

# Annual Report

2022 - 2023



Celebrating 40 Years



# Vision, Mission, Values and Beliefs

## Our Vision

Stride envisions a world in which barriers to employment have been eliminated for people living with mental health and/or addictions challenges.

## Our Mission

Stride is committed to providing person centered support to empower people living with mental health and/or addiction challenges to gain and maintain meaningful employment.

## Our Values

Stride recognizes that employment and self-determination contribute significantly to a person's sense of dignity, independence and quality of life and self-determination contribute significantly to a person's sense of dignity, independence and quality of life.

Stride believes that people living with mental health and/or addiction challenges make significant contributions to society.

Stride respects the individual needs and strengths of each person. We work collaboratively with partners and individuals we serve to assist them in identifying and achieving their employment goals.

### We Believe:

- In treating people with dignity and respect
- In all individuals having the opportunity to achieve their employment goals
- In providing service levels that exceed expectations for those we serve
- In creative, innovative responses to the ever-changing political, economic and work environments



## About Us

Supported Training & Rehabilitation in Diverse Environments (Stride) is a nonprofit, charitable, community based vocational rehabilitation program founded in 1983.

Stride's primary purpose is to assist individuals living with mental illness and addiction find and maintain meaningful work. Our programs include:

### Employment Connections Program

We deliver a wide range of employment connection services including career assessments, skills development, interview practice, job coaching and ongoing job retention support. An employment plan is developed based on skills and experience. Assistance is provided to locate, secure and maintain employment.

### Youth Employment Program

Our staff assist youth aged 16-24, living with mental illness and addiction. Youth are assisted in exploring possible employment options and gaining valuable employment skills. We provide individualized services and supports necessary to be successful in the workplace.

### Pre-Employment Service

This service is designed to enhance and complement the current service model and focuses on assisting individuals to develop vocational and life skills through a variety of training workshops and additional one-on-one support. Staff provide time-limited assistance and guidance in preparing clients for employment through short-term groups and individualized job-readiness support. Services are geared to those interested in obtaining part-time or full-time competitive employment in the community.

### Employment Peer Mentor Program

The Employment Peer Mentor program aims to provide enhanced support to individuals facing mental health and/or addiction challenges. The Employment Peer Mentors are persons with lived experience with mental health and/or addictions and are in recovery. They use their experiential knowledge to inspire hope and empower others in similar situations by providing social and emotional support in order to assist peers on their path towards recovery.

### Employment Justice Program

The Justice Employment Program supports the unique needs of individuals that live with mental health and/or addictions and are justice-involved. The Justice Employment Specialist develops an individualized employment plan to meet the needs of each client; supporting them in developing the needed skills, supports and resources to attain and retain suitable employment opportunities. The aim is to increase their resiliency, promote positive mental health and assist in developing positive relationships to their community.

### Job Development

Our Employer Engagement Specialists work with employers to seek out opportunities for previously non-existent jobs based on gaps discovered during needs analysis discussions with employers. Individuals who are wanting and are ready for job development services are referred internally to the Employer Engagement Specialists by the candidate's Employment Specialist or Youth Employment Specialist.





## A Snapshot

2022-2023

601

People Served



165

Job Placements

650

New Referrals  
to the Agency

129

Served by our  
Employment Peer  
Mentor Program

145

Job Retention  
(clients employed  
over 3 months)



368

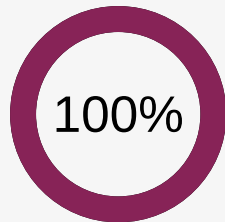
Intake and  
Assessments  
Completed



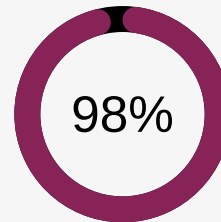


## A Message From Our Clients

Stride invited clients to participate in the Ontario Perception of Care (OPOC) standardized survey. This tool focuses on the client's perception of the services they receive from the agency. The results of the survey are used to make valuable service improvements to client care.



*100% of the respondents that answered this question agreed/strongly agreed that if they had a friend in need of similar help, they would recommend Stride.*



*98% of the respondents that answered this question agreed/strongly agreed that staff understood and responded to their needs and concerns.*

*"The support I received from staff assigned to help me has been invaluable. They have been easy to contact, quick to respond, and patient with issues I experienced over the course of their help process."*

*"Every single person I talked to was welcoming, understanding and embodied an environment of true acceptance from the start. It was actually quite jarring (in a good way), and took me some time to understand that it was real. This was a safe space to be myself and to be genuinely honest without risking that societal backlash."*

*"Life has gone in a better direction due to the caring and supportive nature of all associated staff and workers - it is clear that they want a forward-moving approach, taking "Stride's" to be proactive!"*



## Our People

### Our Leadership Team



Anita Lloyd  
Executive Director



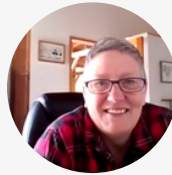
Stephanie McCann  
Quality &  
Operations Analyst



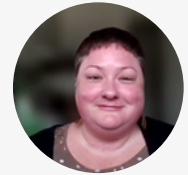
Julie Lange  
Manager, Finance  
and Administration



Terri Skov  
Manager,  
Specialized  
Employment  
Services

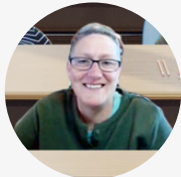


Bonnie Trimble  
Manager,  
Specialized  
Employment  
Services

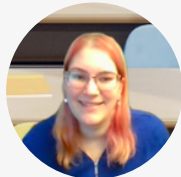


Julie Henshaw  
Manager,  
Specialized  
Employment  
Services

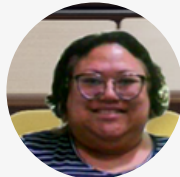
### Employment Peer Mentor Team and Virtual Services Specialist



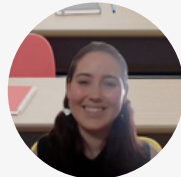
Bonnie Trimble  
Manager, Specialized  
Employment Services



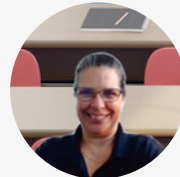
Nicole Frost



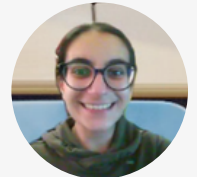
Karen Jacela



Alexandria Nagy



Genevieve Blazik



Jessica El-Helou  
Virtual Services  
Specialist

### Pre-Employment Specialists Team and Intake Specialist



Julie Henshaw  
Manager, Specialized  
Employment Services



Monique Clarke



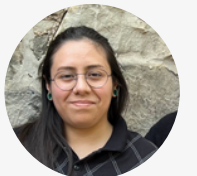
Kristen Whattam



Giselle Glover



Avalon Purdie



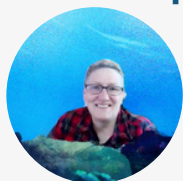
Tanya Sanabria  
Intake Specialist



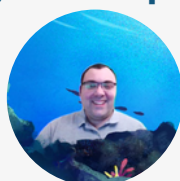
#### Staff Years of Service:

Justine Primeau - 2 years  
Stephanie Hancock - 10 years  
Ayesha Siddiqi - 4 years  
Nicole Frost - 3 years  
Julie Lange - 20 years

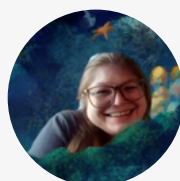
## Youth Employment Specialists and Justice & Youth Specialist Team



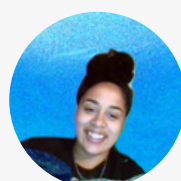
Bonnie Trimble  
Manager,  
Specialized Employment  
Services



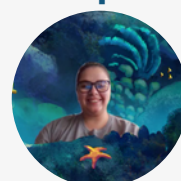
Matthew Wadlin



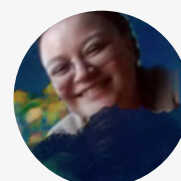
Danielle Larocque



T'Ziah Klass

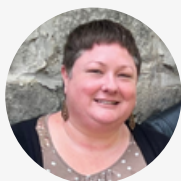


Alyssa Smith



Cassandra  
Dworaczek

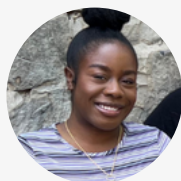
## Peel Employment Specialists and Intake Specialist Team



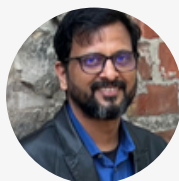
Julie Henshaw  
Manager, Specialized  
Employment  
Services



Matthew Wadlin



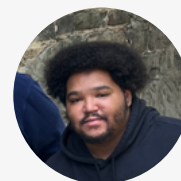
Shanté McKenzie



Ramesh Pandey

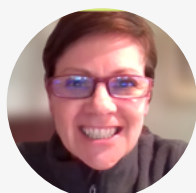


Preeti Panpher

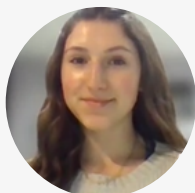


Justin Chin  
Intake Specialist

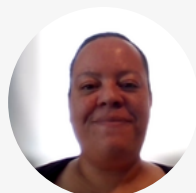
## Halton Employment Specialists Team



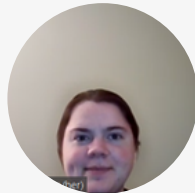
Terri Skov  
Manager, Specialized  
Employment Services



Ashley Soares



Pamela Brown

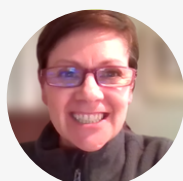


Shannon Mackie

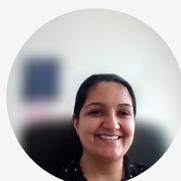


Crystal Dainard  
Employment Supports  
Coordinator

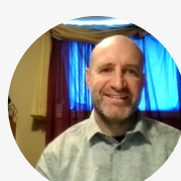
## Employer Engagement Team



Terri Skov  
Manager, Specialized  
Employment Services



Ayesha Siddiqi



Gavin Snell





## Spotlight on Success

John first heard about Stride many years ago through a connection at TEACH (now The Centre for Innovation in Peer Support). Stride had helped an acquaintance find a job, and John figured he would see if Stride could assist him as well. Over the years that John was connected with Stride, he received support from several programs. "I had a Peer Mentor that helped me out quite a bit". He also worked occasionally in the warehouse of Stride's Worksite, although barriers such as not being familiar with taking the bus kept him from getting there consistently. Reflecting on that experience, John says "It was helpful, but I didn't know it at the time". In 2017, John began accessing the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Seeking greater financial autonomy, in 2018 he connected with an Employment Specialist. Despite John's desire to work, he didn't gain employment for several years. With new insight now, John reflects "I wasn't really ready" and "I didn't have the same confidence that I have now... I didn't think I could get back to full time work".

Things began to change in 2023 when John connected with Gavin, an Employer Engagement Specialist, and Shanté, an Employment Specialist. "I got the sense that my new workers really believed I could work". Gavin had a connection with an employer at a sporting goods store and arranged an interview for John. In April, John landed the job as a Freight Associate! So far, John is really enjoying working. While the pay cheque comes in handy, John says "getting out and socializing is way more important". "The experience of working is what's most important. It makes a difference... I've been getting up on my days off and going for a walk". John also notes that his feelings towards work have changed.

***"Even if this doesn't work out, I feel like I could jump into something else – I have the confidence now".***

John's advice for others new to Stride on their employment journey is "Try to have confidence in yourself and don't give up! I've been trying to get back to work for 12 years". John also reflects that it's a process to accept your life as it is, where you're at. When this current opportunity was first discussed, John wondered if it was the right fit for him. With encouragement from his Stride workers he decided to give it a try, with the attitude that "it's a stepping stone". John rightly notes, for himself and others, to take that chance

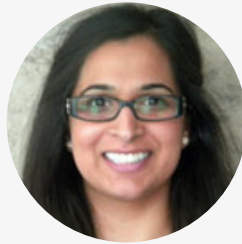
***"Your first step isn't going to be your last!"***



## Board of Directors



**Frank De Vuono**  
Chair



**Fatima-UI-Haq**  
Vice-Chair



**Zoe Vulic**  
Secretary



**Todd Valentine**  
Treasurer



**Catherine McKeown**  
Director



**Mahzaib Ali**  
Director



**Zoe Mitchell**  
Director



**Joydip Banerjee**  
Director



**Sarah Lawson**  
Director



**Nancy Lord**  
Director



**Georges Abdulahad**  
Director



**Alyssa Reddi**  
Non-voting Member



## Strategic Plan Summary 2022-2025

### Who We Are:

Stride supports youth and adults struggling with mental health and or addictions as they seek meaningful employment.

### What We Do:

Our team considers your unique situation, helping you prepare for employment, find a job, and encourage you as you begin your new job. Whether you choose to engage face to face with an employment specialist, attend regular workshops or receive support from a peer mentor, Stride helps you build the confidence and skills needed to find and keep your job Stride promises to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

*Over the next three years, we will focus on three strategic directions and nine initiatives to bring our vision alive. We will work with our community, clients, partners, funders and staff to:*

#### ● Engage

- Enhance employee experience
- Retain and attract talent
- Focus on equity, diversity and inclusion

#### ● Educate

- Actively promote Stride's services by clearly communicating its value proposition to the broader community
- Educate the community, clients, and employers on the employment related opportunities for those living with mental health and or/addictions

#### ● Innovate

- Plan and build new systems to maximize value and growth for internal and external stakeholders
- Create a workplace that will take the organization into tomorrow
- Evolve services to meet the changing needs of the job market and clients
- Diversify funding opportunities





## A Message From Our Board Chair

Stride Friends,

***"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."***

**— Mahatma Gandhi**

For the past 3 years, I have served as the Chairperson for the Board of Directors at Stride. This will be my final year with the organization after serving as a Director on the Board for the past 8 years. This has been an incredible journey for me. I have met some amazing people – people whose opinion matter to me and those that I value. My previous Chair Reports have spoken to the health of the organization, however, in this report, I wish to be more specific with whom I address.

**To the Staff at Stride-** You do incredible work! The changes the staff endured during the pandemic were difficult and cumbersome. While everyone experienced significant change during that time, you were tasked with helping those who needed it the most. The adaptability displayed when staff switched to a hybrid model was astounding. Recently, the Board has become aware of staff retention issues. I assure you, the Board is committed to addressing the issues brought to us by management. I know the work has already started with salary adjustments and that process will continue to evolve over the next few years. The work you do matters. There is no greater gift a human can give than providing someone with hope.

**To Anita, Julie, Stephanie, and the Stride Management Team** - I am always amazed at the volume of work that is completed by the team, but also that it is always completed with enthusiasm and passion. Over the years, I have grown very fond of many of you. We have learned about each other on a personal level and shared our personal successes and losses. I truly believe I am a better person today than I was 8 years ago because of the relationships I have fostered here. Through the Stride re-brand, multiple accreditation processes and strategic planning sessions, worksite closure, Stride program re-vamp and acquiring a new facility, we have faced change together and come to successful outcomes. I'm very proud of the work we have done and the work you will continue to do. You will always have a friend in myself if needed (I admit I may just take very long to respond to email).

**To my Fellow Directors** - Having the decision making power over a non-profit organization is very important and requires knowledge and care. Since becoming a Director at Stride, I have met some incredible people from various professional backgrounds. What united us in our decision making process was our passion for helping those suffering from mental health and addiction issues. The group currently assembled is diverse in their knowledge and experience. I feel very good about the future of Stride knowing this group of Directors will have care of the organization.

Stride has given me more than I ever could have given back. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served on this Board and humbled by the experience.

I wish you all nothing but the best. Stay safe.



Frank De Vuono  
Chairperson, Board of Directors



## A Message From Our Executive Director

Thank you for making 2022-2023 yet another remarkable year for Stride. This year marks a significant milestone for Stride as we celebrate forty years of service for the organization. Since Stride began in 1983, the organization has seen remarkable change, ever striving to meet the growing need for employment support programs and services for individuals facing mental health and addiction challenges. We are proud to look back at our years of progress – whilst we experienced incredible growth, our values and mission remain the same: building an enhanced system of employment support services to help more people move towards employment and independence. Together we take pride in our accomplishments and commitment to excellence.

Our Annual Report highlights Stride's commitment to providing quality employment support services to the mental health and addiction community while working to reduce employment barriers and identifying progressive practices which lead to increased access to employment programs for individuals across Halton and Peel.

It has been an interesting journey over the past year. Our achievements demonstrate our commitment to enhancing the need for an inclusive workforce that creates a sense of identity for employees, fosters a sense of responsibility, and guides the attitudes and behaviours of all workers. We have continued to find innovative ways to serve our community that leaves no-one behind, and focuses on our vision of helping individuals secure and sustain meaningful employment.

We continued to build for the future of the organization, as we launched our strategic plan for 2022-2025, which was informed by Stride's board of directors, employees, clients and key stakeholders. While there is much work to be done to further our organizational goals, amazing progress has been made in identifying effective approaches for our three key strategic directions; Engagement, Education, and Innovation. We have developed a renewed focus to build a comprehensive, connected and efficient service delivery model of employment services; we are hopeful that together we can continue to work to be effective partners, leaders and voices on behalf of the individuals we serve.

As the healthcare sector innovates, we are proud to be participating in two Ontario Health Teams (Burlington Ontario Health Team, Connected Care Ontario Health Team), the Mental Health and Addiction Alliance (comprised of local mental health and addictions service providers) and many new and innovative partnerships and projects (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Compass Food Bank and Outreach Centre, United Way Halton & Hamilton, Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, GIVE Oakville, Give Rise, and so many more). Through this work, we are building a more connected health care system, centred on clients, families and caregivers and are strengthening local services, making it easier for clients to navigate the system and transition between providers.

Stride has continued our involvement in the Ontario government's modernization of the employment and training services sector. This undertaking is one of the largest transformations to employment services in the past several decades and aims to place the needs of job seekers at the forefront of employment programs through locally tailored solutions, enhanced regional partnerships, and the agility to respond to regional needs. While the transformation has been challenging for many Employment Service Providers,

Stride has developed a better understanding of new processes, with approaches becoming integrated into the day-to-day work of our staff; employees are slowly reporting greater understanding of the new model. As we begin this transition our services in Halton, we are committed to working with our Service System Manager to identify gaps and offer best practices in workforce development to support sustainable, quality outcomes for job seekers and businesses.

Covid-19 remained part of many conversations and continued to evolve the way we offered services. The lessons we learned during the pandemic helped us redesign services. We have implemented more effective technology to improve the effectiveness of our staff, created our intake and virtual services programs, developed a web chat service, hosted various workshops and on-line events, and invested in client assessment tools, all contributing to faster service for clients, focused support, decreased wait times for programs and enhanced supports for the individuals whom we support.

None of these achievements would be possible without our amazing team of employees. We owe a big thank you to our staff for their unwavering dedication, flexibility and desire to constantly evolve. Our team has adapted seamlessly to our new normal, supporting the growth of Stride's employment services, which are now being offered both in-person and virtually to individuals impacted by mental illness and addiction. Their drive to provide the highest quality employment and training services for individuals while also delivering efficient, streamlined and more outcomes focused services is immeasurable.

Further acknowledgement must also be given to the leadership staff team. The work of Stride would not have been possible without your unwavering commitment of our employees, exceptional service, outstanding commitment, flexibility and perseverance. My heartfelt appreciation to each of you.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their time and dedication; your support, expertise and leadership have guided Stride to develop new and innovative solutions to meet the employment needs of many in our community. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Frank De Vuono, who will be leaving the board after nine years, for his commitment to consistently work to improve operations, processes and activities in order to meet stakeholder requirements in an efficient, effectual, consistent and effective manner.

As an organization, we aim to: offer services based on the needs of our clients – especially those facing the greatest barriers to employment, advocate for the needs of the most vulnerable, leverage our network to develop partnerships with employers, and enhance the effectiveness of the sector with new avenues for communication, engagement and participation. We also celebrate our successes as we work to respond to the changing needs and challenges of employers and workers within the newly integrated system while also helping to build capacity to help build tomorrow's workforce.

Thank you for your continued support of Stride and the clients we serve. We look forward to an exciting year of growth, opportunity and positive change in 2023-24!



Respectfully Submitted,  
*Anita Lloyd*  
Executive Director





## Treasurer's Report

In thanks to the strong support of our various partners and the outstanding efforts of Stride management and staff, Stride revenues exceeded expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023 by \$103,323 (2022 - \$53,501). Management has succeeded in maintaining the financial strength of the organization throughout a year with considerable uncertainty due to the continued effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, and high staff turnover that has recently stabilized. Management was able to continue to evolve its service offering, ensure the safety of employees, and deliver strong financial results.

Ontario Health Central continues to provide the majority of revenue for Stride (65% of overall), at \$1,628,229 (2022 - \$1,627,400).

The Employment Ontario transformation disrupted the funding models for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS-ODSP), Fedcap Canada, and WCG Services in fiscal 2023. Overall, the management team and staff have done an extraordinary job navigating these changes, resulting in a 7%, or \$43,980, funding increase to \$636,926 in fiscal 2023 (2022 - \$592,946). Combined, these programs generated 25% of overall revenue.

Total revenue for fiscal 2023 increased \$91,275 or 4% to \$2,514,198 (2022 - \$2,422,923), driven primarily by the aforementioned Employment Ontario funding increase, and an increase in Other Revenue to \$201,169 (2022 - \$108,016) primarily due to CIBC funding an Employment Supports Coordinator position and Halton Region funding 2 Intake Specialists. These increased revenues were partially offset by a reduction in charitable donations of \$4,874 (2022 - \$51,636) primarily due to a large one-time donation from the June and Ian Cockwell Private Foundation in 2022.

Total operating expenditures increased \$41,453 or 2% to \$2,410,875 (2022 - \$2,369,422), a modest increase that is representative of the management team's strong financial acumen and governance. Salaries and benefits increased by 3% to \$1,908,400 (2022 - \$1,856,107) and represents 76% of overall revenues.

The contingency fund created in the prior year remains available for emergencies or unforeseen situations that may develop in the organization. This fund is targeted to equal three months of budgeted operating expenditures, and when top-ups are required, a maximum of 10% of the operating fund may be transferred to the contingency fund. For fiscal 2023, the maximum of 10% of the operating fund, or \$66,300, was transferred from the operating fund to the contingency fund.

On behalf of Stride I would like to thank our partners and the Stride management and staff for their continued support. The financial results for the year ending March 31, 2023 were audited by Glenn Graydon Wright LLP. Copies of the Audited financial statements are available from Stride.

Respectfully submitted,

*Todd Valentine, CPA, CMA*

Treasurer, Board of Directors





# Summary of Revenue and Expenses

For the year ended March 31st, 2023:

## REVENUE

|                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Ontario Health Funding       | \$1,628,229 |
| MCCSS-ODSP-ES Revenue/Fedcap | \$446,769   |
| WCG Services                 | \$190,157   |
| Donations and Other Revenue  | \$206,043   |
| United Way                   | \$43,000    |

**Total Revenue** **\$2,514,198**

## EXPENSES

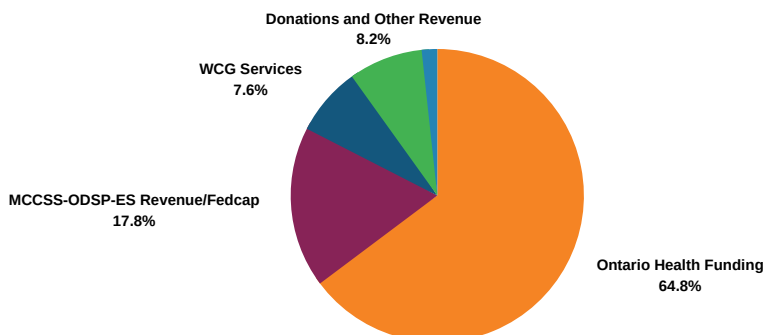
|                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Salaries and Benefits | \$1,908,400 |
| Rent and Utilities    | \$213,273   |
| Other Operating Costs | \$243,878   |

**Total Expenses** **\$2,365,551**

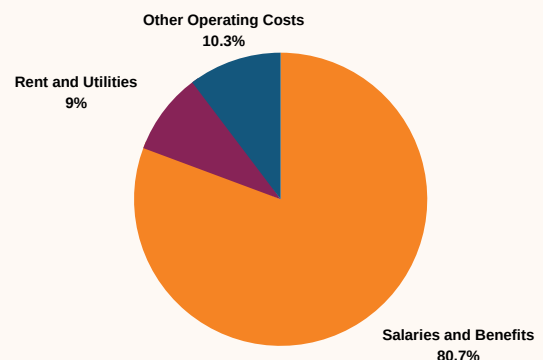
|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Excess of Revenue over expenses for year | \$148,647  |
| Amortization of capital assets           | (\$45,324) |

**Excess of Revenue over Expenses** **\$103,323**

## REVENUE



## EXPENSES





## Our 12 Month Journey



Avalon Purdie, UW Event Award Recipient



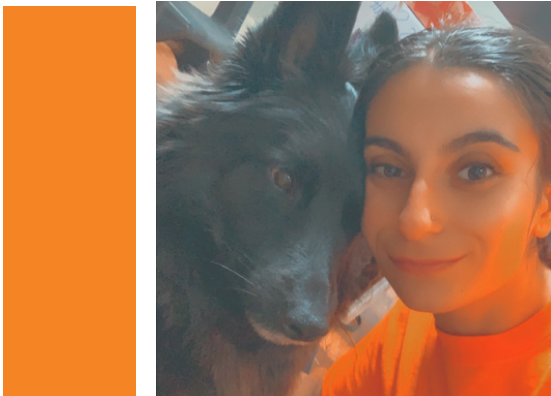
Gavin Snell & Teresa Desjardins, McHappyDay



Justin Chin, Stride Booth



Frank De Vuono, Halton Volunteer Impact Award Recipient



Jessica El-Helou, Orange Shirt Day



Karen Jacela, Orange Shirt Day





## Our 12 Month Journey



Kristen Whattam & Crystal Dainard at Equilibrium



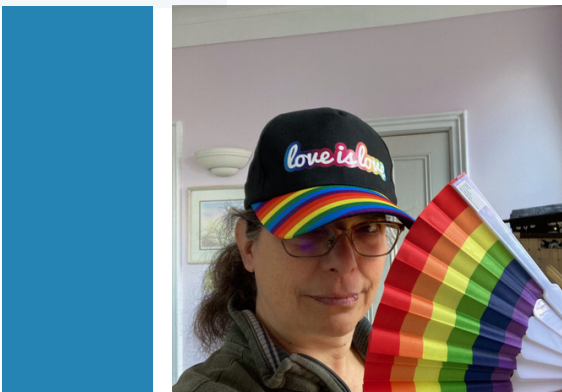
Peel Team



Avalon Purdie & Karen Jacela, UW Event Award Recipient



Nicole Frost & Karen Jacela, United Way Costume Contest



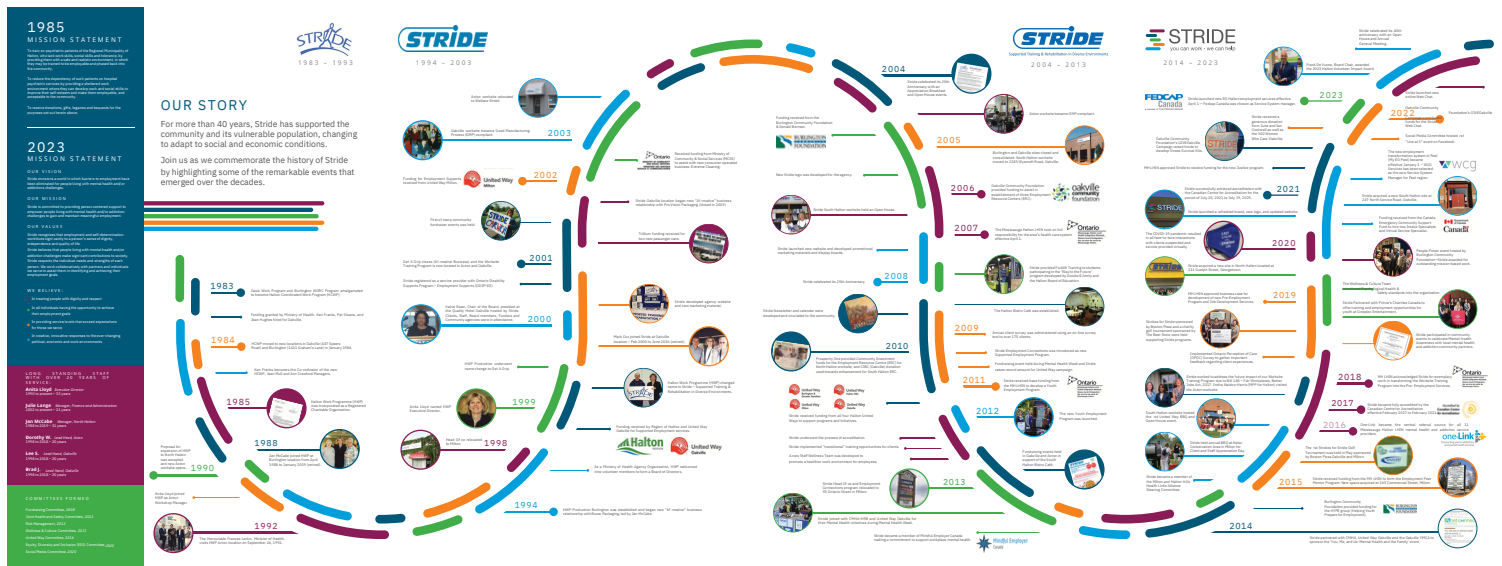
Genevieve Blazik, #IDAHOBIT2023



Avalon Purdie & Karen Jacela, UW Event Award



# Our 40th Anniversary!



**In June 2023 Stride celebrates its 40th Anniversary with the reveal of a four panel tribute of the history of Stride.**

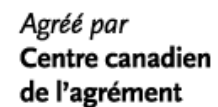
**Visit our Oakville Office located at  
247 North Service Road West, Suite 200,  
Oakville, ON L6M 3E6 to view the panels.**

**Many thanks to Genevieve Blazik, Stephanie McCann, Jessica El-Helou  
and Nicole Frost for bringing this project to fruition.**



# Acknowledgements

*Stride gratefully acknowledges the funding and support received from various individuals and the following:*





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