

# OPTIONS NORTHWEST

LIVE LIFE YOUR WAY



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

95 North Cumberland Street Thunder Bay, ON P7A 4M1

807-344-4994 [optionsnorthwest.com](http://optionsnorthwest.com)

# Our Purpose, Mission, and Values

## Our Purpose

Within the City and District of Thunder Bay, our purpose is to support people with developmental disabilities in their quest to live life their way. We recognize that 'living life their way' is unique to each individual and that we live in a very diverse community.

## Our Mission

We provide high quality, professional and ethical service, ensuring safety for all that:

- Builds skills, capabilities, and confidence of people.
- Assists people to reach their goals and live their dreams.
- Promotes wellness, independence, empowerment, and informed choices.
- Ensures that quality, and continuous improvement is embedded in everything we do.

## Our Values

We will:

- Be respectful, compassionate, inclusive, and fair.
- Collaborate with people and the community.
- Be accountable to the people we support, ourselves and our teams, to our communities and funders.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST, its employees, students, volunteers, and the Board of Directors want to formally acknowledge that we are in the Robinson-Superior territory of 1850 and the land on which we live, work and support families and people with disabilities is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek and Fort William First Nation.

# Message from the Executive Director & Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Leadership Team at OPTIONS NORTHWEST, we are proud to present our 2025-2026 Annual General Report.

At the heart of OPTIONS NORTHWEST is a belief in the dignity, worth, and potential of every person. We know our communities are stronger when everyone is welcomed, respected, and empowered to participate fully in community life.

Every day, our direct support professionals, leaders, and administrative staff demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to inclusion and person-directed support. Working alongside adults with developmental disabilities, they help create opportunities for individuals to make choices, pursue personal goals, build meaningful relationships, and contribute their unique strengths and perspectives. Their dedication supports people in defining success for themselves and living lives that reflect their own aspirations, identities, and values.

The impact of this work is often seen in everyday moments: someone trying something new, gaining confidence, developing greater independence, strengthening connections, or exercising more choice and control in their life. These milestones may look different for each person, but they all reflect the power of support rooted in trust, respect, empathy, and a recognition that each individual is the expert in their own life.

Our staff bring professionalism, compassion, resilience, and creativity to everything they do. Beyond providing support, they help remove barriers, create opportunities, and foster environments where people feel valued and included. Their efforts enrich not only the lives of the individuals they support, but also families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and the broader community. Through their work, people experience greater belonging, accessibility, and opportunities to thrive.

What makes OPTIONS NORTHWEST truly exceptional is our shared commitment to ensuring every person is treated with dignity and respect. We believe inclusion is about more than participation, it is about creating communities where people feel heard, valued, and empowered to contribute in meaningful ways. We remain steadfast in our belief that every individual has the right to make decisions about their own future and to live as full and valued members of their community.

To the individuals and families who place their trust in us, thank you. We recognize the importance of that trust and are honoured to walk alongside you. It is a privilege to support people as they pursue lives filled with purpose, connection, and belonging, while ensuring their rights, choices, identities, and experiences remain at the centre of everything we do.

To our staff, thank you for your unwavering dedication. Your expertise, compassion, and commitment are the foundation of our organization. The relationships you build, the opportunities you create, and the respect you demonstrate each day have a lasting impact on the lives of those we support and on the communities we serve. To our community partners, supporters, and funders, thank you for your continued commitment to accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Your partnership helps create communities where people with developmental disabilities are welcomed, respected, and supported to participate fully in all aspects of life.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to advancing person-directed supports, strengthening accessibility, removing barriers, and expanding opportunities for inclusion. We will continue to advocate for environments where people can make meaningful choices, pursue their goals, build relationships, and live lives defined by their own hopes and ambitions.

Together, we are building more than programs and services, we are helping shape communities where diversity is celebrated, belonging is intentional, and every person has the opportunity to contribute and flourish. Communities where differences are recognized as strengths and where every voice matters.

The Board remains committed to ensuring that our decisions, policies, and resources reflect these values and support meaningful outcomes for the individuals, families, and communities we serve. We will continue to uphold principles of equity, accessibility, inclusion, and accountability as we advance our mission.

Thank you to everyone whose partnership, commitment, and compassion make this work possible. Together, we are creating a future where every person is valued, every voice is heard, and everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, and thrive.

With gratitude,



Erin Dunn  
Board Co-Chair



Kerri-Lee Turcotte  
Board Co-Chair



Tony DeAgazio  
Executive Director

# Events & Training

## Message from Leadership & Management

- AGM 2024-2025
- Community Living Ontario Conference
- Agency BBQ
- Kenwood Pajama Party
- Agency Baseball Game
- National AccessAbility Week
- The Working Mind Foundational Training
- Children's Holiday Party
- Spirit of the Holidays
- City Holiday Parade
- Shuniah Scavenger Hunt
- ONW Golf Tournament
- Home Renovation Project
- Honouring Our Children Walk
- Pink Shirt Day
- ONW Bowling Party
- Community Link Event
- The Hub Halloween Party
- Trunk or Treat
- Holiday Luncheon



Leadership at OPTIONS NORTHWEST is not defined by a title or position. It is reflected in the choices we make, the relationships we build, and the responsibility we take for creating a positive and supportive workplace.

Every member of ONW contributes to leadership. Whether providing direct support, coordinating services, leading teams, maintaining operations, or supporting administrative functions, each person has the ability to influence our culture through their actions, attitudes, and commitment to others.

Strong leadership begins with empathy and respect. It means listening to understand, valuing diverse perspectives, and approaching challenges with compassion and professionalism. It also means holding ourselves accountable to high standards, being open to feedback, and remaining committed to continuous learning and improvement.

The culture of ONW is shaped every day through countless interactions and decisions. It is reflected in how we communicate, collaborate, solve problems, and support one another through both successes and challenges. A healthy culture encourages trust, openness, shared responsibility, and a willingness to learn from experience.

Excellence is not about perfection. It is about growth. It requires curiosity, humility, and the courage to adapt as needs change. By strengthening our skills, sharing knowledge, and embracing new ideas, we build a stronger agency that is better equipped to meet the needs of those we serve.

Trust remains the foundation of effective leadership. It is built through consistency, integrity, transparency, and follow-through. Trust grows when people feel respected, supported, and confident that their contributions matter.

Investing in our people is essential to our success. When employees feel connected, valued, and supported, they are more likely to bring their best thinking, energy, and commitment to their work. Strong teams create stronger outcomes, and a positive workplace benefits everyone.

Ultimately, leadership is an act of stewardship. It is about strengthening our agency for the future, supporting one another in the present, and creating an environment where people can do meaningful work with purpose and pride.

Together, we are building a workplace culture grounded in respect, collaboration, accountability, and continuous growth. Through our collective efforts, we create the conditions for success, both for our agency and for the people who depend on us every day.



# OPTIONS NORTHWEST ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



*Live Life  
Your Way*



Current Structure as March 31, 2026

The Leadership Team at OPTIONS NORTHWEST would like to thank:

- People receiving services and their families.
- Employees, students, volunteers, and community partners.
- Everyone who submitted photos and stories for this report.
- The Board of Directors.
- Everyone who participated in OPTIONS events throughout the year.
- Community and Family Members who generously made donations to ONW.
- Everyone who submitted photos and stories for this report.

IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO SUPPORT AND PARTNER WITH ALL OF YOU!

# Employee Recognition

## Retirements

Evelyn Miller, Sue Mihalus, Juanitta Elliott, Mary Spina

### 35 Years

Kathleen Atkins

### 30 Years

Marie Gusola, Twyla Oleksuk, Janet Berube

### 25 Years

Jerry-Lynn Durant, Rachelle Brown,  
Julie Lemmetty, Warren Vickruck

### 20 Years

Jaime Carpenter

### 15 Years

Amanda Radl, Patti Dustin, Kim McBain,  
Alissa Pradal, Nicole Butvin, Michelle Tallon

### 10 Years

Curtis Armstrong, Suzanne Posthumus, Shirley-Ann Bourdreau,  
Lori Sonogo, Ashlyn Deruiter

### 5 Years

Shannon Bernardo, Karlyne Venton, Terry-Lynne Chesterman,  
Manju Chethukunnel Mani, Gurtej Singh, Rebecca De Dura,  
Morgan Clark, Mark Wade, Tony DeAgazio

Congratulations to all employees who celebrated a milestone year of service with  
OPTIONS NORTHWEST. Thank you for everything you do!

# In Memory

## Leo Annelin

November 13, 1961 – January 6, 2026

It is with the heaviest heart that we share the passing of Leo Annelin, who left us peacefully on January 6, 2026, at his home on Market Street at the age of 64. He was not alone—staff were by his side, supporting and comforting him until the very end.

Born on November 13, 1961, Leo lived a life marked by quiet determination, warmth, and resilience. He expressed himself fully through his presence, his smiles, and his unique way of experiencing the world. One of his greatest achievements was accomplishing all the goals he set for himself—visiting every Thunder Bay landmark he dreamed of.

From the Sleeping Giant to Kakabeka Falls, the Terry Fox Monument, hiking Mount McKay, spending time at Marina Park, Amethyst Mine and exploring Fort William Historical Park—Leo accomplished them all, leaving behind cherished memories.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the staff at the Market and Hodder homes. Your dedication, patience, and care allowed Leo to live fully, pursue his goals, and experience joy and dignity in his daily life.

Leo leaves behind a legacy of determination, warmth, and inspiration. Though he has passed, he accomplished his dreams, and his memory will forever remain in our hearts.

Written by Utsav Khmar, Supported Living Services Supervisor



## Stan Rogala

“Your soft presence brought more joy than you knew”

With heavy hearts we remember a dear member of our group home family who passed away recently. From the very day Kenwood group home opened, Stanley was here. He saw new staff come and go, welcomed new roommates with a smile and made the house feel like a home long before the rest of us knew how.

He cherished his favourite Elmo stuffy and soft music. He had a smile that could light up a room. For the staff, he was a teacher. For the residents he was a constant. For all of us, he was family. We were honoured to walk alongside for so many years. We will carry his memory with us in the way we care for each other every single day.

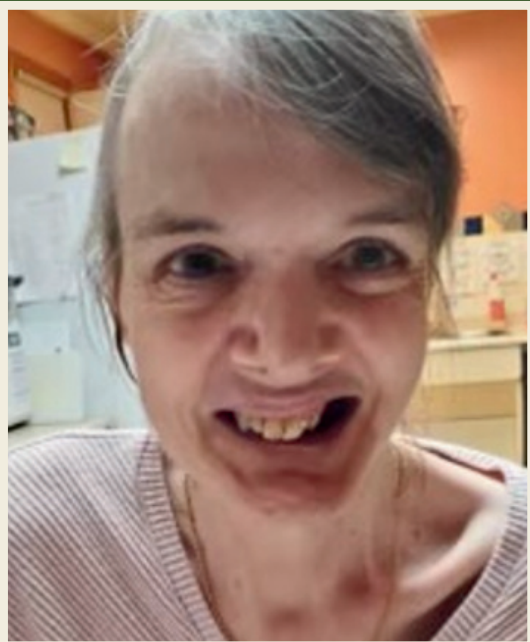
Rest easy Stan, you are home, always.

Written by Kristi Green,  
Supported Group Living Counsellor





# In Memory



## Sue Lambert

On October 12, 2025 we said goodbye to a remarkable woman whose presence brought light, laughter, and music into our lives. Most Friday evenings she would head to the Hub for Karaoke. It quickly became more than a social activity. It was her stage, her joy, and her way of connecting. Sue loved to sing and some of her favorite songs were "Who Let the Dogs Out", and "Close to you". Sue loved Abba. She sang with enthusiasm and had a sparkle in her eye that invited everyone to share in the moment. It was here Sue formed a special friendship with Riley. What began as sharing a microphone and cheering each other on between songs grew into a meaningful relationship. Their Fridays extended to more than Karaoke nights. They visited one another's homes, and enjoyed supper together, out for breakfasts. Their friendship is a beautiful reminder of what can happen when people are given opportunities to gather, share experiences, and simply just have fun.

Through music she not only found happiness she enriched the lives of those around her. Friday nights weren't just about music they were about belonging, friendship, and joy.

Though her voice is now quiet, the echoes of her songs, and the memories she created will play on in our hearts like a favorite song. Written by Donna Tienhaara, Supervisor of Quality Assurance

## Marvin Bone

Marvin, beloved longtime resident and cherished companion of the Nicholetts group home, passed away on July 31 at the age of 13. With his sweet underbite and gentle nature, Marvin was loved by everyone who met him. He enjoyed relaxing outside in the yard, greeting all who visited, and happily accepting treats from anyone who came through the door.

Rescued from Round Lake through Northern Lights Dog Rescue in 2012, Marvin became a special part of the home and brought comfort, joy, and companionship to those he shared his home with over the years. His kind spirit will be deeply missed.

Written by Amanda Radl, Supported Living Services Supervisor

*Those we love don't go away,  
they walk beside us every day.  
Unseen, unheard but always near,  
still loved, still missed and held so dear.*





# Supportive Living Services Updates

As we reflect upon the past year, I am proud of the many accomplishments made by the people we support and the staff at OPTIONS. Together, the agency has achieved more than I could have imagined in a period of just one year. One of the most visible achievements of this past year is the renovations of some of the homes that people we support live in. We take great pride in knowing that people supported can enjoy living in their newly updated, beautiful, safe, and comfortable homes. It is very gratifying to know that we were able to update some of the homes and offer a better environment for people we support to live, and for employees to work in.

We have already received a lot of positive feedback from those who live in and those who work at the homes that were renovated. We will be working on more renovations to existing agency homes in the upcoming year.

This year, I have invited input from the Managers and Supervisors of Supported Living Services to expand on our update through various views of those who work in this service area.

To be able to update on this service accurately, we also need to have the input from the Managers and Supervisors of Supported Living Services.



Written by Mark Beazley, Director of Supported Living Services

## Reflection on Change and Growth

Looking back on the past year at ONW, I can honestly say it has been one of meaningful change and renewed appreciation for my work.

Midway through the year, I transitioned to a new location. At first, I found myself resistant to the change, having felt very connected to the SIL program and the individuals I supported there.

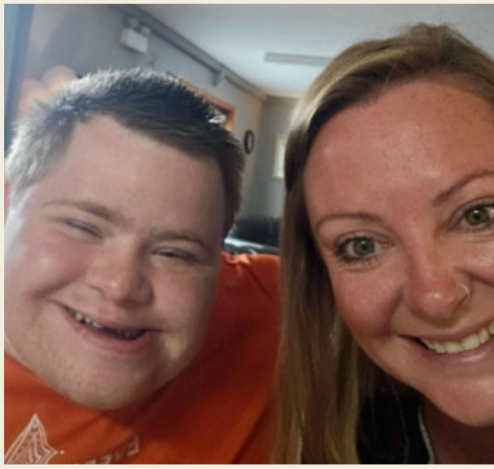
However, over time, I have come to truly value this new chapter. Returning to group living has reminded me of the heart of this work. The daily interactions, shared laughter, and trust from the individuals we support are incredibly meaningful. Moments at Dacre and Kenwood in particular have brought a renewed sense of joy and purpose to my work.

I have also been deeply grateful for the staff teams, who have been welcoming, supportive, and committed throughout the transition. Their willingness to embrace change, take on challenges, and continue learning has made this adjustment both positive and rewarding. I feel fortunate to work alongside such dedicated teams who continually inspire growth and collaboration.



Written by Lori McCoy, Supervisor of Supported Living Services

# Supportive Living Services Updates



## Passport Program & Staff Development

This year, significant work was completed to strengthen the Passport program. All individuals were successfully staffed, with budgets, service agreements, recruitment, hiring, and orientation processes completed for both new and existing staff. Training sessions were held for staff, supervisors, and administrative supports to ensure shared understanding and consistency across the program.

Following this, the program was divided among supervisors to support a more hands-on and individualized approach to managing Passport funds.

Administration also provided additional support for purchasing and distribution when required. This collaborative model has improved oversight and strengthened person-centred planning. As a result, just over 60% of the total budget was utilized this year, with many individuals fully accessing their available funding.

Written by Alissa Pradal, Supervisor of Supported Living Services

## Team Development & Learning

Supervisors recently participated in a four-session team-building series focused on strengthening collaboration and consistency across teams. The sessions focused on communication, shared expectations, trust-building, accountability, and practical commitments to support day-to-day work. These discussions also supported ongoing reflection on how to carry these practices forward within each team.

Written by Amanda Lebel, Manager of Development and Engagement

## A New Role

In September 2025, I stepped into a supervisor role at our agency. I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to continue growing both personally and professionally while supporting individuals, staff, and families in their daily lives. This role has deepened my understanding of leadership, compassion, patience, and the impact we can make through consistent, respectful support. I feel very fortunate to be part of a dedicated supervisory team that shares the same values and commitment to creating an empowering environment for those we support.

Written by Rosemarie MacLean,  
Supervisor of Supported Living Services



# Supportive Living Services Updates

## Community Living Ontario Conference

From September 16–18, Tori, Amanda L, Amanda R, Lori, Mark, and Patricia attended the Community Living Ontario Conference in London, Ontario. The event provided an opportunity to connect with leaders, advocates, and community members across the developmental services sector.

A variety of sessions were attended, many led by individuals with lived experience, offering valuable perspectives and meaningful discussion. Topics included financial planning, self-advocacy, housing, and microboards. The group returned with new insights and ideas to further enhance the quality of life for the people we support and to continue strengthening inclusive practices within our organization.

Written by Amanda Lebel, Manager of Development and Engagement



## A Place of Connection and Joy

Francis Street continues to be a home filled with warmth, humour, and strong connections. The individuals and staff share a genuine sense of community, where laughter and lighthearted moments are part of everyday life. Whether enjoying playful jokes or simple shared moments, there is always a sense of joy throughout the home.

Time outdoors remains a favourite for everyone—whether relaxing under the new gazebo, enjoying the sunshine on the grass, or watching birds at the feeders. These everyday experiences continue to bring calm and happiness to the group.

Each individual brings their own personality and interests that make the home so special. Peenie enjoys going for coffee with his passport worker Mike, which he always looks forward to. Geraldine finds comfort in peaceful moments outdoors and engaging with sensory items. Thomas enjoys his favourite cartoons, sensory activities, and sweet treats. Nathan continues to enjoy going out and visits with family, and his humour brings smiles to those around him. Together, they create a welcoming and supportive environment that truly reflects a sense of home.

Written by Alana McKay, Supervisor of Supported Living Services



# Supportive Living Services Updates



## You See Them Rollin'

The Driving Program is now in its second year at OPTIONS, and it has truly been rewarding to see the difference it makes in the lives of the people we support. Whether it's getting to an appointment, attending an agency event, going to school, or enjoying time in our community, this program offers a dependable in-house service that has become such an important part of people's daily lives. Being part of this much-needed service has been incredibly meaningful, and I have genuinely enjoyed building strong, lasting relationships with the people we serve along the way.

Written by Mark Wade, Agency Driver & Office Assistant

## The Fantastic Four

The residents and staff at St. James are very excited about the recent renovations to the home. From brand-new windows to a completely updated kitchen and new appliances, the house is looking fantastic!

Sandra has especially been enjoying spending time in the kitchen cooking and assisting staff. The new kitchen layout has helped increase her independence, as everything is now more easily organized and accessible for her. Her favourite meal to make is lazy cabbage rolls, with pasta and meatballs being a close second.

Nancy recently had her room painted purple and purchased new dressers for herself. She happily spends time organizing and decorating her room, making it a space she truly enjoys.

Rick has been enjoying many Passport activities, including trips to Mario's Bowl, concerts, and meeting up with friends. Of course, his favourite stop continues to be A&W.

Tracey also continues to enjoy her Passport activities, to concerts, movies and especially animals visits. She loves the Pet stores and Dog parks . She has had a few visits from Brandon Madore and his dog, Cedar, which always makes her day!

Written by Alana McKay,  
Supervisor of Supported Living Services



# Community Resource Team & Quality Assurance Updates

The Community Resource Team (CRT) successfully achieved all funded service targets for the 2025–2026 fiscal year, continuing to support people with an intellectual disability in Thunder Bay and the surrounding district. Many people accessed multiple CRT services to meet their diverse needs. Services provided included:

- Speech-Language Pathology including music therapy
- Health Care Supports
- Social Work Services
- Child and Adult Positive Behavioural Supports
- Single Plan of Care Planning (in partnership with the children's sector)
- Forensic Behavioural Supports (in partnership with Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, until October)
- Occupational Therapy
- Behavioural Consultation and Registered Behaviour Analyst (RBA) Services
- Psychological Assessments to see if people qualify for developmental services
- Access to specialized services through the Northern Community Network of Specialized Care, including Specialized Accommodation funding (3 funding contracts during this period)
- Student placements, including 2 Northern Ontario School of Medicine group placements, 1 Developmental Service Worker student, and 1 Social Service Worker student

Priority this year was strengthening partnerships with residential services by assigning a clinician to each home or designated area. This approach enhanced collaboration, communication, and team-based support. Several group initiatives were also offered, including Peer Connections, Snoezelen training, and the Trunk or Treat event. In addition to direct service delivery, CRT maintained active involvement in numerous committees and initiatives, including:

- Speak Up
- DSW Advisory Committee
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- Rights Review Committee
- Third-Party Reviews of Behaviour Support Plans
- Northern Community of Practice in Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Community of Practice
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives
- Intentional Housing Consortium

CRT also increased advocacy efforts at both the provincial and federal levels to support reinstating the Developmental Services Worker (DSW) program on the Post-Graduation Work Permit eligibility list.

The Quality Assurance program focused on strengthening medication administration practices, and documentation standards. Several health care related policies were also reviewed and enhanced.



In February, CRT recognized the retirement of Joel McCartney after 12 years of dedicated service. While Joel will be greatly missed, we are pleased to welcome Dr. Drawson and Dr. Toombs, who will contribute their expertise in psychological services.

It is a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated and knowledgeable team, committed to supporting people in living life their way.

Written by Lisa Maki, Director of Clinical Services



# Community Resource Team & Quality Assurance Updates

## Cheers to Joel McCartney

After 12 years of dedicated service to the Community Resource Team, Joel McCartney is now retiring. Joel was our Psychological Associate who facilitated our Eligibility assessments, support to our clinicians and behaviour consultations out of Timmins, Ontario. He has been such a great asset to our clinical team and helped many people in our community (and surrounding areas). Joel came to us with a wealth of knowledge and has taught us so much throughout the past years.

We are going to miss his sense of humour and expertise in the field. We hope that someone as deserving as Joel gets to enjoy all that life entails and we can't express our gratitude enough!!

We hope Joel still comes to visit us and enjoy some yummy Persians. He will surely be missed.

Cheers to retirement!

Written by Michelle Lavoie-Pintar, Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



## The Importance of Community Partnerships

Community partnerships play a vital role in improving clients' overall well-being and health outcomes. Working within a multi- or interdisciplinary team offers significant advantages, as professionals collaborate across specialized disciplines to address complex challenges. This integrated approach supports the delivery of comprehensive care while strengthening core competencies. In regions with limited resources—particularly in northern communities, like ours—collaboration with external organizations becomes even more critical, enabling clinicians to bridge gaps in care that might otherwise persist.

Effective collaboration also helps reduce duplication of services, contributing to more sustainable care systems and alleviating long waitlists. As demand for services continues to rise, it is not only practical but essential for organizations to work together and extend care beyond traditional clinical settings. Such partnerships allow for more proactive adjustments to services, ensuring that client needs are met in a timely and efficient manner. Beyond service delivery, partnerships contribute to broader community-building efforts. By working together, organizations can enhance care coordination, making it easier for clients to navigate available services while minimizing redundancy. This collaborative approach encourages professionals to engage with other agencies, understand their processes, and confidently direct clients to appropriate resources. Awareness of community assets fosters a shared vision among service providers and can uncover previously underutilized resources and opportunities for information sharing. I am grateful to be apart of such a team with a wealth of knowledge and community understanding of supports and services in our region.

Ultimately, collaboration should be a collective priority, grounded in a shared commitment to meaningful change. While building and maintaining partnerships can be challenging at times, the benefits are substantial. Effective, coordinated care empowers individuals, improves service quality, and can reduce complications, hospitalizations, and associated costs. In doing so, it also strengthens trust and promotes deeper community engagement. The Community Resource Team actively builds on this foundation of trust to promote diverse and inclusive approaches to care. By incorporating a range of perspectives, the team enhances its ability to support clients in more responsive and effective ways. A sincere thank you to our community partners for being a vital source of knowledge sharing and providing us with ongoing learning opportunities over the years.

Written by Michelle Lavoie-Pintar, Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



# Human Resources Update

The Human Resources team has had a busy, rewarding, and successful year supporting the agency through recruitment, onboarding, employee support, and workplace wellness initiatives. We are incredibly proud of everything that has been accomplished. From welcoming new staff and building strong community partnerships to supporting immigration pathways and promoting psychological health and safety, this work reflects our ongoing commitment to creating a strong, caring, and inclusive workplace for everyone across the organization.

Throughout the year, we held three General Orientation sessions and were excited to welcome 41 new employees to the agency. Of those new hires, 35 joined us in frontline support roles, 3 came on board as non-union staff, and 3 joined as General Assistants. It has been wonderful to see the General Assistants making such positive contributions across all areas of OPTIONS NORTHWEST.

We also continued to grow our community partnerships through student placements and recruitment outreach. In partnership with Confederation College, we supported placements for 5 Developmental Service Worker students, 1 Social Service Worker student, and 1 Recreational Therapy student.



It was especially encouraging to see that 5 of those students expressed interest in continuing their employment journey with OPTIONS NORTHWEST after their placements. We also enjoyed connecting with potential candidates at two career fairs: one at Confederation College, which welcomed a strong turnout of Human Services students, and the Opportunities Northwest job fair, where we had the chance to connect with other community agencies as well. Another important focus for the HR department has been supporting current employees through the Rural Community Immigration Pilot program. This initiative helps speed up recommendations for permanent residency, and over the past year we were pleased to support 5 employees in achieving their permanent residency. HR also led several initiatives this year to support employee wellness and help create a healthy, positive workplace culture, including:

- Celebrated Mental Health Week in May 2025 by sharing resources from the Canadian Mental Health Association's "Unmasking Mental Health" initiative and entering employees into a draw for a care basket.
- Recognized Healthy Workplace Month in October 2025 by sharing practical wellness resources employees could easily bring into their workdays, along with another staff wellness prize draw.

Alongside these wellness initiatives, the HR department, Leadership team, and Supervisors continue to be committed to building a psychologically safe workplace. As part of that commitment, we participated in The Working Mind Foundations training in October 2025. This was an important step in building awareness, strengthening support, and continuing to care for one another across the organization.

Overall, this has been a busy and positive year filled with recruitment, onboarding, staff development, and new initiatives. We are also happy to welcome Felesha McLaren to the department in her role as Human Resources and Training Advisor. As a team, we are proud of all that has been accomplished this year and are excited to continue building on this momentum in the year ahead. Written by Morgan Clark, Manager of Human Resources

# Finance Update

## Introduction

The Finance Department continued to support the organization through effective financial stewardship, payroll administration, information technology services, and process improvement initiatives. Throughout 2025, our focus remained on enhancing operational efficiency, strengthening internal controls, improving system utilization, and providing timely and reliable support to staff and management. The following highlights summarize key accomplishments achieved during the year.

## Information Technology

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve workforce management processes and increase staff adoption of UKG, the UKG SMS Shift Fill module was successfully implemented in July 2025. This enhancement enables available shifts to be distributed and filled directly through the system, significantly reducing scheduling bottlenecks and improving response times. The IT team continues to work closely with the Supportive Living Services Scheduling Department to troubleshoot issues, provide user support, and implement programming enhancements that improve day-to-day operational efficiencies.

## Payroll

Payroll services continued to focus on accuracy, efficiency, and employee engagement. By providing employees with the ability to review and approve their own timecards prior to payroll processing, both payroll accuracy and employee satisfaction have improved. This initiative has also contributed to a continued reduction in missed shifts and payroll adjustments, supporting more efficient payroll administration and stronger accountability throughout the organization.

## Finance Core

The Finance Department remained committed to maintaining strong financial management, accountability, and transparency throughout the fiscal year. We continued to support organizational operations through effective budgeting, timely financial reporting, and responsible stewardship of resources. Several process improvements were introduced to strengthen financial oversight, enhance operational efficiency, and support informed decision-making. These initiatives contributed to streamlined workflows, improved reporting capabilities, and increased accountability across departments.

## Conclusion

The accomplishments achieved during 2025 reflect our commitment to continuous improvement, operational excellence, and responsible stewardship of organizational resources. Through collaboration with departments across the organization, we have strengthened systems, improved processes, and enhanced service delivery. We extend our appreciation to all staff and departments for their cooperation, dedication, and support in maintaining accurate records, efficient operations, and strong financial controls. We look forward to building on these achievements in the coming year.

Written by The Finance Team

# The Hub Update

The Hub continues to be a welcoming and inclusive place where people can connect, build new friendships, and enjoy a variety of activities.

Throughout the year members participated in programs such as crafts, sewing, canvas art, woodworking, cooking class, life skills workshops and selfcare groups.

The Hub also provides opportunities for socializing, games, movies, coffee/lunch gatherings and community activities, including picnics, swimming, pickleball and local events.

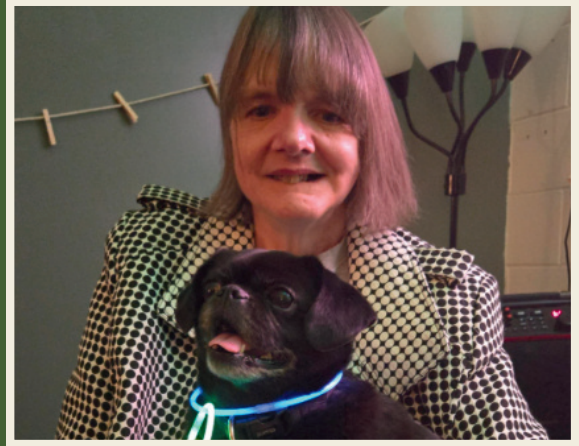
By offering diverse programs and fostering community connections.

The Hub remains committed to providing a comfortable, enjoyable space that supports learning, participation, and wellbeing for all members.

Th Hub is always open to new ideas and continues to focus on interests and needs of its participants.

**THE HUB IS A PLACE TO BELONG, A PLACE TO DO IT ALL!**

Written by Alison Lajeunesse, Life Skills Counsellor









# Fun Stuff!

## ‘Chillin’ like Villains

Lacey, Sadie, Ashlyn, Taylor, and Leah

Sadie showed incredible courage during the 2026 Thunder Bay Polar Plunge. She took the leap into the freezing waters of Lake Superior to help support amazing local organizations including Thunder Bay Special Olympics, PRO Kids, CNIB Thunder Bay, and Roots Community Food Centre. Her bravery and excitement were shown as she jumped in before the countdown even finished!



Sadie with the help of her team ‘Chillin’ like Villains’ raised an incredible \$2,705 for the community. But she says, “Never again!” Written by Taylor Lamothe, Supported Group Living Counselor

## The Challenge was Made and OPTIONS Accepted!

In May, Community Living Thunder Bay challenged our executive to a golf tournament. Unfortunately, not all the executives were able to commit, but that did not stop OPTIONS from stepping forward. The call went out to the 95 staff to see if anyone was available to fill in and boy did we. Mark Beazley’s team (Denver Leach and 2 individuals from CLTB) won the tournament with a score of 2 under par. Mark’s eagle chip (a score of two under par on a hole), which is good but don’t tell Mark that, pulled out the win for their team. Lisa Maki team (see picture) Donna Tienhaara, Suzanne Posthumus and Loni Rudnicki came in second with 1 under par.



Both Mark and Loni won for the longest drive as well. We came to play and represent, which we did. Thank you so much to CLTB for the invite and putting together a fun afternoon. We met so many fun people, had an amazing time and Mark even tried to recruit new staff 😊. Way to go OPTIONS for accepting the challenge!!

Submitted by Loni Rudnicki,  
Supervisor of Clinical Services

## Music therapy with Kaelyn McCallum and her associate Beatrix

Both therapists are passionate about music and how it can benefit those we all work with in reaching their goals around communication and regulation strategies.

Both Liz and Shealyn with their staff Shinny and Mike from the Shuniah home attended a fun full hour having the opportunity to explore various instruments along with singing and dancing. Music allows us to express our needs, desires, and emotions. Toward the end of our session, we explored how combining mindful breathing exercises with music can help calm and regulate the nervous system.

Written by Patty Haney,  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



## A New Community

David has become a member of the community within St Stephen the Martyr Church. They are such a great support to David, they have welcomed him and invite him to take part in so many activities. David approached joining this new community mostly on his own, with a bit of help from support staff. This gave David the opportunity to form new relationships with the members of the church. He is involved in spring cleanup, yard sales, bake sales, carnivals at rec centre & coffee time after Sunday mass. His job title is the Crusifer.



The church requested that OPTIONS go and speak on David's behalf to explain what the agency is all about- what services we offer, how we support David and other individuals in our care.

Written by Amanda Lebel, Manager of Development and Engagement

Suzy studied and worked hard to take her G1 Driving Test. When she felt confident that she was ready, she went and took the test and of course walked out with her G1 Driver's License that same day! Great job, Suzy!

Written by Vanessa Mollicola, Life Skills Counsellor





In January, Joe's physician prescribed Ozempic to support the regulation of his blood sugar levels. Joe has been independently monitoring his blood sugars and expressed interest in learning how to self-administer his Ozempic.



To support this goal, Lilly and Nicholetts team began weekly practice sessions every Tuesday throughout February and March. Staff were initially trained and then work started to teach Joe how to do the injections independently. During this time, Joe demonstrated strong commitment and enthusiasm. He participated in hands-on practice, including administering injections using a mannequin to build confidence and skill.

Joe has made excellent progress and is very proud of his achievements. He is now able to independently administer his Ozempic with minimal staff support.

A special thank you to the Nicholetts team for their ongoing support, and to Laurel for creating a certificate to recognize Joe's success in reaching this important milestone. Way to go Joe!

Written by Lilly Gifkins, Health Care Consultant



Erik, Brandon, and Victoria all have had so much fun going out in the community, having lots of fun, and working towards achieving their goals.

Erik enjoys going bowling at Mario's, once monthly. He had a blast at the Bowling Extravaganza event. He also attended a Pow Wow and had a wonderful time!

Brandon enjoys going out for his monthly mall walk. During one of the walks, he stopped at the food court and enjoyed New York Fries for lunch. He also purchased a beautiful dream catcher for his bedroom.

Victoria loves to go for a short walk to Tim Horton's near her home. She interacts with staff and customers, while trying various menu items. She really enjoys an iced cappuccino and chocolate Timbits!

Written by: Ryley Vescio, Supported Group Living Counsellor



Darlene had a year filled with adventure. She had some time of experiencing living life in her own apartment with her adorable dog Mork. She enjoyed walking with Mork around her neighbourhood and throughout the community. She enjoyed several trips to Mission Island to visit the deer and see the ducks and birds. Darlene volunteered her time handing out treats at the Community Trunk or Treat. She was hardly recognizable in her Snoopy costume while she waited with the Peanut Gang for the arrival of the Great Pumpkin. Her spare time in the fall was spent at the gym, walking the track, treadmill and lifting weights. The Annual Holiday Luncheon was also a highlight to her year. She looks forward to many more adventures!

Written by: Pam Cain, Life Skills Counsellor



Cynthia, Filamena, Sadie, and Laurie took their own Eras adventure with a Taylor Swift tribute concert. They even got to meet the performer after the show. They had a great evening being Swifties!



Every year OPTIONS NORTHWEST supports the Tim Hortons Special Olympic Donut event. 100% of proceeds from the donuts supports sports programs for athletes with an intellectual disability in communities across Canada!





A new and exciting update for Gordon this year would be his new address! This past fall Gordie made the transition from residing at Tuscany to moving into Glengary House! The original roomies are excited to have him as a new friend and roommate. Gordie is easy going and has a great sense of humour as well as a beautiful singing voice. We love to cook at Glengary and Gordie loves to try new recipes. He is often found hanging out with staff working in the kitchen or just having a relaxing day hanging out with the others. He is always eager to go for a ride and can often be seen smiling away from his happy place in the van. He loves his books, whether he or staff are reading them, and enjoys always having one in hand.

He has a great and fresh new room and has easily made the adjustment to his new 'digs'. He knows his way around the house, has gotten to know and enjoy his housemates company and is very comfortable communicating his needs and wants in his own way. Glengary is happy to have him, he fits right in and has made himself at home. We are lucky to have him as our newest roommate! Welcome Home Gordie. Valhalla! Written by The Team at Glengary

Blaise joined OPTIONS on January 16, 2026, and has quickly become a wonderful addition to Dacre St home. At 21 years old, Blaise is incredibly tech savvy and can confidently navigate the internet, whether it's finding her way to Walmart or Amazon or searching for the things she loves most — especially iPads and televisions. One of her favourite items is her huge brown teddy bear. She also enjoys bike riding, going to parks, eating ice cream, spending time laughing with others, and keeping everyone smiling with her fun-loving personality. Blaise is very happy in her new home, especially with her beautifully decorated bedroom and the TV mounted on her wall, which she absolutely loves. She has formed great relationships with her roommates and the staff.

Dawn, Brad, and Deb all enjoy having her as part of the household. Blaise loves omelettes for breakfast and egg salad sandwiches for lunch. She only drinks red fruit juice! She is very ticklish, full of joy, and we are truly so happy to welcome her as part of the Dacre Street family. Written by Lori McCoy, Supported Living Services Supervisor





Nicholetts Road welcomed Wesley in July of 2025. Wesley lived in Thunder Bay previously, had moved to Ottawa for a short time and decided to move back to Thunder Bay. Wesley appreciates time spent with family and friends and shares visits with them often. Wesley is admired for his wisdom surrounding sports along with television series and movies that he enjoys. In a short time, Wesley has made meaningful relationships with the other individuals living in his home. He is eager to be involved and included, making Nicholetts the perfect place to connect with his peers and share common interests.

Written by Amanda Radl, Supervisor of Supported Living Services



Ms. Tannia experienced a monumental change in her life this past fall with a big move from James Street to Glengary Drive. She brings many awesome qualities and characteristics to her new home including a great sense of humour, enthusiasm, kindness, blue hair-dos, shopping trips, fashion shows, cheer routines, sparkles, unicorns, dance moves and all the best of her girly-girl self. Her friendly, outgoing and bubbly personality ensured she was warmly recieved and quickly accepted and welcomed by everyone in the house. Tannia loves to joke around, help around the house, keep busy or just hang out with housemates, chilling and watching television. When not busily working on a craft she can frequently be found helping cook meals or snacks and baking special surprises and treats for her housemates. She is an enthusiastic participant no matter what the activity and often makes things more fun just by being there. She has settled in fantastically and it's hard now to imagine Glengary without her. Tannia's positive attitude and easy going nature have made for such a positive and successful transition to her new home sweet home. Her home is her castle and no castle is complete without a princess. Welcome to Glengary Tannia - we're lucky to have you!

Written by The Team at Glengary





### Another Holiday Season at ONW means another round of Spirit of the Holidays!

This past December, staff from the administrative office bought and wrapped gifts for over 30 people who receive services at the agency. This project helps bring holiday cheer to people in our ONW Community and we are more than happy to take part.

A heartfelt thank you to our Board of Directors helping fund this program, and a second heartfelt thank you to the Spirit of Holidays Committee. Rosemarie, Cara, Laurel, Michelle, Jenn, Alana, Lori, Andrea, Lisa, Amanda L, Donna, Brandon, Suzanne P, Mark W, Tori, Anita, Alissa, Erica, Madison, and Utsav.



Larry was all smiles as he celebrated his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday at the HUB last June ! It was a big surprise when he walked in to see his friends and sister Janet waiting for him to arrive to celebrate. He celebrates his 80<sup>th</sup> on June 28<sup>th</sup> ! Be sure to wish him a Happy Birthday if you see him !

Larry recently moved from the Frederica Street home to the Francis Street home and will be celebrating with some new and old friends!

Written by Alana McKay,  
Supervisor of Supported Living Services



## A Place to Call Her Own: Jenna's Journey to Living Life Her Way

After living with roommates for several years, Jenna finally achieved something she's been wanting for a long time – to live by herself. This was a significant milestone for her, and it has been wonderful to see how happy and content she has been since making the transition. Having a space of her own has allowed her to express her

personality, make choices about her environment, and enjoy greater independence. One of the things Jenna enjoyed most was selecting and purchasing furniture for her new home. She carefully chose beautiful blue couches, as blue has always been her favourite colour. Seeing her furniture arrive and her house come together brought her a great sense of pride and accomplishment. She takes pride in keeping her home comfortable and welcoming, and it truly reflects her personality.

Jenna also enjoys celebrating holidays and special occasions. She had a wonderful time choosing decorations for her home and took great pride in displaying them for others to enjoy. Halloween and Christmas were especially meaningful to her, and she was always excited to decorate her home and share the festive spirit with neighbours, visitors, and members of the community. Seeing others admire her decorations brought her a lot of joy.

Jenna enjoys being involved in her daily routines and likes to help staff prepare meals whenever possible. She takes pride in contributing to household activities and enjoys being part of the cooking process. During her leisure time, she enjoys colouring, which allows her to express her creativity and relax.



She also continues to enjoy playing with Barbie dolls, an activity that brings her happiness and comfort.

Since moving into her own home, Jenna has flourished. She has embraced the opportunity to make choices, build her independence, and create a space that reflects her personality and preferences. Watching her achieve this important goal and seeing the happiness, confidence, and pride she demonstrates each day has been incredibly rewarding. Her home is a place where she feels comfortable, valued, and supported, allowing her to continue growing, making meaningful choices, and enjoying the activities and relationships that bring her joy and fulfillment.

Written by Suryateja Chekuri,  
Supported Group Living Counsellor

Alex enjoys spending time at home, where he likes chatting with support staff, sharing stories, and joking around. He is an avid gamer and enjoys playing video games on his computer, Xbox, and tablet. Alex also loves reenacting scenes from his favourite games and movies, as well as listening to music. In this photo, he was getting ready for Halloween by carving a pumpkin for his front step. He came up with the pumpkin design himself, while support staff assisted with the carving.

Alex was very proud of his creation and extremely pleased with the final result.

Written by Cassandra Beaton,  
Supported Living Services Counsellor



Mariah has been eager and motivated to incorporate exploring Thunder Bay Trails into her journey towards a healthy lifestyle. She has been utilizing the gym and feeling great! Mariah has also joined the OPTIONS workforce this past year. She works part time alongside Laurel at the front desk and we couldn't be happier to have her at the office!



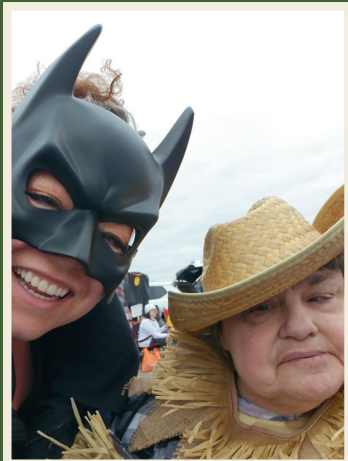
OPTIONS once again took part in the “Honouring our Children Run” at Boulevard Lake to take part in one of the events on The Day of Truth and Reconciliation. All funds raised help support local Indigenous youth through Mazinaajim Children’s Foundation.



# Trunk or Treat

Our annual Trunk or Treat event was a great success again this year. We had more than 100 Trunk or Treaters from both our agency and the community around North End Community Centre. This time we have the most volunteers handing out treats from their spooky vehicles. Volunteers and participants had an amazing time.

We cannot wait to see what the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Trunk or Treat brings!





In February, Liz and Shea helped put together the idea of an Agency Bowling Party. With a bit of help from Cara, the event was a hit! Over 50 people supported and staff joined the fun at Mario's Bowl. Everyone had a great time bowling and laughing over lunch. We are excited to bowl together again next year!



OPTIONS took part in the city holiday parade for the first time in November! Amanda Lebel and Michelle Tallon got everything rolling. People supported and staff had a great time creating the float and taking part in the parade! People in our community even helped out. Your Yard Guy let us borrow his trailer and Nova-Pro gave us the space to decorate it. We look forward to taking part in the parade this coming holiday season!







# OPTIONS NORTHWEST Personal Support Services

## Schedule of Receipts and Expenditures

*For the year ended March 31, 2026*

|                                                     | 2026<br>(unaudited) | 2025<br>(unaudited) |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Receipts</b>                                     |                     |                     |
| Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services | 21,286,456          | 20,380,793          |
| Individual rent and recoveries                      | 1,045,661           | 1,056,876           |
| Interest earned                                     | 99,731              | 136,104             |
| Other recoveries                                    | 763,471             | 828,212             |
|                                                     | 23,195,319          | 22,401,985          |
| <b>Expenditures</b>                                 |                     |                     |
| Salaries and benefits                               | 18,972,516          | 18,152,315          |
| Salaries and benefits - wage enhancement            | -                   | 100,509             |
| Staff training                                      | 126,924             | 57,026              |
| Building occupancy                                  | 1,089,771           | 758,564             |
| Travel and communication                            | 253,795             | 299,816             |
| Supplies and equipment                              | 776,980             | 1,060,190           |
| Other program service expenditures                  | 1,461,760           | 1,690,698           |
|                                                     | 22,681,746          | 22,119,118          |
|                                                     | 513,573             | 282,867             |

To view the complete set of financial statements, including the Independent Auditor's Report, or for any other comments or questions regarding this report, contact the Organization's offices at:

95 Cumberland Street North, Thunder Bay ON P7A 4M1 phone (807) 344-4994 fax (807) 346-5811