



2023-2024

Impact Report

How to Navigate the Report

This report has been arranged into sections. To assist with the navigation of the report, there are headings for each section and each Abilities Centre program or initiative described. To go to a specific page, please click (ctrl and click) on the name of the section or sub-section you would like to see within the Table of Contents above. This will take you right to that page.



abilitiescentre.org



A Message from the Chair of the Board and President & CEO



As we reflect on the past year, we are excited to share the journey of Abilities Centre staff, participants, and community through our 2023-2024 Impact Report.

At Abilities Centre, our team works tirelessly towards a better, barrier-free life for all Canadians by delivering programs and services that unlock the potential of our community through accessibility. This year, we worked to uphold our mission of reimagining accessibility and redefining the way Canadians live, work, and play. Our team supported people to participate meaningfully in their communities, work towards personal goals, and engage in all aspects of life. Individuals and organizations were challenged to reflect on their practices and help make their spaces and communities more accessibility and inclusive. Opportunities were created for participation in recreation, social, and educational activities that promote community connection and belongingness. This work has impacted people across the country, creating ripple effects towards a barrier-free life for all.

Abilities Centre has welcomed new executive leadership and board members to the team, ensuring continued growth and support of our programs and services. We want to thank all our Executive Leadership Team and Board of Directors for their loyal support and engagement over the past year. Finally, we extend our sincere gratitude to Abilities Centre staff, for upholding our mission and vision with unwavering service and dedication to participants, members, and the community.

As you explore the highlights of our year, we encourage you to find ways you can connect more stakeholders to Abilities Centre. Through strategic partnerships, shared research, fundraising and innovative programming, countless more people can take advantage of the services we provide. We look forward to working together on a more inclusive society.

Sharon Cochran
Chair, Board of Directors

Michael Cvitkovic
President & CEO





Our Purpose:

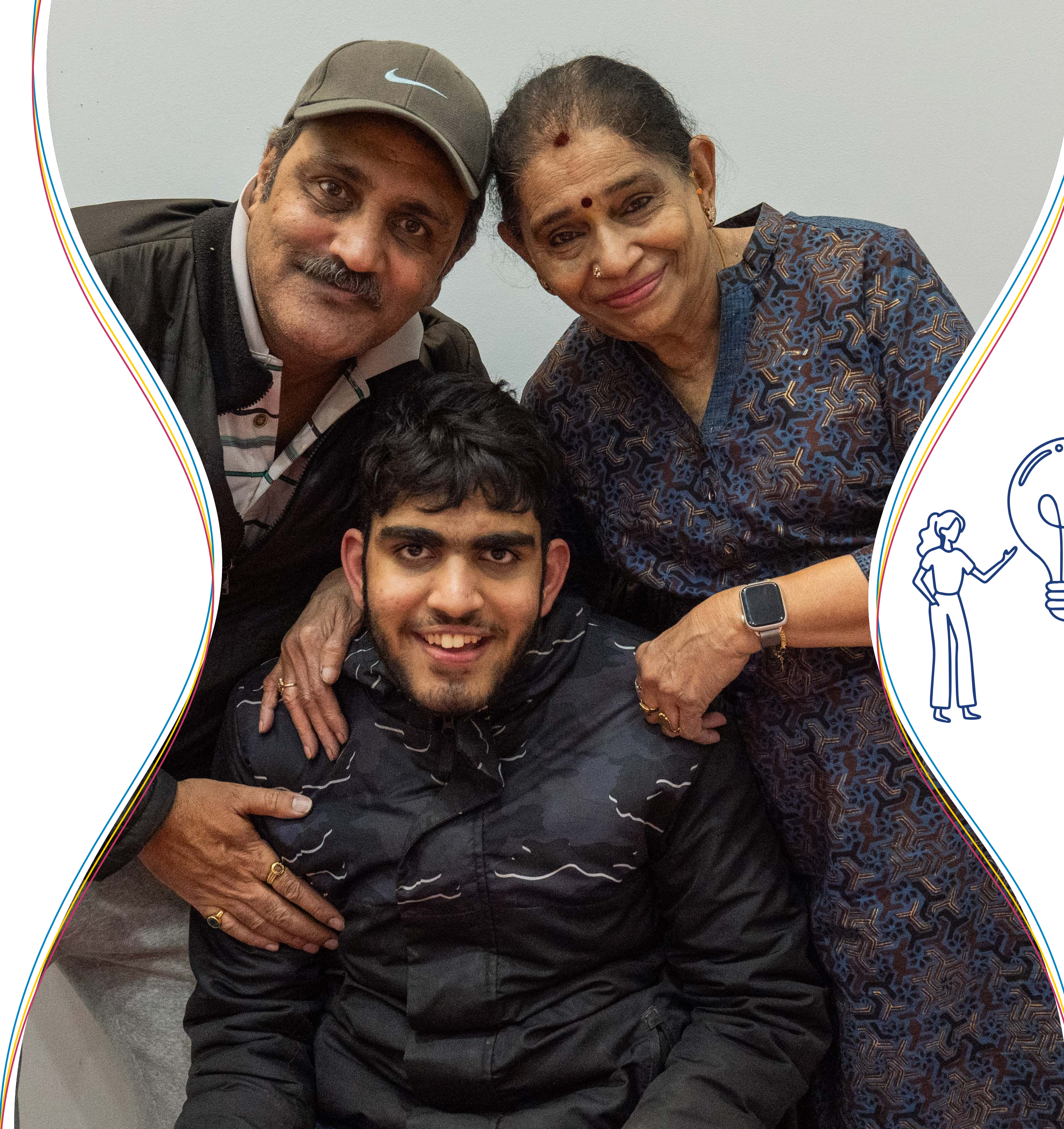
Unlock potential
through accessibility

Our Vision:

A better, barrier-free
life for all Canadians

Our Mission:

Reimagining accessibility
and redefining the way
Canadians live, work and play



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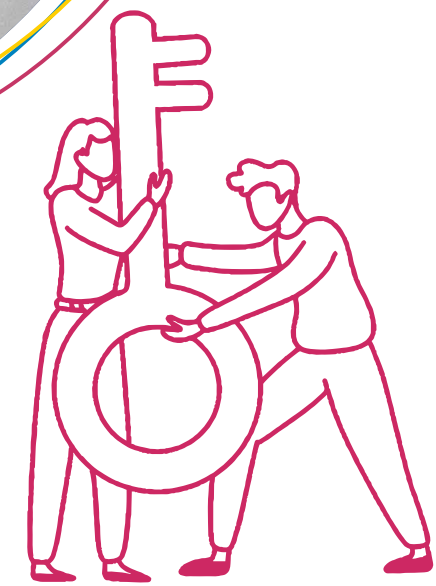
Thank You **20**

Year in Review

Each year, Abilities Centre’s Impact Report highlights our innovation, growth, and excellent programs and services for people with and without disabilities in our community and across Canada. This year was no exception. We developed new ways to remove barriers and unlock potential, supporting our community to live, work, and play.

We focused on continuing our efforts to support our community and bolstering our foundation for future growth. Our programs and services staff maintain the delivery of high-quality programs.

- Our Academy for Student-Athlete Development (ASAD), with the support of a Sport Canada Innovation Grant, expanded our parasport program from one location to four, facilitating monthly parasport training opportunities for athletes in Ontario and Alberta.
- In partnership with the Region of Durham and Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB), Abilities Centre supported the implementation of Project Search®, which supports students with disabilities in job placements at, and around the Region of Durham.
- We continued to offer important programs such as Virtual Fitness for Breath in partnership with the Lung Health Foundation; Therapeutic Recreation in School, provided at both DCDBS and the Durham District School Board (DDSB); and Thrive™, our adult day program.



Subscribe to AC Unlocked | The Blog

- To share more information about the Centre, we created a Blog called AC Unlocked. This platform shares insights and stories from our programs, community members, partners, and events.
- With our partners Ontario Shores, we expanded our Joint Research Ethics Board to include Grandview Kids. This allowed Abilities Centre to conduct more research within our community. We are looking forward to supporting more research initiatives in Durham Region.

Amidst significant changes over this past year, including the appointment of Michael Cvitkovic as our new President and CEO in March 2024, Abilities Centre has remained constant in its mission. Michael’s arrival has brought new energy to the Centre, reinforcing our commitment to excellence after a period of growth and transition. We extend our sincere appreciation to Board Chair, Sharon Cochran, Chief Operating Officer, Ross Ste-Croix, and the whole management team for their leadership during this transitional phase, ensuring that the Centre stayed true to its purpose, mission, and vision.

The collaborative efforts across all departments of Abilities Centre this year have strengthened our relationships with partners and the community, laying a solid foundation for expanding our impact. We are excited to present this annual report, highlighting the outstanding work of our team members throughout this year.

LIVE

Meaningful participation in the community and engaging in behaviours and activities that promote wellbeing.

Abilities Centre's programs and services support people to participate meaningfully in their communities, work towards their goals, and engage in all aspects of life. This year, several programs worked to break down barriers and build people up, reimagining the way they **live**:

- The **Academy for Student Athlete Development (ASAD)** helped young athletes to balance their personal, academic, and athletic goals.
- The **Therapeutic Recreation** team delivered welcoming and supportive programming, increasing opportunities for meaningful recreation participation that supports participants in progressing towards their goals.
- The **Post Rehabilitation** programs brought people together within their community for peer social support while maintaining their physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Thrive** supported skill-building and self-expression opportunities in the areas of art, life skills, social recreation, and sport & fitness, while supporting skill building and community connection for continued pursuit of interests and goals beyond the Abilities Centre walls.
- **Pathways** supported youth to develop confidence with community navigation skills such as safe stranger interactions, trip planning, and budgeting for activities.





ASAD

The Academy for Student Athlete Development (ASAD), located in London and Whitby, Ontario, aims to remove barriers and create equitable access for athletes aspiring towards high performance and competitive sport. ASAD supports student-athletes by bringing their academic, athletic, and personal development together into one training environment. This also includes a focus on accountability, respect, and leadership. ASAD works in partnership with Thames Valley District School Board, Durham District School Board, and Durham Catholic District School Board. The ongoing support from the local school board ensures student-athletes in both locations can balance their priorities with committed academic support.

Through improvements to the ASAD Integrated Support Team, student-athletes' ratings of ASAD's support for their holistic preparation have increased. Specifically, inter-coach communication regarding athletes' training, coaches' commitment to athlete well-being, and coach availability to support student-athletes all improved.

90%

More than 90% of student-athletes felt they have progressed towards their personal, academic, and/or athletic goals.

100%

100% of respondents felt ASAD helped them to balance their personal, academic, and athletic goals.



"Everybody's there to be on your team."

- Spring 2023 evaluation from a Student-athlete

102
Athletes

72
Durham
Students

27
London
Students

3
Special
Olympics
Athletes

Since 2021, the ASAD team has also been working to identify and fill gaps in athletic development for Canadian Paraspport athletes, supported by a Sport Innovation Grant from Sport Canada. This year, programming expanded to three other locations: Scarborough, in collaboration with Variety Village; Edmonton, Alberta, in collaboration with the Steadward Centre; and Durham Region within Abilities Centre; along with delivery in Ottawa. Our program partner, the Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sport Association (OCPSA), honoured the ASAD parasport program with the Weatherall Award of Distinction at their annual sport awards banquet for its impact on the development of the boccia program.



"I had never done something like ASAD before. Doing something new with people I had never met in a place I had never been, helped me gain some confidence and trust in myself. The program itself helped me gain leadership, accountability, respect, and teamwork as they are a part of the values and kind of the core ideas of ASAD."

-Student-athlete 2023.



Therapeutic Recreation

Therapeutic Recreation is about making sure that everyone has options to take part in the activities they are interested in while supporting social interaction, physical activity, and skill building. This year, that meant continuing with the successful and in-demand programs, while filling gaps and supporting new recreation opportunities.

Therapeutic Recreation in Schools (TRIS), a unique and highly impactful program, continued to support students from DDSB, DCDSB and TDSB. This year, TRIS was involved in **17** different schools and supported **334** students.

“TRIS has been a very special addition to our regular programming. [Abilities Centre is] able to provide resources that we do not have, and that can connect with our students’ strengths but at the same time bridge gaps.”

-DCDSB Teacher with TRIS program

Therapeutic Recreation in the Summer ran during July and August 2023 with **36** youth participants working towards goals, getting active, building skills, and connecting with peers through the program.

“Joy, learning and connection are all benefits of Therapeutic Recreation in Summer programming. The Durham District School Board is appreciative of the opportunity to partner with the Abilities Centre and Durham Catholic District School Board to provide an opportunity for students, who access life skills programming during the school year, to participate in summer programming. The benefits continue to be significant for the participating youth, their families and staff from across the organizations. Having had the privilege of visiting the program in action, the smiles along with the feedback from families, tells the story of the positive impact of the [TR in the Summer] program.”

- DDSB Superintendent of Equitable Education
for Inclusive Student Services

334

Students

17

Schools

**“Best program I’ve ever seen in all of Ontario.
Kids will be happy, loved, included, and
develop skills and friendships.”**

-Parent with TR program

Alongside the many programs, the TR team worked to support a variety of other recreation opportunities in the community, including:

- Offering week-long camps for high school-aged students during the school winter and March breaks. These camps are another outlet for students to meet new friends, try new activities, and get active while away from school.
- Helping SMILE Canada to facilitate sport and physical activity programming for youth newcomers to Canada at the organization’s Rec Fest.
- Collaborating with local partners, Community Development Council Durham and Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, to offer recreation programming to youth in the community during professional development days.
- Receiving the Next Play Grant through Canadian Women & Sport to build a supportive environment for women and girls with a disability to have fun and social belonging through sport and recreation, while creating opportunities for women’s only fitness and pickleball programming for newcomer women and girls.
- Supporting Toronto FC to make attending a soccer match more welcoming and positive for persons with disabilities and their families, as part of their Autism Awareness Day Initiative.
- Working with the South Oshawa Community Centre in development and delivery of inclusive programming, through the Strong Inclusive Communities grant from the City of Oshawa.





Post Rehabilitation

Abilities Centre Post Rehabilitation provides community-based exercise programming for individuals managing chronic health conditions or transitioning from clinical rehabilitation into community settings. Our programs also serve participants in supporting their maintenance of physical activity levels on their journey of rehabilitation. With our partners we provided programming and supports to over **549** enrollees this year through the Virtual Fitness for Breath (vFFB), Respiratory Cardiac Maintenance (RCM), Together in Movement and Exercise (TIME), Minds in Motion (MiM), and Total Knee Rehabilitation programs.

The long-standing partnership between Abilities Centre and Lung Health Foundation (LHF) is a collaborative effort based on principles of equity, respect, and effectiveness. With this shared vision, both organizations have leveraged their respective expertise to support individuals living with lung health conditions. Through this partnership of more than nine years, Abilities Centre has had more than **700** enrollments in RCM and vFFB programming. This partnership has celebrated significant milestones this year with continued growth of vFFB programming and expanded evaluation efforts.



549



Total Enrollees for 2023

91

TIME Enrollees

71

RCM Enrollees

60

Minds in Motion Enrollees

303

Virtual Fitness for Breath Enrollees

24

Total Knee Rehab Enrollees



This year, RCM had **71** enrollees participate across four sessions. Participants of the RCM program shared that they enjoyed the class, instructors and found value in the social aspect of interacting and learning from other participants. Additionally, our virtual program, vFFB ran four virtual classes by Abilities Centre staff with **303** enrollees and two satellite sites had a combined **80** enrollees participate. To ensure smooth transition for the satellite sites, Abilities Centre staff developed a training module and provided consistent support and guidance.

In partnership with University Health Network (UHN), Abilities Centre offers Together in Movement and Exercise programming (TIME, TIME+ and TIME Lite) for individuals with neuromuscular conditions and age-related mobility changes. This was our 10th year running TIME program. We had **91** participants enroll across the four sessions of TIME and one session of TIME+ and TIME Lite this year. Participants across TIME programming noted an increase in confidence, strength and completing more daily activities. Participants also indicate the social aspect of the program is inviting and helps with accountability.

Abilities Centre partnered with Alzheimer's Society of Durham Region in 2021 to deliver the Minds in Motion program. This program supports individuals with early to mid-stage Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia and their caregivers to come together to engage in physical and social activities. **60** enrollees participated across five sessions this past year. Participants and caregivers shared that they enjoyed the program and found the physical activity aspects of the program to be inclusive and enjoyable. Additionally, the social aspects were very important for both the participant and caregiver.

The Total Knee Rehab program started in Fall 2022. This year, **24** enrollees participated across two sessions before the program was transitioned to our Fitness and Wellness department.



Thrive™ is an adult day program for individuals over the age of 18 with developmental disabilities, offering a variety of program opportunities in the areas of art, life skills, social recreation, and sport & fitness. The aim of Thrive™ is to support individuals to build and develop new skills, gain confidence, and achieve the goal(s) that are most important for them.

Thrive™ delivers three 14-week sessions (Winter, Spring, and Fall) as well as weekly summer programming for adults and teens. This past year, up to **70** individuals were enrolled in each of our Winter, Spring and Fall sessions and **97** total individuals participated in the Thrive™ Summer program. Of the **39** unique program periods offered each session, **20** were new program periods, and nine of which were co-designed with Thrive™ participants (including Advocacy and Allyship, Painters Studio, and Thrive™ Garden Circle). Thrive works with many internal and external partners to offer various program period options and connections to the community, this year new external partnerships allowed for yoga, music, or swimming program periods. Outside of regular programming, Thrive™ also hosted four events this year, including a holiday party, Valentine's Day dance, and two art exhibits at Station Gallery.

39

Program periods per session

70

Participants enrolled in Thrive

97

Participants enrolled in Thrive Summer Camp

For the past four years, Thrive™ participants have made holiday cards for purchase, to showcase the participants' beautiful artwork and skills, while also raising funds for the program. In Fall 2023, the inaugural 'Thrive™ Card' program period was introduced. After designing and developing the Winter Holiday Cards, two 'Thrive™ Card' program period members attended this year's Festival of Trees along with Thrive™ staff to participate as a market vendor. The new 'Thrive™ Card' program period allows interested participants an opportunity to gain experience in the production process and customer service, as well as a chance to share their personal growth and experience in the program.

Festival of Trees is an annual holiday market hosted by Abilities Centre in November. An opportunity to shop local businesses, play holiday games and activities. The event also features appearances by Santa and much more!



Participant Highlight - Amanda:

Thrive™ encourages participants to share their 'Hoping to Achieve' goal at the start of each session with the aim of supporting participants to work towards and achieve this goal through programming. Amanda expressed an interest in enhancing her facilitation skills as a Mixed Ability Sport coach by building upon her confidence and leadership skills. With the support of staff, Amanda was able to choose a balance of program periods that offered opportunities for co-facilitation as well as personal participation. Recently, Amanda was a guest speaker for the Thrive™ Career Exploration program period and was able to share her passion for Mixed Ability Sport and becoming a coach.



Thank you to our partners and collaborators:

- Literacy Network of Durham Region
- AC fitness instructor – Strength & Stretch
- Swimming at Iroquois Park Sports Centre
- Horizon's Music, Station Gallery
- Therapeutic Dogs of Canada
- AC fitness instructor - Yoga
- Durham Community Health Centre
- Jays Care Foundation
- Vikings Rugby
- DR Drumming
- Durham Community Health Centre
- Reptilia
- Archery 2 You.

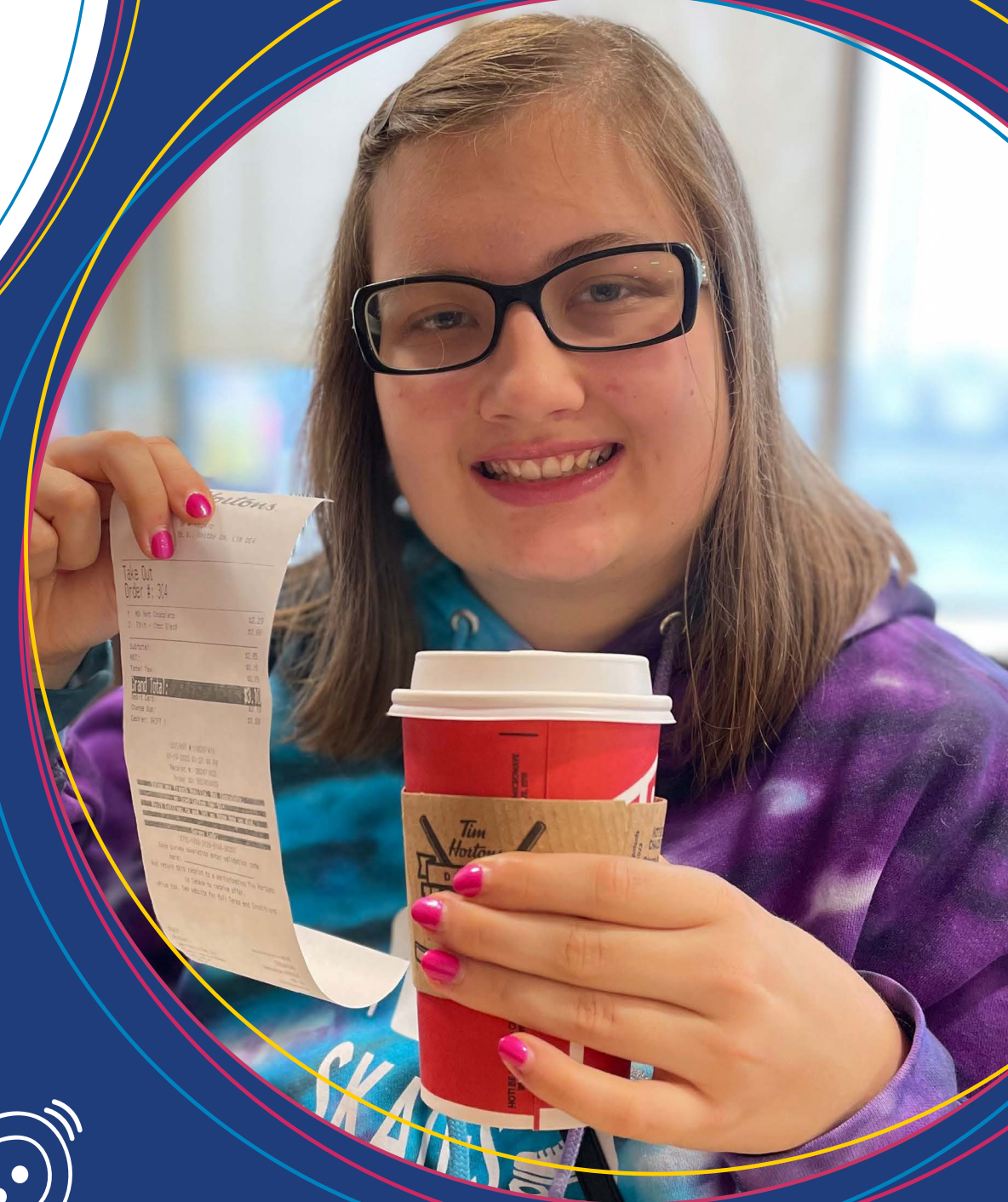
Pathways

Pathways works to foster community engagement through skill development (such as functional skills, transit awareness, community navigation, and money education)-among individuals with disabilities aged 14 years and above. Within the program sessions, youth build decision-making skills and take part in hands-on training and experiential learning to enhance community navigation, financial management, and transit awareness.

This past year, Pathways offered both daytime and evening programming across three sessions, with **33** total participants completing the program. Participants developed confidence across the various skills and learning experiences within the program including identifying safe strangers in the community, planning trips, and budgeting for activities.

“He has shown a tremendous improvement in his demeanor and self confidence in the last three months during this period at Pathways ... making this a very positive, productive and joyful experience.”

- Participant Parent



“He calculated the cost of the books he wanted from Chapters plus sales tax at 13%. The total, which was \$24.60, and his gift card was for \$25, so he said, “I came in under budget!” I had no idea he knew how to calculate sales tax. He told me he learned it in Pathways and that’s why he got the Money Master award. I was so happy knowing he knew how to do this. Amazing.”

-Participant Parent

“They [AC Staff] make the material accessible and set the bar high while supporting participants to reach their goals and simultaneously honouring their strengths and needs. Their professionalism is incredible and the way they speak to and support every single participant to feel entirely included, heard and valued should be taught to all Disability Service Providers as the **GOLD STANDARD.”**

-Personal Support Worker

WORK

Active engagement in programs and services in community settings to ensure continuous learning.

Abilities Centre offers programs and services to support, promote and guide access to meaningful employment, create communities of practice, and promote continuous learnings for our broader communities. This year, several of our programs challenged individuals and organizations to help build accessible and inclusive communities, reimagining the way they work:

- **LEAD** supported **27** organizations to improve accessibility and inclusion in their workplaces.
- The **Disability Inclusion Workshop** was presented to more than **400** individuals, empowering them to enhance their understanding of disability.
- **Unlocking Leaders** supported individuals in developing and enhancing the skills needed to enter the workforce.
- Abilities Centre **Employment Services** offered free in-person workshops to support the growth of job readiness skills through advocacy, accommodation, and professional communication.





LEAD™

Leading Equitable and Accessible Delivery (LEAD™) launched in Canada more than five years ago in collaboration with Activity Alliance, a UK-based organization. It is now a prominent signature training initiative that Abilities Centre offers to the community, supporting organizations on their journey to transformational change.

The aim of LEAD™ is to help organizations identify and take action to improve upon the accessibility and inclusivity of their workplaces. Over the course of 12-18 months, organizations work through the multi-step assessment process, completing an inventory of their internal practices and processes, and exploring how accessibility and inclusion practices can be integrated in a meaningful and sustainable way.

This year, **27** different organizations across Canada engaged in at least one step of the LEAD™ process. As many of them are in the process of developing and implementing their accessibility plans, LEAD™ was able to play an important role in supporting these organizations in the creation plans that go above and beyond accessibility guidelines.



Municipalities



Sport Organizations



Other not-for-profit community organizations



School Boards

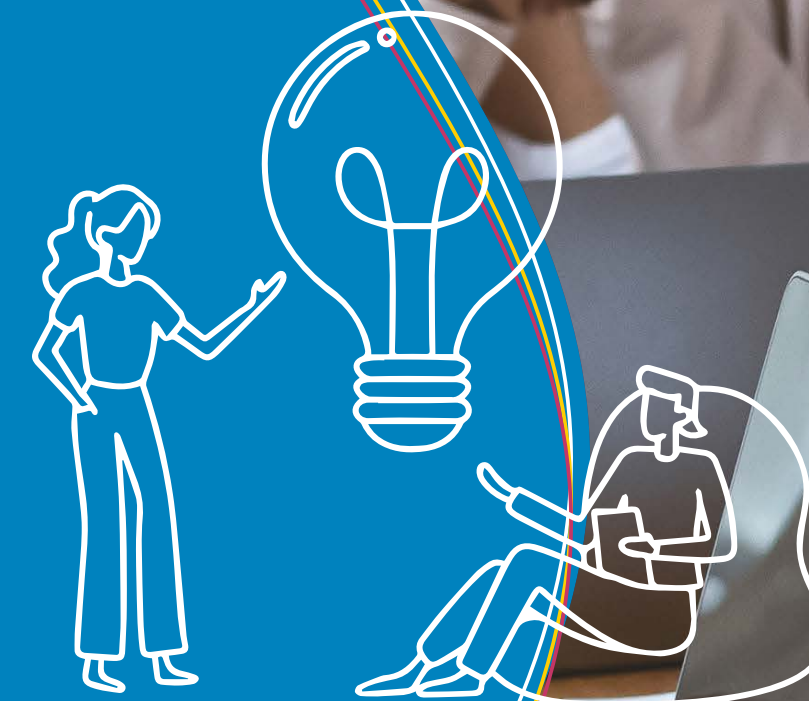


Some actions that organizations took this year include:

- Creating multi-year accessibility plans with added performance measures to hold them accountable;
- Enhancing the training available to staff, empowering them to promote inclusion in their daily work;
- Updating or creating policies to uphold inclusive practices for employees and the community members they serve;
- Establishing advisory committees to guide work, involving community members with lived experience;
- Updating recruitment and onboarding strategies to uphold diverse hiring practices and help employees thrive;
- Enhancing websites and online resources to make information more accessible; and
- Creating and distributing staff demographic and/or engagement surveys to inform HR strategies.

This past year, the LEAD™ team also made some enhancements to the process to support organizations to build their improvement plans, including:

- Revitalizing of the organizational improvement plan structure, helping organizations to confidently act based on their self-assessments.
- Updating follow-up processes to help organizations identify and focus on specific priorities for change.





Disability Inclusion Workshop

Abilities Centre's Disability Inclusion workshop gives organizations opportunities to enhance their learnings about disability. The workshop allows participants to reflect on their own experiences and knowledge of inclusion by discussing sensitive concepts such as biases and assumptions, models of disability, and removing barriers to facilitate meaningful participation for everyone.

This past year, the team delivered Disability Inclusion workshops to **440** individuals across **16** organizations. These organizations were representative of different sectors, including municipalities, businesses, and not-for-profits. The discussion generated in these sessions left its participants with a more knowledge of disability and best practices for inclusion in the workplace.

The workshop is designed and delivered by the Disability Inclusion Facilitation Team. This team is made up of Abilities Centre staff with various professional and lived experience. The workshop's content is guided by the lived experience of team members with disabilities and current research and literature.

The Disability Inclusion team connects with organizations prior to their workshop to gain an understanding of why they've sought out education on disability inclusion and any specific knowledge gaps they're hoping to fill with the workshop. This enables the Disability Inclusion team to tailor the workshop's formatting and delivery to the specific organization's needs, allowing for concentration and fulsome discussion in priority learning areas (i.e., ableism, language, etc.).

Abilities Centre provides accessible and inclusive services and programming, which require accessible and inclusive information-sharing and documentation. To fulfill this need, development and implementation of Accessible Documents training occurred internally. The training was taken externally later in the year, offering a workshop to **40** individuals with the Durham District School Board (DDSB). Feedback from this training showed that attendees increased their confidence in making documents accessible and learned specific techniques and actions that they intend to implement in their day-to-day work.

440

Individuals



Unlocking Leaders

Unlocking Leaders aims to remove barriers to employment and career advancement for youth with disabilities. Individuals are supported to enhance the skills needed to enter the workforce. Three 10-week sessions ran last year, consisting of project-based and activity-based learning, promoting three main areas: learning, life, and literacy skills. At the end of each session, participants presented a leader of their choice to family and friends during the Unlocking Leaders Showcase. **23** individuals enrolled in Unlocking Leaders. Over the three sessions, participants showed an increase in confidence, improved communication by building rapport among participants, and growth in resilience.

Some of the highlights for a participant:

- independently using GO train/bus;
- riding a bike, and mounting it on the front of the bus;
- healthy breakfast to start the day.

This year, Abilities Centre was proud to accept a generous donation of **\$85,000** from our partners at the RBC Foundation for the **Unlocking Leaders** program.



Foundation





Employment Services

Abilities Centre Employment Services aims to support individuals in finding and maintaining meaningful participation in the labour market by developing skills, bolstering job readiness, and providing education for inclusive workplaces.

The Employment Department hosts free in-person workshops at Abilities Centre covering various job readiness skills, such as Getting the Job, Advocacy and Accommodation, and Professional Communication. Since implementing the new workshop format, **146** individuals have attended the **30** workshops. Most participants indicated that after attending a workshop they felt confident in writing and formatting their resumes, searching for a job, engaging in professional communication, and being successful in a job interview. Outside of Abilities Centre, employment workshops were presented to support the Durham Catholic District School Board's (DCDSB) Continuing Education program. Following the workshop, school board staff noticed an increase in the number of job interviews for students.



“Through their comprehensive workshops, Abilities Centre equipped students in our program with the essential soft skills vital for job-seeking and navigating the work world with confidence. These workshops fostered a **supportive** learning environment, allowing students to develop their communication, resume building and interview skills. As a result, the graduates of the Custodial Services Training Program emerged not only as skilled custodial professionals but also as well-rounded individuals ready to excel in a workplace setting. I am deeply grateful for the invaluable guidance and resources provided by the employment team at Abilities Centre.”

-Andrea Ellsworth, Program Leader
Archbishop Anthony Meagher Catholic Continuing Education Centre



Project Search®

Project Search® is a few short months away from completing its inaugural year in Durham Region. Abilities Centre, the Regional Municipality of Durham, and DCDSB worked with 10 interns to build skills, complete experiential learning and three internships. At the start of the interns' journey, they participated in Transit Awareness Training at Abilities Centre. This week-long training instilled skills and knowledge around trip planning, transit routes, and building confidence in using public transit independently. Throughout the remaining internships, participants attended in-class sessions with Skills Trainers on various employment topics. Interns have worked in various departments within the Region (Legal, Social Services, Facilities, Service Durham, and Environmental & Food Services). Throughout the year, there was an increase in participating departments and staff interested in volunteering to mentor interns. **Check out the news story Global Durham ran on Project Search®.**



PLAY

Active engagement in the community and participating in enriching and inclusive activities that promote community connection.

Abilities Centre provides a diverse array of programs and services designed to foster experiences in a safe and welcoming environment. This year, several of our programs worked to actively promote community connection, inclusion, and equity. Through providing opportunities to engage in recreational, social, and educational activities, contributing to inclusive and accessible forms of community engagement, such as:

- The **Physical Literacy & Inclusion (PL&I)** program expanded its reach by providing interactive workshops and information sessions for participants across Canada and sharing valuable tools and strategies for promoting meaningful participation and gained deeper insights into physical literacy;
- The **Mixed Ability Sport** department offered an innovative and inclusive approach to sports, through social connections, physical activity, mental health, and an overall sense of belonging;
- This year, **Sport & Recreation** continued to provide diverse movement programs, focusing on youth engagement and community building. Popular programs like You.Me.We., wheelchair basketball, and Healthy Youth Programming for Everyone (H.Y.P.E) saw continued success, with initiatives to fill programming gaps, strengthen community connections, and expand program offerings.





Physical Literacy & Inclusion

This year, the Physical Literacy team continued to expand education opportunities, sharing information on inclusive physical literacy across Canada. This expansion included bringing the Physical Literacy & Inclusion (PL&I) workshop to post-secondary students and recreation facilitators in Newfoundland and being invited to share PL&I with the Play to Lead Conference in Edmonton. The team also worked with Parks and Recreation Ontario to support practitioners across the province on inclusive summer camp planning and facilitation.

This past summer, more than **100** youth between ages 5 and 12 joined us for summer camp at Abilities Centre. Individuals spent time throughout the Centre making use of our specialty program spaces, time on the court trying new sports and games, and plenty of time exploring outdoors. Summer camp offers a whole range of experiences throughout the summer, with each week focusing on a different theme including Summer Fun, Creative Movement, Olympics/Paralympics, Outdoor Explorers, Off the Pages: Stories in Real Life, and Mixed Ability Sport.

425
individuals

More than **425** individuals took part in the interactive PL&I workshop this year. These attendees included undergraduate students in kinesiology and education, pre-service and in-service teachers, recreation professionals, high school leadership students, and municipal camp staff. This workshop helps participants to reflect on their perspectives of physical literacy and the inclusivity of their practices. Additionally, participants practice strategies that promote meaningful participation by all those they work with and support.



“My understanding has deepened to encompass the importance of not only physical skills but also the cognitive and emotional aspects of **movement. I gained insights into how to promote physical literacy across diverse populations and settings, fostering a lifelong love for physical activity”**

-Workshop Attendee

85%

- 85% of workshop attendees left with a deeper and more holistic understanding of physical literacy, often adding more nuance to their personal definition of the concept.

92%

- 92% of workshop attendees had practical takeaways from the workshop that they will implement with participants to enhance participation and improve opportunities within their communities.

This year, the physical literacy and inclusion team delivered inclusive field trips for more than **850** people, including **80** campers from local municipalities, and two corporate field trips for local businesses. Teachers who have attended both the workshop and field trip with their class have shared great feedback about the experience:

“[The workshop facilitators] are a dynamic duo, enthusiastic about sharing their learnings, and are experts in the implementation of Physical Literacy and Inclusion. Together, they have effortlessly made both their workshop and the follow-up field trip enjoyable, engaging, and easy to participate in. I have already benefited from their lessons, and my students will, in turn, benefit as well.”

-Workshop Attendee



Mixed Ability Sport™

In partnership with International Mixed Ability Sport (IMAS), Abilities Centre provides Mixed Ability Sport (MAS™) training, education, and advocacy in Canada. MAS™ isn't just about playing sports; it's a movement promoting inclusion and fairness, nurturing a feeling of belonging and camaraderie within groups, teams, or clubs. The MAS™ model is a fresh approach to inclusive sports ensuring an inviting, inclusive, and accessible atmosphere where every athlete can engage meaningfully.

This year MAS™ and our Inclusion and Sport team trained **49** individuals in the MAS model. These individuals were from various organizations including **15** people from various sport and community organizations in Calgary, **23** staff members from YMCA locations in Ontario and Nova Scotia, and **11** representatives of sport clubs across Ontario.

The Inclusion in Sport Team is a group of individuals with lived experience dedicated to removing barriers and ensuring an inclusive and accessible sport environment for everyone.

Additionally, the second annual National Mixed Ability Sport Week in Canada occurred April 23-29, 2023. Throughout the week, **9** community sport clubs hosted try-it events in **7** different sports, introducing Canadians to sport opportunities in their community and highlighting the great work being done by clubs across Ontario and Canada.



During National Mixed Ability Sport Week, Canada hosted the first ever Mixed Ability Archery Tournament.

More than **100** people attended the try-it events held throughout National Mixed Ability Sport Week.



“MAS has given me so much. It is **inclusive** and a place where I feel like everyone else. I finally know what it's like to be on a team and compete internationally.” - MAS Athlete

This year, Abilities Centre reached out to participating athletes to hear what Mixed Ability Sport™ meant to them and how they have experienced sport since engaging with MAS™. We heard back from athletes from eight different sports, many of whom participate in more than one Mixed Ability Sport™. They shared that since participating in MAS™:

88%

have experienced improved social connections and friendships;

81%

have experienced improved physical health;

75%

have experienced improved self-confidence;

69%

have experienced an improved sense of belonging; and

63%

have experienced improved mental health.

Sign the Mixed Ability Sport Manifesto





Sport & Recreation

This year, the Sport & Recreation team continued to offer opportunities for youth to be active through a variety of movement programs. Key focuses for growth this past year were filling gaps in available recreation programming and building up a sense of community within the Centre.

Popular programming like You.Me.We., wheelchair basketball, and HYPE (Healthy Youth Program for Everyone) continued throughout the year, finding new ways to improve opportunities for community members.

- You.Me.We. worked with the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) team to bring programming into schools during class time. This collaboration supported the impact of the TRIS program and offered another resource to schools to support students' physical literacy development and physical activity engagement.
- Wheelchair basketball continues to be coached by individuals who have lived experience as elite wheelchair basketball athletes, giving access to mentorship and role modelling for the youth athletes. After competing in the 2023 Ontario Parasport Games, this year the Abilities Centre Eagles hosted a tournament at the Centre, engaging in competition with other local teams.
- HYPE continued to see strong uptake among youth aged 10-14 years as attendance grew throughout the year. Notably, the adults responsible for dropping off program attendees formed their own community over the course of the year, using the program session time to hang out in the Abilities Centre lobby and socialize themselves.



Membership

If you happened to visit us in-person this past year, you will have noticed Abilities Centre is constantly humming. With group fitness classes in the Jim Flaherty Fieldhouse or studio, group rentals on the courts or in the specialty program rooms upstairs, members walking the track or using the HUR room, and personal training sessions, there is always a lot going on in the Centre. Our staff has worked tirelessly to meet the demands of our community, adding new classes to the schedule, and opening more opportunities for recreation and fitness.

This year at the Centre:

950

Nearly **950** recreation passes were used to attend classes, use the fitness equipment, courts, or our indoor track;

22

Ten classes were added to the weekly schedule, so our members currently have **22** options for fitness classes throughout the week;

1700

More than **1700** sessions were supported by our Personal Trainers, helping members to pursue their personal fitness and wellness goals;

We continue to offer outlets for kids physical activity and social connection with evening programs for ages three to 11 years old.

Abilities Centre continues to offer a Membership Assistance Program to reduce financial barriers.

In September, membership services implemented ACTIVENet, a new registration and membership management software to better serve our members. This new platform will streamline class registration and help facilitate member engagement in programming, making the member experience easier as we continue to improve our services and the offerings available to our community members.





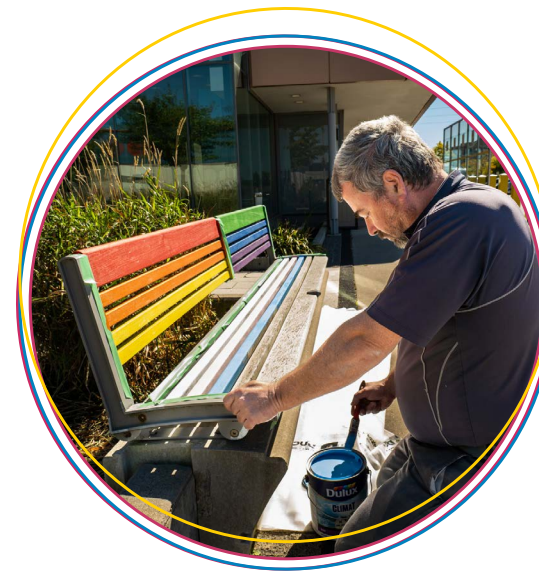
Events

In July, the second annual Abilities Centre Golf Tournament saw the participation of **80** golfers. The event collectively raised more than **\$28,000** for Abilities Centre's program and services.

In November, Abilities Centre hosted the third annual Festival of Trees, which showcased the products and services of **104** vendors. We had **1,400** attendees and **50** volunteers to help support this event. We raised **\$50,000** to support programming and services offered here at Abilities Centre.

Abilities Centre is also proud to have been a part of many amazing events and activities delivered by our various partners over the past year.

- Along with the Regional Municipality of Durham, we hosted the second annual Durham Accessibility Conference.
- We welcomed members from the International Physical Literacy Association (IPLA) for a week of education, project planning and team building.
- Calm: A seminar, hosted by Denise Marek as a fundraiser for Thrive™.
- Welcomed MLSE and OPG to utilize our fieldhouse basketball courts to shoot their Home Court Advantage commercial.
- International Women's Day Event, including speakers, networking, physical movement, and local women-owned business market.



Development

Abilities Centre, as a charity, is fortunate to have strong support from relationships with our stakeholders and community. Over **\$4 million** has been raised through grants, fundraising campaigns, and partnerships to support our programs, services and infrastructure.

Grants secured:

- \$500,000 from The Canadian Red Cross Community Services Recovery Grant for IT systems upgrades.
- \$95,900 from Ontario Trillium Grant for capital improvements.
- \$30,000 from Harry E. Foster Charitable Foundation for Skills Development Programs.
- \$25,000 from Canada Life for Skills Development Programs.
- \$25,000 from CIBC Foundation for Employment Services.
- \$20,636 from the New Horizons for Seniors Grant for capital improvements.
- \$7,500 from the Petro Canada CareMakers Foundation for Skills Development Programs.
- \$5,500 from Canadian Women in Sport to support gender equity in recreation and physical activity.

Fundraising Campaigns raised:

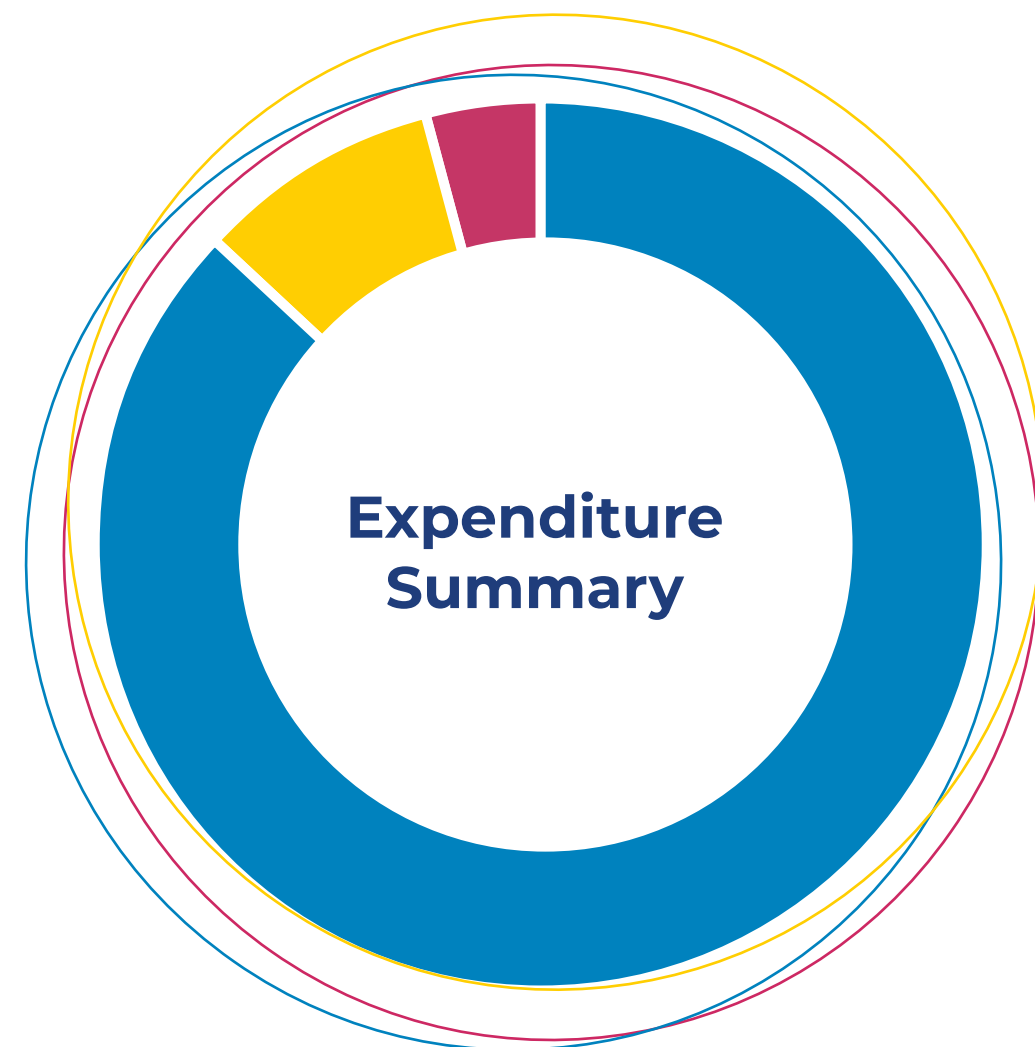
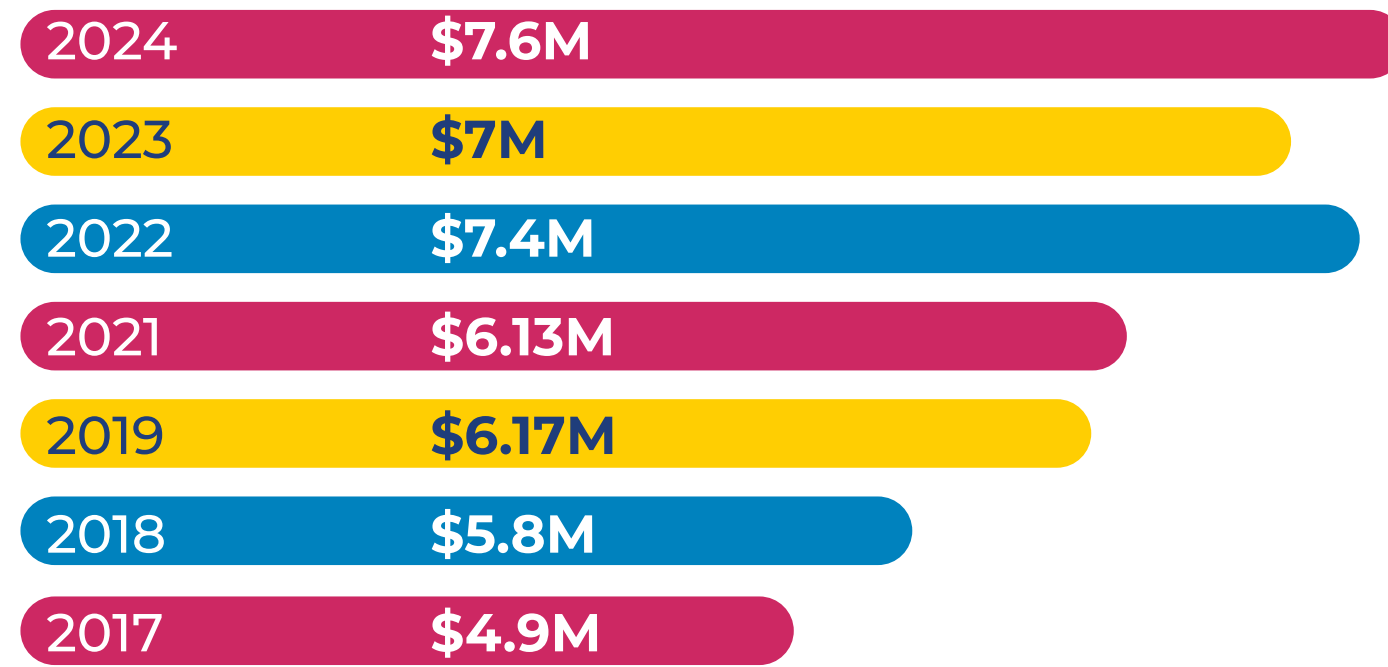
- \$50,000 from Third Annual Festival of Trees.
- \$28,000 from Second Annual Golf Tournament.
- \$20,000 from our Giving Tuesday and Holiday Campaign.

Partnerships

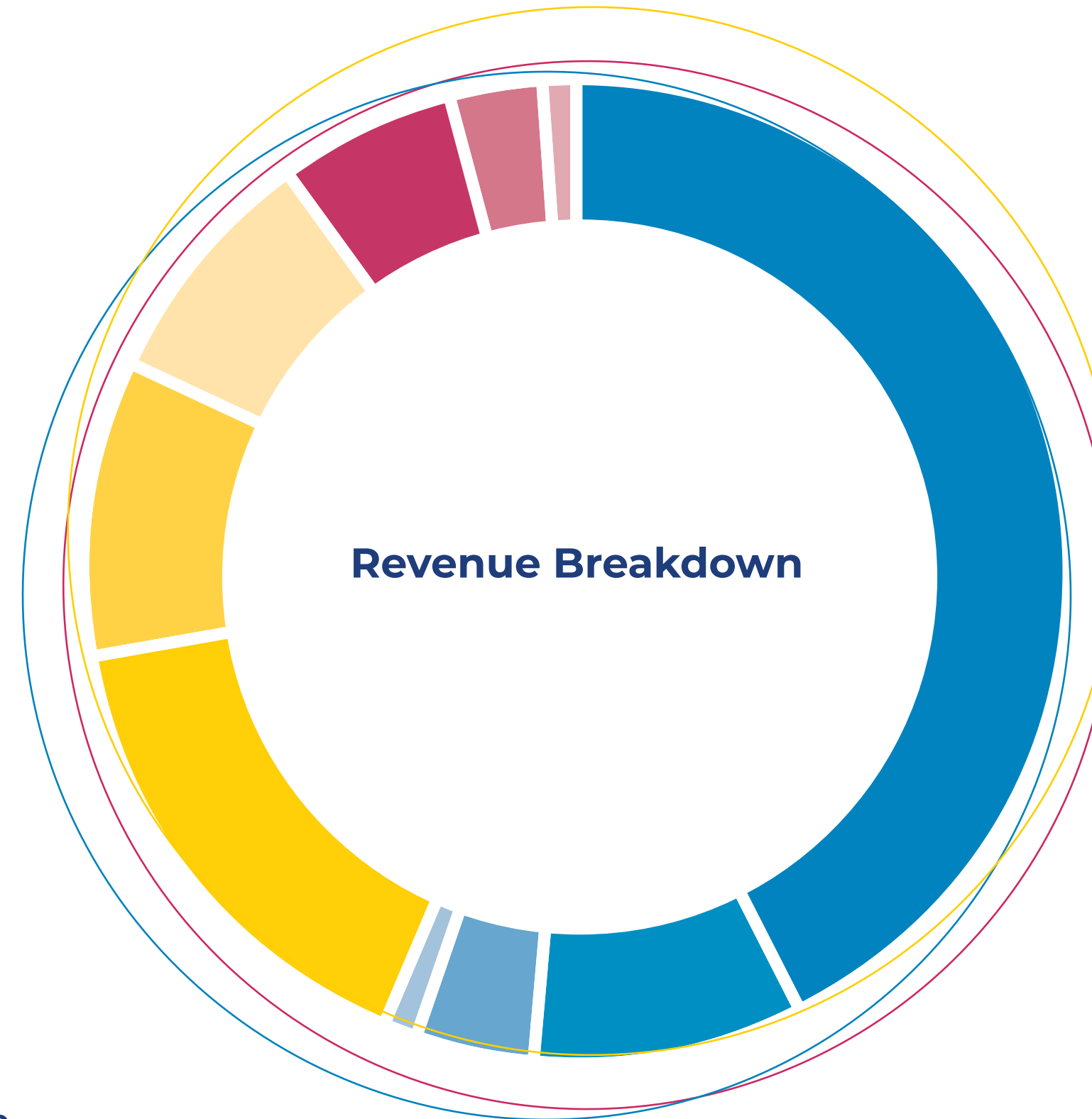
- \$3.0 million from the Government of Ontario Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS).
- \$100,000 (over 3-year period) from Geekspeak Commerce, with the launch of a new partnership, for Employment Services and in-kind marketing and communications services.
- \$17,500 from My MS Family for Post-Rehab programming and organizational accessibility.
- \$10,000 from MSIFN Maada'ookii Committee Mississaugas of Scugog Island for support of the Membership Assistance Program.

Financials

Revenue Growth (Millions)



- 87% Programs
- 9% Administration
- 4% Development



- 43% Provincial Govt. Funding
- 9% Corporate Funding
- 4% Federal. Govt. Funding
- 1% Municipal Funding
- 16% Program fees
- 10% Def. Capital revenue
- 8% Membership revenue
- 6% Rentals
- 3% Fundraising
- 1% Other Income

Thank You

It is important for us to take a moment and thank our Abilities Centre community. Over the past year, our community has engaged, fostered, and supported our work to reimagine accessibility and redefine the way we live, work and play. We are grateful for the amazing corporations, foundations, and individuals who have generously supported Abilities Centre. You have allowed us to give individuals the opportunity to achieve their goals through physical movement, life-skills, and employment programs as well as research.

Thank you to all our partners in government, health, research and education, sport, and various community groups. Your partnerships are critical to the work we do at Abilities Centre and would not be possible without your collaboration. To see a list of our generous donors

To support our organization, you can share this report, follow us on social media, or donate to our charitable organization so we can continue to build a better, barrier-free life for all.

