DREAM
BIG.

Strengthening our Community..

THANKS TO YOU!



We live in a caring community and appreciate every dollar given to support our services. Thank you for allowing us to do what we do best! Without each of you, there would be nowhere for these children and youth to receive uniquely tailored support.

Pancake Lunch

We welcomed 725 guests who came together on Tuesday February 25th at Bingemans for our annual signature event, the Pancake Lunch. We enjoyed a delicious lunch buffet, networked with friends and colleagues, introduced our new Executive Director and celebrated the important work you support – all within an hour!

Many corporate partners were integral to the success of this by choosing to be an event, food, partner, supporter, media or table sponsor. We are so grateful for all our sponsors and those who attended this sold-out event. This was the biggest turn-out ever and also raised the largest amount ever – over \$43,000!



Third Party Events

From golfing to motorcycles and everything in between, new community connections were made through these events, thanks to you! We are extremely grateful to everyone in our community who hosted an event in support of our work.

The Annual Co-operators Charity Golf Tournament

On June 13, the 25th Annual Co-operators Charity Golf Tournament was held at the Ariss Valley Golf and Country Club. The golfers, volunteers and the amazing team from The Co-operators had an absolute blast. The day included a BBQ, a putting competition, and ended with a fantastic dinner reception, all of which was accented by a strong sense of doing good for your community. Through their own generous giving, along with donations from sponsors and partners, this tournament raised \$129,000!





Widows Sons Grand River Chapter Charity Ride

On August 24, the first annual Widows Sons Grand River Chapter Charity Ride took place with 54 riders and 11 passengers embarking from Blackridge Harley-Davidson in Cambridge for a scenic motorcycle ride in support of the Child Witness Centre. Thanks to everyone who participated, this event raised \$3,000!

2019 RIDE for Refuge

Saturday October 5, was a beautiful sunny day to walk or ride in support of the Child Witness Centre. We were very excited to have six teams and forty-three participants in our first year. Thank you to everyone; together we raised over \$11,000, surpassing our goal!

In the Community

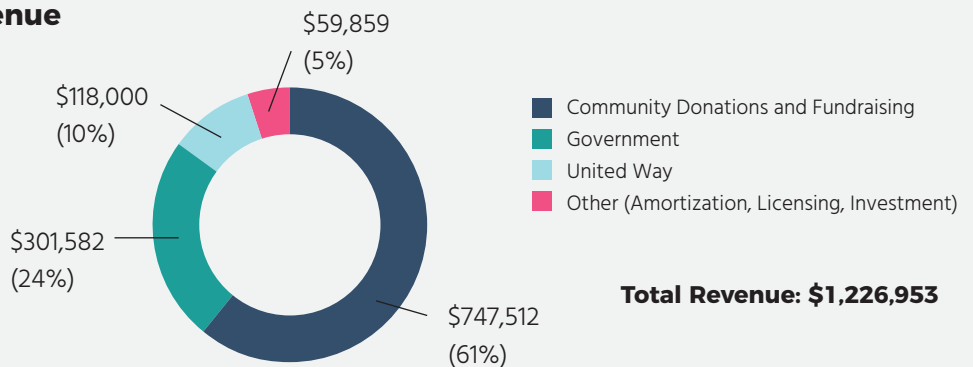
We love being out in the community, thanking our supporters or creating awareness about our work and the challenges young victims face. This is a trend that we hope will continue!



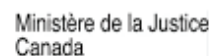
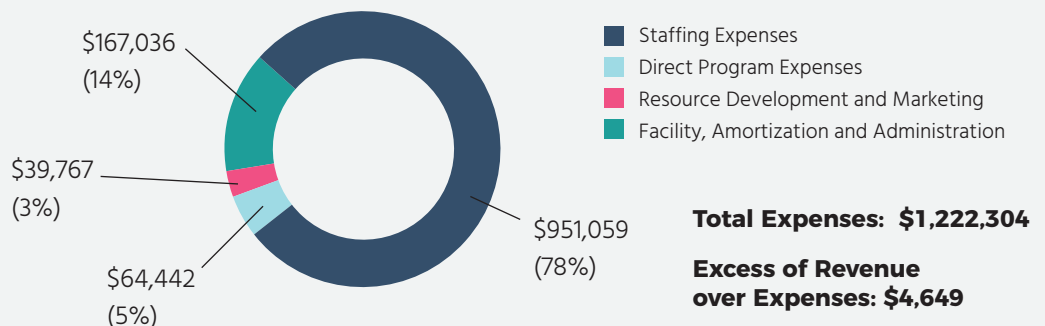
2019-2020 Financial Summary

The work we do is so important in our community and for the futures of the children, youth and families that we serve. We could not do this work without our funders. We truly appreciate every dollar given to support our services.

Revenue



Expenses



Certain funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Attorney General. Views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

A PARENT GRATEFUL FOR OUR SERVICES... THANKS TO YOU!

"...never in a million years would we have expected to need the services of the Child Witness Centre - and we are so appreciative that the program is available; we would've been lost without it. I tell anyone who is aware of our situation that if you have to go through something like we did, the supports that are in place are amazing."



Charitable registration number 10097 7180 RR0001

111 Duke Street East, Kitchener, ON N2H 1A4

Phone: 519-744-0904

Toll free number: 1-888-544-0904

Fax: 519-744-5379

Email: admin@childwitness.com

Website: www.childwitness.com

Twitter: [@Childwitnessctr](https://twitter.com/Childwitnessctr)

Facebook: [@Childwitnesscentre](https://facebook.com/Childwitnesscentre)