

A Note From Lisa

At long last, spring has arrived! There were moments when it felt like winter might never let go. With the change in season comes renewed energy, and there is certainly no shortage of activity across CLAPW.

We are very excited to be preparing to open a new home in Whitby that will support youth aged 13–18 with intellectual disabilities and complex needs. Our goal is to be operational by the summer. While we have supported young people for many years, providing accommodation supports for youth is a new and important step forward for our organization.



We are also seeing continued growth in the number of individuals for whom we broker Passport funding. Demand has increased to the point where we are adding a part-time team member to help address a waiting list of over 50 individuals. At the same time, it is encouraging to see strong engagement with the Respite Now platform. In fact, we currently have more workers available than individuals seeking support, so if you have not yet explored this option, we encourage you to do so.

We are thrilled to share that the Ajax Waterfront Race Committee has selected CLAPW as the recipient of funds raised through their race on October 4. There are many ways to get involved whether by participating in the run, volunteering, or simply cheering on participants. Every contribution makes a difference.

Our sincere thanks go out to our community partners. Ontario Power Generation is supporting our theatre group, which will premiere a short film at our Annual General Meeting on September 21 at the St. Francis Centre. We are also grateful to the Town of Ajax for providing the venue free of charge and for awarding us an Impact Grant to support our Community Living Month BBQ on May 30 at 36 Emperor Street.

We also extend our appreciation to the Durham Community Foundation for continuing to fund honorariums for members of the Advocates Alliance who deliver Rights and Abuse Prevention training, and to the Canadian Progress Club for supporting our Healthy Hearty Meal program for individuals supported through SIL.

Work on our Strategic Plan continues to move forward with strong momentum. We are seeing innovation through Community Connections (formerly CPP), and We Candle continues to provide meaningful employment opportunities for people facing barriers, including individuals who have been connected to CLAPW for many years.

As we move into the second half of the year, the Board will be advancing two new task groups: a Properties Committee and a 70th Anniversary Planning Committee. We are also pleased to welcome a new Board member with lived experience. These steps reflect key priorities identified in our Strategic Plan and position us well for the future.

May marks Community Living Month, and we have a number of events planned. The Town of Ajax and the Region of Durham will raise the Community Living flag and light their facilities in blue and green. The City of Pickering will issue a formal proclamation. Our Self-Advocates will visit Queen's Park on May 6, and we look forward to welcoming the community to our BBQ on May 30.

And once June arrives, we shift into full gear with summer programming. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for upcoming events and opportunities to connect.

As always, I welcome your questions, feedback, and ideas. Please feel free to reach out anytime.



SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING



Spring is in full swing, and people involved in **Supported Independent Living (SIL)** are making the most of it! In April, James and Kevin headed to the historic Regent Theatre in Oshawa for an unforgettable performance by "The Bomb."

The night was a resounding success, filled with great music and even better company. James and Kevin enjoyed the experience so much that they are already scouting out the local concert calendar to line up more shows for the remainder of the year. It's wonderful staying connected to the local arts and culture scene!

Looking Ahead: A Summer of Adventure

The SIL team is also hard at work organizing a calendar of summer excursions that offer something for everyone. We have some fantastic trips in the works, including:

- **A Historic Getaway to Kingston:** We will be heading east to enjoy a scenic boat cruise and a classic trolley tour of the "Limestone City."
- **The Roar of the Falls:** No Ontario summer is complete without a trip to Niagara Falls to take in the sights and sounds of the world-famous landmark.
- **Take Me Out to the Ballgame:** We'll be heading to the Rogers Centre to cheer on the Toronto Blue Jays. Fingers crossed for a home run!
- **A Day at the "Ex":** We are also planning a trip to the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) to wrap up the summer with some classic midway fun and food. Let's go baby!

These outings are more than just trips; they are vital opportunities to build memories and engage with the wider community. We can't wait to share photos of these adventures in our next update!



ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

From Valentine's Dance to Vital Voices: How the Advocacy Alliance Is Sparking Change Every Thursday



We, the Advocacy Alliance, have been busy with a number of exciting initiatives. We recently hosted a Valentine's dance and have begun organizing a weekly knowledge exchange at Dowty.

Every Thursday, a different group joins us to share information and lead discussions. So far, topics have included fire safety; politics with Marlyn Crawford; abuse prevention with DRPS; mental wellness with Miss Natasha; internet safety with Durham Regional Police Services (DRPS); and community safety, with a focus on human trafficking.

We are also looking forward to visiting the Legislature in Toronto on May 6th.

~ Crystal Grieg, President, Advocates Alliance

[Learn More](#)



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Our Memorable Niagara Falls Getaway

On April 16, we set out for a much-anticipated trip to Niagara Falls, a getaway filled with exploration, entertainment, and great company. We kicked off our first evening at *The Price is Right Live*. While none of us were called to the stage to "come on down," the energy in the room was infectious. We had a fantastic time cheering as a group and soaking in the lively atmosphere.

We started our second day bright and early, eager to experience the best of the Falls. Our morning began with *Niagara Takes Flight*, an immersive attraction that offered a breathtaking aerial perspective of the region. We followed this with a visit to the Butterfly Conservatory; wandering among hundreds of free-flying butterflies provided a serene and magical contrast to the morning's excitement.

After a quick midday break, we headed to Journey Behind the Falls, which proved to be a definitive highlight of the trip. As we stood near the thundering water, we were treated to the sight of a vibrant rainbow stretching across the mist, a truly unforgettable moment for everyone.



The evening was just as busy. We enjoyed a buffet dinner at Al Mac's before heading to Clifton Hill to explore the attractions and take in the spectacular views from the SkyWheel. We wrapped up the day back at the hotel with a well-deserved soak in the hot tub, the perfect way to unwind after a full day of walking.

On our final morning, we visited the Niagara Parks Power Station. Walking through the historic tunnel to the observation deck offered yet another impressive vantage point of the falls. Before heading home, we squeezed in some final sightseeing at Clifton Hill and took one last stroll by the water to reflect on the trip.



The trip was a resounding success. Everyone had a wonderful time connecting outside of our usual routine, and we are already looking forward to a return trip next year. It was a perfect opportunity to explore together and create lasting memories.

~ Shannon Goddard, Community Connections Team Lead



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating Esha's Volunteer Journey and New Milestone

For the past four years, Esha has been a dedicated and compassionate volunteer supporting a person connected to CLAPW. Over time, their connection has grown into a meaningful and joyful friendship, grounded in shared experiences, trust, and genuine conversation.



Together, they have spent many enjoyable hours painting ceramics, watching movies, and talking about life, simple yet powerful moments that truly reflect the spirit of inclusion and companionship. Esha's warmth, patience, and steady commitment have made a lasting and heartfelt difference, and her presence has been deeply appreciated.

We are also delighted to share that Esha has recently been accepted into Medical School! This remarkable achievement reflects her hard work, determination, and deep compassion for others.

Congratulations, Esha! We are incredibly proud of you and so grateful for the time, care, and kindness you have shared with our CLAPW community.

~ Sharon Burgess, Volunteer and Student Coordinator

Volunteer Services Update: Spring 2026

It has been a season of incredible growth and celebration within our Volunteer Services department. As the community thaws out, our team is busier than ever, welcoming new faces and celebrating the dedicated individuals who make our work possible.

Growing Our Team

We have been hard at work onboarding a wonderful group of new volunteers and students. Throughout the winter semester, we were joined by 22 new volunteers and 25 college students completing their field placements. We are now preparing to welcome our next student cohort, who will begin their spring/summer semester this May.

Looking further ahead to the fall, we are excited to announce a new partnership with the Durham District School Board (DDSB). This collaboration will welcome co-op students into our programs, offering them hands-on experience and a unique window into the meaningful world of developmental services.

Celebrating Service

On April 21st, we had the distinct honour of celebrating several members of our team at the **Ontario Volunteer Service Awards**. Their long-term dedication and compassion are the backbone of our organization, and it was a privilege to see their contributions recognized at the provincial level. Gene Baker, Maddison Poulin, Megan Cable, and Esha Dinesh were honoured for their service.



Gene Baker, Maddison Poulin, Sharon Burgess, Megan Cable and Esha Dinesh

Community Connections

Our local partnerships continue to thrive. In April, we were pleased to host 15 students from Pickering High School's Recreation Leadership class. Alongside their teacher, these students facilitated two mornings of high-energy, engaging activities that were a hit with everyone involved.

We are also thrilled to announce the launch of a **new volunteer-facilitated initiative** starting **Wednesday, May 6th**. This program will run on Wednesday mornings at the McLean Community Centre, providing even more opportunities for connection and engagement.

Get Involved

Our volunteers make a real difference in the lives of those we support every single day. If you're interested in learning more about our programs or joining our team, we would love to hear from you.

For more information, please contact:

Sharon Burgess

[✉ sharon.burgess@clapw.org](mailto:sharon.burgess@clapw.org)



[Visit our Website](#)

CLAPW STAFF EXCELLENCE

Cheers for Peers: Recognizing Dedication and Excellence at CLAPW

At Community Living Ajax-Pickering and Whitby (CLAPW), we believe in celebrating the incredible dedication of our team. Through our Cheers for Peers initiative, we recognize staff who go above and beyond, bringing our mission, vision, and values to life each day.

Whether it's supporting individuals with compassion, collaborating with colleagues, or making a positive impact behind the scenes, these team members embody what CLAPW stands for.

Thank you to all our staff for your commitment, heart, and excellence, and cheers to this month's standout peers!



January 2026 Employee of the Month: Shakeidra H.

Shakeidra has been the driving force behind the relaunch of our **Click n' Connect** virtual activities, bringing incredible kindness, energy, and creativity to the program.

Shakeidra took the initiative to completely elevate our virtual programming, presenting a professional and innovative vision to her leadership team that has truly transformed the experience for those we support.



January 2026 Team of the Month: Supported Independent Living (SIL) Team

The SIL Team at CLAPW was recognized in appreciation of their exceptional dedication and consistent commitment to supporting 33 individuals within the Supported Independent Living program. As the program has grown, so too have the diverse and evolving needs of those supported. The SIL Team responds with professionalism, compassion, and resilience. They consistently go above and beyond to provide high-quality, person-directed support, while modeling strong communication, effective problem-solving, and meaningful community engagement.



February 2026 Employee of the Month: Betty Eteli

We are proud to recognize Betty Eteli as she prepares to retire after an exceptional 41 years of service with CLAPW. Throughout her career, she has navigated decades of change with professionalism, always grounded in a deep commitment to inclusion and dignity.

She has made a lasting impact through her support of others, mentorship of new staff, and efforts to strengthen community connections. Known for her diligence, accountability, and strong "safety-first" mindset, Betty consistently fosters a positive and supportive team environment.

Betty leads by example, and her integrity and compassion have left a lasting legacy. While she will be greatly missed, her contributions will continue to strengthen CLAPW for years to come.



CLAPW STAFF EXCELLENCE



March 2026 Employee of the Month: Kelly Poulin

A true force to be reckoned with, Kelly is deeply committed to elevating our services through creativity and innovation. From helping to establish a new online registration system to her active leadership in our **Culture Club, EDIB, and Task Group committees**, Kelly consistently looks for ways to make things better for our staff and the families we serve.

Kelly is a natural leader and mentor who fosters a supportive environment where students and volunteers thrive. Known for her steady presence, professional integrity, and wonderful sense of humour, she brings both warmth and excellence to the workplace every day.



April 2026 Employee of the Month: Ross Iloba

Since joining CLAPW in August 2025, **Ross Iloba** has demonstrated exceptional dedication. After quickly building a strong connection with the individual he supports, Ross transitioned into a full-time role.

Ross is the definition of a "person-centered" professional. He is recognized for his outstanding communication with both his manager and his team, ensuring that support plans are followed consistently. Ross demonstrates a calm composure and a positive attitude that provides incredible stability.

Ross is a compassionate advocate and a truly valued member of the CLAPW team. Congratulations, Ross!

CLAPW STAFF RETIREMENTS

Celebrating 41 Years of Dedication and Impact: Honouring Betty Eteli's Retirement

We are pleased to extend our sincere congratulations Betty Eteli on her retirement after a remarkable 41 years of service.

Betty's career has spanned a period of significant transformation in the developmental services sector, as supports shifted from institutional settings to more inclusive, community-based models. During this time of change, Betty demonstrated



professionalism, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to the people she supported. Betty was a leader in advancing person-directed approaches, always ensuring that individuals were heard, respected, and supported to achieve their goals and live meaningful lives.

CLAPW is stronger because of Betty's dedication, and we are deeply grateful for her contributions over the past four decades.



EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS

From Classroom to Workplace: How Project SEARCH Supports Meaningful Employment

Project SEARCH is a school-to-work transition program designed for youth with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Through hands-on experience and structured training, participants gain transferable, job-specific, and employability skills that prepare them for appropriate and meaningful work opportunities.

Each program is embedded within a host business, giving youth the chance to learn in a real-world environment. In partnership with the Durham District Catholic School Board (DDCSB), Project SEARCH collaborates with Lakeridge Gardens Long-Term Care Home. There, participants rotate through departments such as food services, environmental services, and recreation, building confidence and practical workplace skills.

Additional support is provided through a collaboration between Community Living Ajax-Pickering and Whitby and the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB). An employment specialist also serves as a part-time skills trainer, offering individualized, on-the-job coaching. This support helps participants develop real-world abilities that prepare them for sustainable, appropriate employment.

The program's impact is already evident. As of April 2026, Lakeridge Gardens Long-Term Care Home has hired one of the Project SEARCH interns in its food services department. The intern is performing exceptionally well, demonstrating growth, reliability, and independence, an outcome that reflects the strength of the program and the value of inclusive hiring practices.





Contact Us

GET INVOLVED

CLAPW Named Charity of Choice for the Ajax Waterfront Race

Mark your calendars! This is one you won't want to miss. We are proud to share that Community Living Ajax Pickering and Whitby (CLAPW) has been selected as the Charity of Choice for this year's Ajax Waterfront Race. This community event raised over \$23,000 for Herizon House last year, which is an incredible achievement and speaks to the generosity of this community.

Set along the beautiful Ajax Waterfront, this race offers paved paths, gentle inclines, and some of the best views in Durham Region. Whether you're running, walking, or cheering from the sidelines, there is something for everyone.



- **Register today at ajaxwaterfronttrace.ca - Register**
Choose from 1 km, 5 km, or 15 km distances - perfect for all ages and abilities.
- **Volunteer and be part of the action at ajaxwaterfronttrace.ca - Volunteers.** We are looking for volunteers to assist with registration, greet participants, and help manage water stations to keep runners safe and supported.
- **Become a sponsor at ajaxwaterfronttrace.ca - Sponsors**
Sponsorship is a great way to promote your business while giving back to the community in a meaningful way.

Why it Matters:

Funds raised through this event will directly support CLAPW programs and services, helping people with intellectual disabilities live full, inclusive lives in our community.

The Race Committee is also leading the way in accessibility and inclusion. Through an initiative inspired by Adidas Runner 321, individuals with intellectual disabilities can participate in the race free of charge, removing barriers and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to be part of this event.

Help us build momentum! Like, Follow, and share Ajax Waterfront Race on Facebook and Instagram, and keep an eye on our channels for updates as we get closer to race day.

We extend our sincere thanks to the organizers, sponsors, volunteers, and participants who will be lacing up in support of CLAPW. Let's make this year's race them most successful yet.

~ Lisa McNee-Baker, Executive Director



GALLERY





UPCOMING EVENTS

May Events for Community Living Month

May is more than just a month on the calendar—it's a province-wide celebration of belonging. We at [Community Living Ajax-Pickering and Whitby](#) (CLAPW) have planned a month full of connection, advocacy, and fun. Whether you're a long-time supporter or new to our community, we'd love to see you there.

COMMUNITY LIVING MONTH

May 2026 Event Schedule

FRIDAY
May 1

CLAPW FLAG RAISING #1
Town of Ajax, Pat Bayly Square
55 Bayly St W, Ajax

11:00 AM

FRIDAY
May 1

CLAPW FLAG RAISING #2
Region of Durham H.Q.
605 Rossland Rd E, Whitby

2:30 PM

FRIDAY
May 1

SHINE A LIGHT CAMPAIGN

Town of Ajax:
65 Harwood Ave S, Ajax

Town of Whitby H.Q.:
575 Rossland Rd E, Whitby

Region of Durham H.Q.:
605 Rossland Rd E., Whitby

These
locations
will be lit in
Community
Living
Colours in
the evening

WEDNESDAY
May 6

DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE
Queen's Park Legislative Assembly of
Ontario
1 Queen's Park, Toronto

11:00 AM

COMMUNITY LIVING MONTH

May 2026 Event Schedule

SATURDAY
May 30

COMMUNITY LIVING MONTH BBQ
CLAPW Head Office:
36 Emperor St., Ajax

12:00 PM
-
3:00 PM

ENTIRE
MONTH

SHOW US YOUR COMMUNITY LIVING COLOURS

Celebrate Community Living Month in style! Show your spirit by wearing blue and green throughout the month and sharing your photos with us. Post them on Viva Engage or email them to dana.sullivan@clapw.org—we'd love to see how you're celebrating!

ENTIRE
MONTH



Contact Us

How did you like this email?



UPCOMING EVENTS



You're Invited
to a
FREE Community BBQ!



Hosted By
COMMUNITY LIVING
Ajax-Pickering and Whitby
Inspiring Possibilities



Saturday May 30th, 2026
12:00-2:00pm
36 Emperor St., Ajax
(Rain or Shine)

- Food
- Ice Cream Truck
- Music
- Games
- Therapy Dogs
- Limited seating will be available. Please feel free to bring a picnic blanket or lawn chair.



Made Possible With Funding From



UPCOMING EVENTS



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PRESENTS

THE SCREENING SOCIETY MOVIE PREMIERE



COMING SOON



06.23.2026

FILM STARTS AT 10 AM

CINEPLEX

IN PICKERING

PLEASE RSVP TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT
COME SEE THE PREMIERE OF THE SCREENING SOCIETYS FILM



BIG THANKS
to

**ONTARIO
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Change
Project

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possible**



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