

# Bringing Change to Life



Annual Report 2019 - 2020



## Dear Community,

2019-2020 saw the emergence of bold and transformational strategic plans at our agency. We have worked tirelessly to make Willowbridge more welcoming, accessible and inclusive to our community.

We have exciting new developments in a number of areas. Firstly, we are proud to announce that going forward, we will be known as Willowbridge Community Services and that we are celebrating a new brand and website at our AGM this year.

Next, after hearing from clients, community, board and staff, we learned that our services are inadequately supported by our current facility on Brant Ave. Throughout 2019, we engaged in an extensive exploration of options for a new building in partnership with our community, other organizations and volunteer experts. We engaged in an in-depth needs' analysis which has led to a bold vision for a Community Hub that will be shared by numerous other interested organizations. It will be modern, inclusive, and welcoming, a place that fosters belonging, safety, excellence in service, innovation and economies of scale.

At both a local and provincial level, we are also proud to report that we have begun to work more closely with our partners in health. Locally, we were honoured to join as a core partner in the development of an Ontario Health Team. We believe the visionary care, compassion and collaboration demonstrated by our health partners will ensure our local health care is more robust and effective. At a provincial level, we were privileged to contribute to the design of evidenced-based mental health services for people experi-

encing anxiety and depression - two of the main disabling conditions experienced by Ontarians. Once initiated, these new services will contribute to better mental health care closer to home.

In light of the opportunities, growth, and transformation our agency is undertaking, we also took a look at our agency structure this year. We are pleased to report that we now have a restructured, more robust management team that can support our much-anticipated growth and new programming, such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation funded Leadership Development Course that we began this year.

We are eager to move forward together with you in 2020/2021 in creating empowered individuals, stronger families, and a more vibrant community.



Regards,  
Andrew Oldroyd  
Board President

Leslie Josling,  
MSc, G. Dipl, RSW  
Executive Director

## Bringing Change to Life:

### Our Priorities for 2019 – 2021

Our strategic priorities reflect our vision of empowered individuals, strong families, and a more vibrant community.

We invite you to examine our top strategic priorities for the coming years and learn more about where we aim to be as an organization.

To find out more about our strategic priorities, read our whole plan [here](#).



## 2019-2020

### Board of Directors

Andrew Oldroyd - President  
Jamie Savage - Vice President  
Sherry Paling - Treasurer  
Wendy Easveld - Secretary  
Zachary Portelli  
Josie Heath  
Anna Maria Pettitti  
Dale Hall



# Becoming Willowbridge: Turning Over a New Leaf

As an agency, we are proud to announce the launch of our new name, logo, website, and brand. Through the process of rebranding, we have learned that Willowbridge Community Services is not only a name and brand, it is a vision for the future. It is a vision for an agency that is safe and welcoming to everyone. It is a promise to continue to work towards relevant, accessible, responsive community services.



“I want to thank our community and those we support for helping us reimagine our future and our brand. I am so excited to continue working with you to make Willowbridge and our community safe, welcoming, and supportive.”

**Leslie Josling, Executive Director**



At Willowbridge, we bring change to life. We believe that everyone deserves relationship, community, and celebration, and we empower individuals to improve their lives for a more positive future. Our team is committed to providing responsive, creative, and compassionate care to all those living in our communities.

So many of us and those we serve face discrimination, personal trauma and isolation. All of us have felt alone at one time in our lives. Willowbridge works to be the bridge to meaningful relationships, celebration and belonging and to offer safe passage to somewhere new. Bridges allow you to cross waters that would otherwise be impassible. They are solid, supportive, and elevated. For

thousands of years they have connected communities to trade, resources, and unexplored spaces. They make those living far away a little easier to reach. And that is what we hope to do as Willowbridge. We hope to inspire our community to heal, support, and grow together. We hope to connect with those who feel disconnected and offer safe passage over rough waters.

Our warm thanks goes out to the team at COPP Marketing and Design, who patiently worked with us in understanding and expressing our promise and vision through our new brand and website. We appreciate their deep commitment to, and compassion for, community. We couldn't have done it without them!

# A Year in Review



2019-2020 was a year of change, growth, and outreach at Willowbridge Community Services. With over 2,929 community members served through financial empowerment, developmental services and counselling, we know that our staff were able to reach those in the community who need it most.



## Community members served: 2,929

Counselling	1,427
Pivot Behaviour Supports	355
EnCompass Service Coordination	326
Leadership Development Course	8
Routes Respite Community	73
Financial Empowerment	740

Our commitment to increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of our services expanded this year. Willowbridge was proud to attend Brantford's Pride in the park event in June, 2019, and to begin forming relationships, taking training, and collaborating with the Bridge – Brant's 2SLGBTQ+ advocates in order to serve our community better.

We continue to work so that marginalized groups are given a voice, and can find relevant

and safe support at our agency. Our staff undertook San'Yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training this year, working with us to decolonize our services and advance the needs of our Indigenous community. Our Executive Director was also delighted to get to know our neighbours at the Multicultural Gathering in Market Square, and our agency continues to strengthen our relationships with a number of community organizations in order to develop group programs in the future.



# Leadership Development Course

The Leadership Development Course is a free class offered to adults living with intellectual disabilities who are passionate about making a difference in their communities. The course involves leadership and teamwork training, community placements, and skills to last a lifetime.

## New Leaders for Brantford!

In 2019-2020, Willowbridge Community Services was pleased to launch a Leadership Development Course available to developmentally disabled students passionate about making a difference. We trained 8 new community leaders and offered peer mentorship opportunities to 5 Wilfred Laurier University Social Work interns. This exciting and successful course was made possible by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, who supports our agency in the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to be heard and to help shape our community. Their generous grant allowed our class to be offered free of charge, in recognition that everyone benefits when diverse experiences and perspectives are shared.

The Leadership Development Course supported student leaders as they built leadership, teamwork and advocacy skills while working towards a certificate. Their coursework prepared them for supported community placements in groups such as neighbourhood associations, boards, and community-planning groups based on their interests. Placement opportunities were all selected to ensure that student leaders could create meaningful change both now and in the future.

Unfortunately, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, our course had to adapt mid-way through the year. Lessons were recorded and shared online, and students began meeting virtually. This didn't stop it from being a huge success, however!



“

“I loved it.  
I made new friends, and  
I looked forward to going  
to class every day.”

– Student

“I thought it was an  
interesting, informative, and  
easy to understand. I really  
enjoyed going to  
the classes.”

– Student

”

## Pivot Behaviour Supports

### The Turning Point for Change

At times, people with a developmental disability may express their unmet needs through behaviour that confuses or concerns others. Pivot Behaviour Supports offers behaviour consultation, training opportunities and various groups to help adults and children learn new skills, assist caregivers in understanding unmet needs and to develop effective interventions in the home and community.

2019-2020 was a busy year for our Pivot Program. Serving 256 adults and children living with intellectual disabilities across the region,

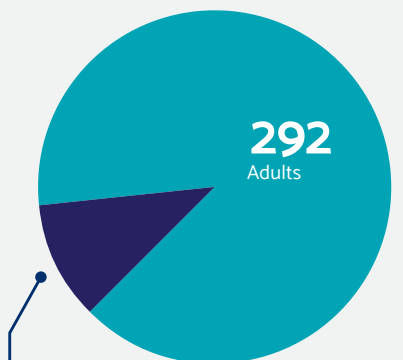
our program also welcomed two new managers to the program – Alisa Gagne and Michelle Wiersma.

Our Pivot Program recognizes that those living with a developmental disability are at a high risk for experiencing trauma and abuse due to stigma, discrimination, and a lack of social support for those who care for them. As a result, our behaviour consultants are committed to the ongoing development of our trauma-informed approach to care. Trauma-informed behaviour analysis realizes the impact of trauma on individuals, assesses for signs and symptoms of trauma, responds by integrating what is known about the individual's trauma into treatment planning, and resists retraumatization by creating a safe environment.

This past year, all of our behaviour consultants completed a four-hour training in trauma-informed behaviour analysis and attended a two-day training in trauma and its impacts on attachment along with our agency.



**355** Community Members  
Served in Pivot



**93**  
Children

# Routes Respite Community

In our Routes Respite Community, everyone belongs. We offer daily support to individuals across Brantford and Brant County to participate in the community, give back through volunteering, and to make new friends through exciting activities.



## Building Friendships & Skills in Respite

At Willowbridge, our adult respite program continues to grow and offer exciting new opportunities to adults living with an intellectual disability in Brantford and Brant County. The Modernization Grant from the Ministry was a success, and while the funding has ended, we've remained community oriented! This year, our 25 community members got out and volunteered all over the city – from Habitat to Humanity and Soup for the Soul, to Friendship House, the SPCA, and Participation House! We focused on creating connections and giving back to those in need this year.

Our respite community members were also supported to reach their personal goals and we're excited to announce that a member was supported to earn her Zumba Instructor's certification! We've also supported members

to improve their reading skills, obtain a Safe Food Handler's certificate, and focus on personal health and physical activity through aquafit, Safe Zone, and trail walking. Congratulations to everyone, 2019-2020 was an exciting year!

## Growing Together through Passports

Due to the incredible dedication of our staff and the genuine friendships built in our programming, this year our Passport Supports doubled! Over 31 adults in the region chose to make Willowbridge their Passport home. Our passport community members were supported by staff to attend respite programming, classes and community events, and to build friendships that will last a lifetime. We're excited to see where our Passport community members will guide our program next.

## The Grove: An Afternoon Community for Youth

We are excited to announce that our Respite Community has grown! This year, we began The Grove, an afternoon respite community for youth living with an intellectual disability. The Grove worked to bridge the gap for 7 youth in Brantford ending their day programming and moving to evening activities. The Grove runs from roughly 3:00-6:00 pm, and offers the opportunity for teens to hang out, make new friends, play games, and get help with school projects. We can even arrange for transportation and one-on-one support for those in need!

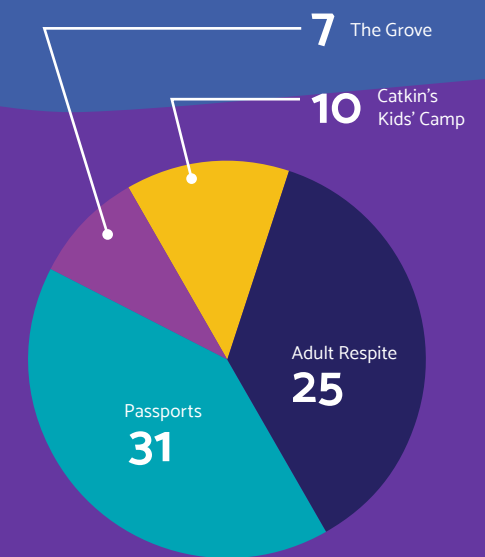
## Catkins Kids' Camps

Willowbridge Community Services offers four free weeks of Kids' Camps in the summer months, and even does camps over March Break for kids and youth living with an intellectual disability in Brant County! This year, our summer camps were a huge success for 10 local kids.

Summer campers enjoyed HERO week and met local police officers and the fire department in a special visit. They also loved music week and learned to play new instruments – they even got to see a concert by Bevy and Beans! Campers visited Kidtastic, Earl Haig Water Park, and the Brantford Conservation Area.

Unfortunately, our March Break camp was cancelled due to COVID-19. We look forward to welcoming everyone back next year!

**73** Community Members  
Served - Routes Respite





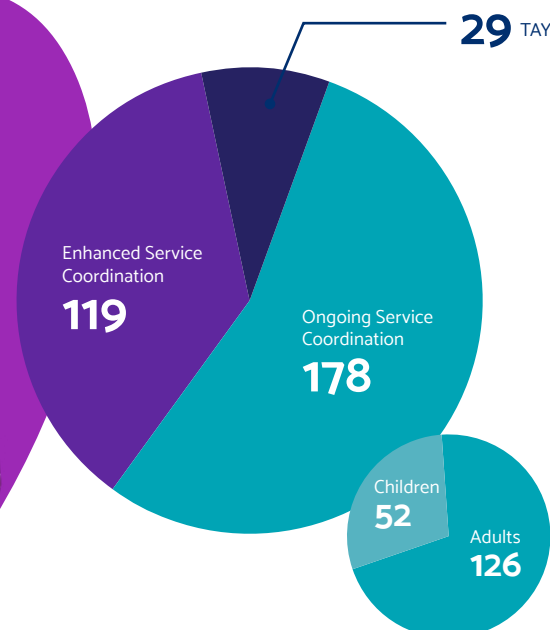
# Transitional Aged Youth

## Moving Toward Adulthood Together

For youth living with an intellectual disability in the Hamilton area, our Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Planner provides support, coordination and opportunity during the transition into adulthood. Our TAY Planner is available to Youth in Extended Care over 16.

In 2019-2020, over 29 youth in extended care met with our Planner to explain their dreams and develop a realistic and exciting care transition plan with those who know them best. In the process, our Planner worked collaboratively with children and adult community services as well as children's aid societies. Together, we created thoughtful and smooth transition plans that supported youth to successfully begin their exciting journey into adulthood.

### Community Members Served - EnCompass



# EnCompass

## Service Coordination

### Building Connected Communities

Navigating and accessing complex community services can be overwhelming when you're in need. For those living with an intellectual disability these challenges are magnified - often resulting in crises if individuals aren't supported to access safe housing, medical, financial, or mental health services. Our Ongoing and Enhanced Service Coordinators offer assistance that encompasses all aspects of community building and service navigation.

This year, our EnCompass Service Coordinators were pleased to welcome Edie Mous as their new program manager. Edie is a long-time staff with our agency and brings years of managerial experience from a variety of agencies across the region. Her compassionate and caring approach inspires her team to do the difficult work they perform every day.

Ongoing and Enhanced Service Coordinators had a busy year assisting community members in need. Over 297 individuals living with intellectual disabilities received support with concerns such as homelessness, correctional and court issues, family conflict, health concerns and mental health crises.

Because of the depth of crises many of our Encompass clients face, this year our Service

Coordinators took part in training on trauma and attachment. This training assisted our Service Coordinators in recognizing and understanding how to respond to individuals who have experienced trauma, and helped to provide a better framework for community support. It also highlighted the need for a new position - a Developmental Services Clinician.

Our Developmental Services department has been working tirelessly to create a hybrid role for a trained counsellor to support individuals living with an intellectual disability across programs. A great deal of planning and thought has gone into integrating our Service Coordination program with the expertise of a clinician.



### Testimonial:

I wanted to reach out as I have had the pleasure of working with one of your Service Coordinators over the last 18 months in support a dual diagnosis client.

Her consistency, resourcefulness, encouragement, and ability to connect with our client have resulted in him making progress beyond what I could have dared to hope for when I started working with him 2+ years ago.

I have now had to discharge the client as they have both met all of the goals that we set and reached the end of our service timeline. Although bittersweet, I feel so much better knowing that you continue to support this individual. Makes a difficult decision much easier to bear.

With much gratitude and peace of mind,

Heather Morrison  
Mental Health Caseworker

# Counselling

## If you're ready to talk, we're here to listen

At some point in our lives we all encounter situations that we are not equal to. During these times, counselling can make a difference. At Willowbridge, we offer professional counselling for individuals, couples, families and groups to support them in the challenges they face. Counselling works!



## Changes in Counselling

In 2019-2020, our counselling program was pleased to welcome a new Director of Clinical Services, Angela Murie. With over 30 years' managerial experience, Angela has already brought her background in policy work to the department and is helping to build a solid foundation for delivering Structured Psychotherapy in the region.

Under Angela's supervision, our counsellors served over 1427 clients this year. As always, we continued to work with marginalized communities and those who face the trauma of past or present violence. This year, we served 39 members of Canada's Indigenous communities free of charge through funding from Health Canada. We also offered free counselling to 279 women who had experienced intimate partner violence with the generous support of the Ministry. We

ran eight women's groups for 70 women, and two groups on nurturing self-compassion for 18 community members.

Beginning in September, our dedicated counsellors also took on the additional challenge of attending intensive training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in order to become experts in CBT treatments for those living with depression and anxiety. This training was provided by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as part of a demonstration project that will assist in building the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program, set to deliver free mental health counselling to Ontarians within the coming years.

Our team welcomed the addition of two therapists to the team during the training months, and we are very excited to be one of five agencies trained in the new provincial approach.

Total Community Members Served in Counselling Services: 1427



# Financial Empowerment

## Right on the Money



The Financial Empowerment team at Willowbridge supports individuals and families feeling overwhelmed by their finances to find solutions and plan for the future. Our certified, professional staff inspire financial empowerment in Brantford and Brant community free of charge.

2019-2020 was an exciting year for Financial Empowerment. Our accredited Credit Counsellor was able to offer 139 community members with financial guidance in budgeting, credit ratings, financial planning, and debt repayment. We also held 14 educational workshops for community members and organizations in need.

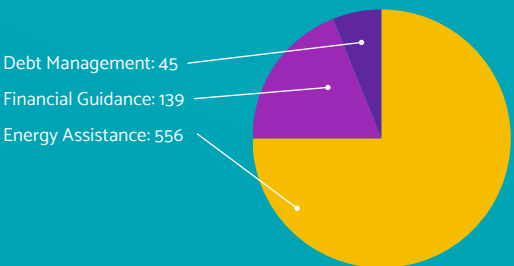
This year, we were proud to assist an additional 556 individuals and families with their household energy costs through the Low-Income Energy Support Programs. Our work helped to lessen the burden of poverty and ensure that critical services remained accessible to residents met with hard times.

Although it was an important year for our debt management program, we made the decision to end Debt Management Services in our last quarter. This was the result of new provincial

legislation that would have made it difficult to continue with our work in this field. However, we were pleased to assist 45 clients with debt management before that time.

We continue to work toward financial empowerment in the community and find new and innovative ways to meet the needs of the individuals we serve.

740 Community Members Served in Financial Empowerment







# Together we can make a difference...

Willowbridge Community Services is a charitable not-for-profit organization. We provide counselling, financial empowerment, and developmental services to those in our community. No one is ever turned away based on ability to pay.

Our deepest thanks to all the generous donors and funders of our 2019-2020 programs and services. We were able to create new programs, support our old ones, and reach out to those who need it most as a result of your giving.

For over 100 years, Willowbridge Community Services has been supporting our community. We ask for your help to keep our programs and services accessible to individuals and families in their moment of need. With donations, grants and funding from generous individuals and organizations, we will continue to make our community a better place.

Donate Online at Canada Helps

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/Willowbridge/>



A special thanks to the individual donors who also contributed to making our work possible this year.



The John A. Sanderson & Family Trust

## Staff List

As of March 31, 2020

### Counselling Services

Mary Ann Burbank  
Lori Hensen  
Shelley Jonathan  
Joanne MacNeil  
Paul Polito  
Joey Ruiz  
Valentin Angardi  
Tracey Frazer - Intern  
Andrea Walsh - Intern

### Financial Empowerment

Terri Gilroy  
Sue Davey

### Pivot Behaviour Supports

Michelle Wiersma - Manager  
Alisa Gagne - Manager  
Brad McIntosh  
Christine Blocki  
Corene Jonat  
Jo-Anne Kens  
Kassandra Sauder  
Mary Mullen  
Sarah Smith  
Carmen McCauley

### Leadership Development Course

Tricia Kidd  
Caleb Hooper - Intern  
Shannon Scarbo - Intern  
Alexandria Grimley-Pannozzo - Intern  
Liming Cao - Intern

### EnCompass Service Coordination

Edie Mous - Manager  
**Ongoing**  
Jackie Thompson  
Joanna Pugsley  
Joanne Towers  
Laurie Redpath-Rolfe  
**Enhanced**  
Amanda Downs  
Jim Kennedy  
Heather Mordue  
Kathryn Newhouse  
Alisha Thornton

### TAY

Lyndsey Dickson

### Routes Respite Community

Jenny Poplar - Manager  
Allan Murray  
Elizabeth Carmel MacMillan  
Marilyn Ward  
Shanah Hayes  
Tricia Willson  
Michelle Bell  
Brenda Hockin  
Jennifer Rose

### Administration & Finance

David Kindy - Manager  
Wanda Hunter - Manager  
Sandra Kennedy  
Sarah Hammond  
Melissa Kuzler

### Management

**Leslie Josling**  
Executive Director

### Angela Murie

Director of Clinical Services & IT

### Laura Bergeron

Director of Developmental Services

### Devon Atherton

Communications and Development Coordinator  
Executive Assistant

### Eranga Peduruarachchige

Director of Human Resources

### Hosea Mpofu

Director of Finance

## Financial Report

April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

### Revenue

Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services	\$ 3,054,184
Brant United Way	\$ 153,908
Donations/Other Revenues	\$ 133,847
Fees for Service	\$ 129,247
Other Government Grants	\$ 40,555
Passport Revenues	\$ 94,341
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 3,606,082</b>

### Expenditures

Salaries and Benefits	\$ 2,577,677
Non-Salaried Expenses	\$ 680,571
Centrally Allocated Administration	\$ 347,416
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 3,605,664</b>

Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenditures	\$ 418
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The Willowbridge Audited Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2020, prepared by Millards, Chartered Accountants, are available at 54 Brant Ave, Brantford, Ontario N3G 3G8



# Our Programs and Services

## Counselling Services

- Family and Children
- Couples
- Groups
- Individuals
- 2SLGBTQ+
- Indigenous
- Multicultural
- Men's Specific
- Women's Specific

## Financial Empowerment Programs

- Financial Guidance
- Planning for Debt Repayment
- Household Energy Assistance
  - OESP (Energy Bill Assistance)
  - LEAP (Gas and Hydro Bill Assistance)
- Workshops and seminars

## Developmental Services

- Pivot Behaviour Supports
  - Behaviour Consultations
  - Pivot Clinic
- EnCompass Service Coordination
  - EnCompass Children
    - Ongoing Service Coordination
    - TAY
  - EnCompass Adults
    - Ongoing Service Coordination
    - Enhanced Svc Coordination
- Respite
  - Routes Respite Community
  - The Grove
  - Passports
  - Catkins Kids Camps

## Groups

- Leadership Development Course
- Women Initiating New Growth and Self Esteem (WINGS)
- Soaring Above the Turbulence
- Flying Together in Healthy Relationships
- Zones of Regulation
- Nurturing Self Compassion
- Skills for Healthy Living



## Our Mission

To promote the well being and social inclusion of individuals and families through counselling, support, education and advocacy.

## Our Vision

Empowered Individuals. Stronger Families.  
A More Vibrant Community.



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[willowbridge.ca](http://willowbridge.ca)