

2025 – 18th Annual Child Witness Centre Youth Symposium for Grade 8 Students in Waterloo Region, Guelph, and Wellington County



Tuesday, April 15, 10:00 am - 1:30 pm

- Galaxy Cinemas, 485 Woodlawn Road West, Guelph

Wednesday, April 16 & Thursday, April 17, 10:00 am - 1:30 pm

- Galaxy Cinemas, Conestoga Mall, 550 King Street North, Waterloo

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Open to Grade 8 students and their teachers, in public, Catholic and independent schools in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County. We can welcome over 3,500 students in total over the three days.
- The program is strategically scheduled in April, reaching students as they prepare for high school.
- Registration fee is \$15 per student, teacher, and parent supervisor.
- Each class remains together throughout the Symposium and is supervised in the theatre by their teacher.
- Students will participate in three presentations throughout the day as well as learn more about the services provided by Child Witness Centre. Students will learn how we can walk with and support them on their journey through the criminal justice process if they are ever a victim or witness of abuse or crime.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Provide grade 8 students with current and relevant information that supports their mental health and overall wellbeing (i.e.: social, physical, and emotional).
- Provide youth with tools and strategies to develop resiliency, and empower them towards strong futures.
- Equip students with skills and confidence to better embrace life's opportunities and overcome challenges.
- Challenge youth to dream big and make a positive difference in the world.
- Utilize different presentation approaches to suit various learning styles.
- Support teachers in their important work with their students.

PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

1. **Scott Hammell – Facing Adversity:** Sometimes our worst experiences can end up making us stronger. Scott’s theory about overcoming adversity boils down perspective: adversity comes in many forms, but you can always control your perspective. If you're willing to learn from your negative experiences, you will always come out on top!
<https://youthspeakers.ca/speaker/scott-hammell/>
2. **Rick Osborne – A journey through addiction, crime and prison:** Rick Osborne connects with students about his life as a former gang member and his 23 years in the prison system. Rarely does someone survive Rick's past with both the ability and motivation to make a difference in so many young lives.
3. **Andy Thibodeau – Get your Hand UP!:**
On the first day of high school, Andy was 6 foot and 115 pounds. His #1 enemy ... the wind! Andy tried out for the Junior football team and on the second day of school he experienced the failure of being cut. This hilarious and inspiring program encourages your students to have an attitude of “Pick Me, Pick Me”! Fight the fear of failure and be the student that “Gets Your Hand UP” to answer questions, ask questions, and volunteer. School is about balancing learning and having fun! ***Work ethic, School Spirit, Self-Confidence, Resiliency, and Volunteerism are the key themes of this presentation.*** This powerful message will entertain and inspire students by encouraging them to bring back their Grade 2 enthusiasm and "get your hand up" – participate in class, in school, and in life! Andy encourages students to overcome their fear of failing and urges them to ask questions, answer the teacher, and try their best. The overall moral of this message is to remind students to “take advantage of your time in school to both learn and have fun!” www.andypresentations.com
4. **Kaitlyn Clark – Punching Through Obstacles – Resiliency and Goal Setting:** 2x Canadian Champion and Team Canada Boxer Kaitlyn Clark shares how to embrace resilience and set powerful goals to navigate life's challenges. Drawing from her personal journey of overcoming obstacles, Kaitlyn shares how resilience and a clear vision have been key to her success. She discusses the importance of setting realistic, meaningful goals, staying determined through setbacks, and developing the mental toughness to persevere when things get tough. Kaitlyn’s story highlights that, like in boxing, life is full of challenges—but with the right mindset and the ability to bounce back, anyone can achieve their dreams.
5. **Jeff A.D. Martin – Diversity and Inclusion:** Many people do not recognize that although we are all different in gender, skin complexion, religion etc., as human beings, the only difference between any one of us, on a microscopic level is 0.01%. This means we are more alike than not. The sad part is people are being bullied, discriminated against, and even killed over the

difference of 0.01%. Jeff focuses in on the power of inclusion and embracing diversity.

<https://youthspeakers.ca/speaker/jeff-a-d-martin/>

6. **Family Violence Project – Healthy Dating Relationships:** Youth are bombarded with media images and the social pressure to be in dating relationships – from “hanging out” to “hooking up”. This session will provide youth with an understanding of what makes for healthy, respectful dating relationships. Students will take away some skills for recognizing both qualities to look for and what qualities to watch out for. <https://familyviolenceprojectwr.ca/>
7. **Chris Gray – The Power of Perseverance:** In this keynote presentation, Chris focuses on the power of persevering through hardship. He tells stories of his childhood, which was riddled with alcohol abuse and psychological disorders. Despite these hardships, Chris dared to dream big. Viewers take away the realization that their circumstances don’t have to dictate their actions. We all have the power to persevere if we put enough passion and drive into achieving our dreams. <https://youthspeakers.ca/speaker/chris-gray/>
8. **Debb Bodkin – Global Citizenship and the Experience that Moved Me to Action!** Debb was a Sergeant with Waterloo Regional Police for 24 years. She loved her career here in Canada, but she also found ways to use her police training to do more in other parts of the world. Debb worked overseas in war torn countries including Kosovo, Sudan, Rwanda, and Bangladesh. She will speak about her experiences and the incredible people she met, with the goal of motivating students to do what they can to make the world a better place. <https://www.debbiebodkin.com/>
9. **Mind Bender – How My Mind Got Bent!** At eight years of age, it became clear that Jordan Murciano had a learning disability. Once Jordan discovered magic and was transferred to a new school that catered to students with learning disabilities, it became clear that Jordan wasn’t alone and could still live a fulfilling life and even run his own business. This presentation features some of Mind Bender’s favourite pieces of interactive magic, his personal story, and the universal techniques he discovered for feeling accepted and working through difficult problems. <http://www.mindbendermagic.com/>

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Please join us in thanking the [Sertoma/LaSertoma Foundation](#) whose support makes this unique program possible.