



SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



Accredited
IMAGINE CANADA

April - June 2026

A Spring of Growth, Connection & Community

This spring was one of our busiest and most rewarding seasons yet.

From hosting our **Empower & Elevate Community Builders Awards Gala** to expanding community programs, welcoming new partnerships, and celebrating the incredible work of our volunteers, every initiative reflected our commitment to building belonging and supporting our community.



Term Snapshot

Take a look at
what we've
been up to!

6

Programs Delivered

44+

Program Sessions Delivered

498+

Program Participant Attendances

100

Families Supported through
Qurbani Meat Distribution

94

Eid Toys Distributed to Children

56

Volunteers Engaged through
Programs and Events



info@msswr.org



480 Charles St. E., Kitchener, N2G 4K5



www.msswr.org

Spring PROGRAMS 2026

Six programs supporting learning,
wellness, recreation and belonging.



Spring 20 PROGRAMS 26



Our Tutoring Program continued to thrive this spring, with students returning each week to strengthen their academic skills and build confidence in a supportive environment. Parents reported improvements in math skills, academic confidence, friendships and willingness to ask for help.

"They have new way of learning their reading and writing and math, and I have noticed with my two children that they've gotten a lot better"

TUTORING



9 Sessions
8 Volunteers

145 Attendances
9 Students Engaged

NEIGHBOURS HELPING NEIGHBOURS



100%

of survey respondents
felt **less isolated** or
more supported.

Our Neighbours Helping Neighbours program continued throughout the spring, providing a welcoming space where refugee, newcomer, and marginalized families could connect, learn, and support one another. Weekly sessions featured community, health, and legal education workshops that equipped participants with valuable resources.

"I feel more connected to my peers in the community"

"I have grown increasingly fond of the gatherings that evoke a spirit of love and harmony."

7+ Sessions **67** Attendances
22 Consistent Program Participants



Spring 20 PROGRAMS 26

HEALING THROUGH ART FOR PARENTS



Ontario 



This spring, Healing Through Art for Parents continued to provide a welcoming space for adults to unwind, connect, and focus on their mental well-being through creativity. Each week, participants explored a variety of hands-on art activities that encouraged self-expression, meaningful conversations, and personal growth while building supportive connections with one another.

100% Rated the Program Good or Excellent

78%

reported growth in **creativity, confidence and social connection.**

8 Sessions
31 Adults Engaged
113 Attendances

"I would like to express our sincere gratitude for MSS management and staff for their overwhelming continued kindness and support"

HEALING THROUGH ART FOR KIDS

This spring, Healing Through Art for Kids continued to provide children ages 4–12 with a safe, welcoming space to express themselves, explore their creativity, and build confidence through art. Each week, participants connected with their peers through engaging activities that encouraged imagination, emotional expression, and personal growth in a supportive and inclusive environment.



8 Sessions **79** Attendances
28 Children Registered



Spring 20 PROGRAMS 26

GIRLS IN SPORTS

This spring, Girls in Sport created an accessible and welcoming space where girls could participate in recreation, develop new athletic skills, and build confidence.

"It had a positive impact on my daughters because of the supportive environment and the fun atmosphere. They played different games and learned rules of all those games. The whole team and especially the coach and the coordinator of the program are very welcoming and supportive."



8 Sessions

21 Girls Registered

MINDFUL GARDENING



This spring marked the return of Mindful Gardening, as *Planting Seeds of Hope, Belonging, and Community Care*, bringing community members together to connect with nature, learn new gardening skills, and enjoy the benefits of spending time outdoors. Participants worked together to plant and care for the garden while learning about sustainability, building meaningful connections, and experiencing the calming benefits of gardening in a welcoming community space. Sense of **belonging, reduced loneliness, emotional safety, stress relief** and **connection with nature** were emerging outcomes

4 Spring Sessions

43 Participants

94 Attendances

MSSWR IN THE COMMUNITY

Working together. Creating change.



Design Workshop on Affordable Housing for Newcomers

MSSWR participated in a workshop focused on Affordable Housing for Newcomers in the Waterloo region, organized by Immigration Partnership and Build New. This workshop provided valuable insights into the long-term affordable housing strategy while also allowing for feedback on the existing plans.



April 1st, 2026

April 11th, 2026



37th Annual Mayors Dinner

MSSWR attended The Working Centre's 37th Annual Mayors Dinner, celebrating the theme Places for Inclusion – The Heart of Belonging. The evening highlighted the importance of creating welcoming and connected communities.

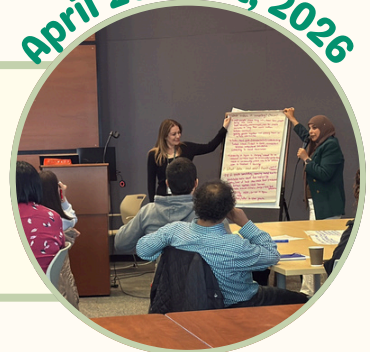


Data & Storytelling Workshop

Over two days, MSSWR explored how nonprofits can strengthen storytelling & collect data in more meaningful ways. The first day focused on data collection & the importance of strong systems, while the second day highlighted effective storytelling and how organizations can clearly communicate their impact.



April 20 -21st, 2026



April 23rd, 2026

"We need more men" Documentary Pre-Screening

We Need More Men: A Short Documentary was presented as a community-focused screening aimed at sparking dialogue around men's mental health, social expectations, and community support systems.



MSSWR IN THE COMMUNITY

Working together. Creating change.



WRDSB Community Fair

The Community Fair was held at as a community engagement event designed to connect residents with local services, organizations, and resources. The fair featured a range of community and service providers offering information on programs, supports, and local initiatives.

April 24th, 2026

CYPT Voting Members Meeting

MSSWR was pleased to attend the Children and Youth Planning Table Voting Member Meeting. Members explored equity-centered approaches to uplifting youth voices in Waterloo Region. The meeting included thoughtful discussions around the Equity Design Thinking Project and the launch of the Youth Impact Survey.

April 29th, 2026



May 6th, 2026

Multicultural Connections Event

MSSWR was honoured to attend the Multicultural Connections event hosted by the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre. The event created a meaningful space to connect with community members, organizations, and leaders working toward a more inclusive and welcoming Waterloo Region.



Community Heroes Recognition Banquet

We were honoured to attend Reception House's Community Heroes Recognition Banquet, an inspiring evening dedicated to celebrating individuals and organizations strengthening our region. We are especially proud that our **Executive Director, Duaa Al-Aghar, was recognized as a Community Hero.**

May 6th, 2026



MSSWR IN THE COMMUNITY

Working together. Creating change.

May 12th, 2026



Highschool Wellness Fairs at Huron Heights & FHCI

We attended 2 wellness fairs at Huron Heights Secondary School and Forest Heights Collegiate Institute. The wellness fairs were an opportunity for students to learn about mental health supports available for them in the region.

May 20th, 2026



Fairer Funding Summit

MSSWR participated in the Fairer Funding Summit, bringing together nonprofit leaders to discuss funding, sustainability, and equity. Executive Director Duaa Al-Aghar joined the Grassroots Leadership Panel to share insights on strengthening community-led organizations.

May 20th, 2026



51st Annual Interfaith Community Breakfast

Our team was grateful to attend the 51st Annual Interfaith Community Breakfast alongside community members, leaders, and organizations from across the region. The morning brought people together through meaningful conversation, food, entertainment, and reflection.

Parenting Resource Fair

MSSWR was pleased to attend the Children and Youth Planning Table Voting Member Meeting. Members explored equity-centered approaches to uplifting youth voices in Waterloo Region. The meeting included thoughtful discussions around the Equity Design Thinking Project and the launch of the Youth Impact Survey.

May 26th, 2026

MSSWR IN THE COMMUNITY

Working together. Creating change.

Laurentian Public School Spring Open House

MSSWR attended The Working Centre's 37th Annual Mayors Dinner, celebrating the theme Places for Inclusion – The Heart of Belonging. The evening highlighted the importance of creating welcoming and connected communities.

May 27th, 2026



5th Annual Snapshot of Hate Report Release

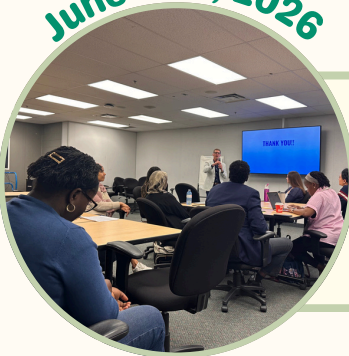
MSSWR was pleased to attend the Children and Youth Planning Table Voting Member Meeting. Members explored equity-centered approaches to uplifting youth voices in Waterloo Region. The meeting included thoughtful discussions around the Equity Design Thinking Project and the launch of the Youth Impact Survey.



June 6th, 2026



June 15th, 2026



The Racism Schism: Building Bridges Through Policy

MSSWR's Executive Director participated in The Racism Schism: Building Bridges Through Policy, a WRDSB-hosted community conversation on anti-racism, equity, and meaningful action. The event created space for dialogue, shared perspectives, and collective learning.

WCSWR Annual Meeting

MSSWR attended the Womens and Crisis Services Waterloo Regions Annual Meeting. It was a great opportunity to learn about their expanded transitional housing, peer support groups, and ongoing outreach initiatives supporting women and children affected by domestic violence.

June 25th, 2026



Tenancy Rights Townhall Event

MSSWR brought together **36 community members** for a free and accessible information session focused on tenant protections, eviction processes, landlord responsibilities, housing disputes, and locally available supports. Hosted by the Office of **MPP Aislinn Clancy** and delivered in partnership with **Waterloo Region Community Legal Services** and the **Waterloo Region Eviction Prevention Program**, the event gave newcomer and refugee community members an opportunity to ask questions directly and connect with trusted legal and housing-support services.



Eid Toy Drive & Arab Heritage Month Celebration

MSSWR distributed **94 Eid gifts** to children during its Eid Toy Drive and Arabic Heritage Month Celebration. The event brought families together for an evening of cultural celebration, community connection, program information, and a shared potluck. We partnered with **Islamic Relief Canada** and **Beaver Eid Toy Drive** (powered by Farida Events) to successfully run the event.



Cambridge Moves for Mental Health

MSSWR proudly joined Cambridge Moves for Mental Health, bringing community members together to walk, raise awareness, challenge stigma, and support accessible mental-health services. **30 people registered to join the MSSWR team** for the 2.5-kilometre community route at Cambridge Civic Square. Funds raised through the initiative supported Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services and other organizations advancing mental health across Waterloo Region.



WRCF Presentation

MSSWR joined five fellow members of the Counselling Collaborative of Waterloo Region for a presentation to Waterloo Region Community Foundation highlighting the importance of affordable, accessible and community-responsive counselling. **Six organizations shared how they are responding to distinct regional challenges**, including housing pressures, rising mental-health needs, rural service access, social disconnection and the experiences of equity-deserving communities. MSSWR contributed its perspective on Waterloo Region's changing demographics and the unique strengths and challenges experienced by newcomers.



Civil Remedies Grant Announcement

MSSWR was honoured to receive \$194,840 through Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program to expand culturally and spiritually sensitive, trauma-informed counselling for newcomers affected by gender-based violence and human trafficking. MSSWR and Reception House Waterloo Region received a combined \$390,680, recognizing the essential role community-based organizations play in creating safety, healing and belonging. The announcement was hosted by Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health and celebrated the staff, volunteers and community partners whose trust-building work makes these services possible.



Qurbani Meat Distribution

MSSWR partnered with Islamic Relief Canada to distribute **100 Qurbani meat allocations to 100 families across Waterloo Region**. The initiative supported families experiencing food insecurity and financial pressure by improving access to culturally appropriate halal food during an important time of giving and reflection. With the support of staff, volunteers, and five delivery supporters, **20 packages were delivered directly to families** experiencing transportation or accessibility barriers. In total, **23 helpers contributed to the initiative**, including 17 who provided direct event-day support and a combined 49 hours of service.



EMPOWER & ELEVATE *Gala*

Community Builder Awards Gala
June 11, 2026 • Kitchener Portuguese Club

“The true measure of a community is not found in its buildings or its wealth. It is found in how we care for one another.”

— Duaa Al-Aghar,
Executive Director,
MSSWR

The second annual Empower & Elevate Community Builder Awards Gala brought together community members, partners, organizations, elected officials, volunteers, and supporters for an unforgettable evening celebrating those making Waterloo Region more compassionate, inclusive, and connected.

The evening recognized outstanding leadership and service while raising support for MSSWR's culturally responsive mental health, newcomer, youth, and family programs. More than a fundraiser, the Gala showcased the power of a community united by compassion and a shared commitment to uplifting others.

OUR IMPACT TOGETHER

20+

VOLUNTEERS

290+

GUESTS IN
ATTENDANCE

80+

SPONSORS &
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

14

AWARD
WINNERS

39

NOMINATIONS



Gala Highlights

We received **39 incredible nominations**, making it impossible to choose just one winner per category. This year, we proudly recognized **two winners** across **7 categories**.

To every nominee and every winner, thank you.

Your dedication is changing lives and strengthening our region.



The evening began with a beautiful Qur'an recitation and Land Acknowledgement before guests enjoyed an inspiring keynote address by Taha Ghayyur and the Community Builder Awards ceremony. Throughout the evening, attendees connected over dinner, visited the dessert and juice bar, explored the silent auction, captured memories at the photo booth, and enjoyed a live oud performance that added to the warm and celebratory atmosphere. **Every moment reflected the spirit of community, generosity, and belonging that defines MSSWR.**



The Gala received wonderful media coverage, highlighting stories of resilience, leadership, and community impact across Waterloo Region.

Follow us on Instagram to relive the evening through photos, videos, and highlights from this unforgettable celebration:

 [@muslimsocialserviceswr](https://www.instagram.com/muslimsocialserviceswr)



RECOGNIZED BEYOND THE GALA

We are honoured to receive a formal letter of recognition from **Prime Minister Mark Carney**, acknowledging the dedication, compassion, and service of our honourees, volunteers, and community partners. His message affirms the impact of the work being done every day across Waterloo Region.



Thank you for making it possible.

Because of you, the **Empower & Elevate Community Builder Awards Gala** was an unforgettable celebration of community, compassion, and service.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our sponsors, donors, community partners, volunteers, board members, staff, award nominees, recipients, attendees, and every individual who contributed their time, talents, and generosity. Your support made this evening and the impact that follows possible.



Grow With Us

Volunteer. Connect. Make an impact.

Every act of service creates a ripple of change.

Whether you're looking to gain experience, build leadership skills, complete volunteer hours, or give back to your community, there's a place for you at MSSWR.

Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do, helping create welcoming spaces, support meaningful programs, and make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals and families across the Waterloo Region.



WHY VOLUNTEER?



BUILD MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Meet passionate volunteers, staff, and community leaders.



DEVELOP NEW SKILLS

Gain experience in leadership, teamwork, communication, and event planning.



GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Support programs that empower youth, newcomers, seniors, and families.



EARN VOLUNTEER HOURS

Perfect for high school students, university students, and anyone looking to make an impact.



VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Receive certificates, reference letters, and celebrate your contributions at our Volunteer Appreciation Event.



MAKE A LASTING IMPACT

Your time and talents help create stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities.

2025 VOLUNTEER RECAP



1620+
Volunteers



2500+
Volunteer Hours



Hundreds of
community members supported

JOIN OUR
Volunteer family!

Applications for our Fall 2026 Programs are now open.



APPLY TODAY!

 www.msswr.org/volunteer





STAY CONNECTED

Become a Donor!

Together, we can build a strong community that supports culturally informed, customized services for programs and mental health supports. With your donation, you contribute to newcomers expanding their personal capacity, gaining self-confidence, and developing resilience. Your support means hope and a better future for many. Let's create change together and positively influence lives!

Scan the QR code, or click the button to donate!

DONATE NOW



Counselling Collaborative
WATERLOO REGION



Accredited
IMAGINE CANADA

Follow Our Journey

   [@muslimsocialserviceswr](https://www.instagram.com/muslimsocialserviceswr)

 [@kwmuslims](https://www.tiktok.com/@kwmuslims)



info@msswr.org



480 Charles St. E., Kitchener, N2G 4K5



www.msswr.org