

MUSLIM SOCIAL SERVICES WATERLOO REGION

NEWSLETTER 2023



Hi There Neighbour!

Did you know that social isolation can lead to health risks such as heart disease and depression? If that wasn't concerning enough, it has been reported that newcomers tend to report higher levels of isolation due to the social disruption caused by migrating to a new country.

That's why Muslim Social Services (MSS) has been grateful for the impact of our Neighbours Helping Neighbours program. This program was originally designed to provide newcomers and residents alike with a safe space to bond and integrate into their new communities. From organized potluck events to community gardening initiatives, participants have been able to enjoy a number of spaces that promote community engagement and bonding.

"This program gave us a lot of benefits like integration into the Muslim Community and awareness in areas like mental health, legal rights, and technical issues," Says Thuraya, one of our participants. "It expanded our understanding of each other and allowed us to create new friendships. You have all our thanks and gratitude".

Suaad, another participant echoed similar sentiments saying, "The program helped minimize feeling lonely in a foreign environment. It contributed to improving the psychological condition of me and the elderly because our children spent all their time at work. I gained new friends where we can share our problems and help each other". Being a part of this program for Suaad has been like "finding a second family".





Just Hear Me Out

Youth are our future.

As such, it is essential to provide young community members with a sound platform to cultivate both resilient and community oriented mindsets. These spaces will allow youth to feel heard, supported and believe that their voices matter.

Hear Me Out, a youth resilience program provides young community members in the Waterloo Region with this platform. The program hones a keen focus on supporting individual and community-oriented wellness through a cultural and spiritual lens. Hear Me Out continues to be a space for youth to collectively feel understood in a brave space. A space where youth will not face judgment in expressing their strengths and struggles. Rather, HMO guides to navigate the often confusing stages of adolescence and young adulthood through ample opportunities for relationship building and mutual support. Ultimately, the goal of HMO is for youth to develop the skills to maintain a resilient mindset to aid them in their journey through life.

“Having the privilege of attending several of your events has had such a positive impact on myself and I have noticed it in others as well” says Najaat – a consistent attendee of Hear Me Out. “I deeply appreciated the space you created for us to voice our opinion by engaging us in meaningful discussions. This environment has given me the confidence to become an active participant in the community. I feel like the work being done in hear me out is crucial for the long-term well being of our group” she continues.



HEAR ME OUT Resilient YOUTHS

Funded by the  **Astley**
Foundation

For youth, ages 14-25

Tuesday, May 30 online on Zoom
7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87437434484?pwd=V2NTS3NNN1N4TmllTGJnRONxUklvUT>





Just Hear Me Out

We are so grateful to those who have supported our ability to provide such an enriching environment for the youth in our community. Because of your support, we've been able to support people like Najaat to gain confidence and Afnaan feels a sense of community.

"Before Hear Me Out, I struggled with forming genuine bonds with others and truly understanding other people." Afnaan says. "This program has helped me with that in so many ways by providing a sense of community and teaching the importance of self-awareness and reflection and how it can help you be a better member of your community". In a society where multiculturalism is the norm it can be difficult as a youth to figure out what spaces you belong in, especially when you have limited options that are culturally sensitive. "MSS has opened me up to a community of people that believe in the same things as I do, they have also shown examples of working hard, sharing our beliefs and culture. I'm grateful for how Hear Me Out and MSS has helped me grow".

Hear Me Out's already positive impact on youth across the Waterloo Region drives our organization to expand HMO initiatives to reach a wider audience effectively. Inspired by maintaining a cultural and spiritual focus, the next phase of Hear Me Out includes separate men's and women's empowerment groups to hear youth members out by cultivating brave sharing spaces.



Donate Today. Help Tomorrow.

Your support today of our youth program will help shape the community leaders and members of the future, despite the systemic obstacles present for newcomers and minorities.

[Click Here To Donate!](#)





Like Hanane and her family, there are many newcomers that are welcomed into our country only to be left with little to no resources to assist with the adjustments to a new society or with challenges such as racial discrimination.

“Muslim Social Services has been such an incredible support for me,” Hanane says. “It’s here that I have been able to find my voice again. I really liked how they educated us on our rights and created a safe space for us – my experience here has transferred into my personal life as well. Since joining the Progressive Leadership Program, I have been more grounded and a better leader for my children at home.”

New Places New Faces

Moving from one country to another can be an incredibly daunting experience. Which oftentimes includes facing many adjustments with little to no resources to help newcomers acclimate. Newcomers in our Region are thus faced with a variety of hurdles including cultural and linguistic challenges which create further barriers in adapting to new legal and social systems.

“I was born here but was raised in my home country,” says Hanane, a Progressive Leadership participant. “I returned to Canada in 2021 and almost immediately felt alienated, anxious, and scared in my new environment”.

To make matters worse, Hanane’s “son suffered from racial discrimination” early on, a difficult experience for Hanane in a place she was meant to call home. “I was new to Canada and did nothing because I did not know my rights. This was a frustrating experience that made me feel unsafe”.

Did You Know:

1 in every 4 youth-aged individuals experience social isolation in Canada?

1 in 3 elder immigrants also suffer from social isolation in Canada?





New Places New Faces

As a small grassroots organization, MSS strives to provide educational, personal wellness, and leadership opportunities for women through our Progressive Leadership program. Thank you to those who donated for your ongoing support of this initiative. Without your ongoing contributions, the team at MSS would not have been able to create such a positive impact with newcomers such as Hanane and Yusra.

"Life before Muslim Social Services brought on a fair share of saddening challenges " says Yusra, another program participant. "By the time I came to Canada, I trusted no one including myself and so I chose to just isolate from everyone. This took a toll on my well-being and eventually, I knew I had to change how I was living my life". That's where MSS stepped in for Yusra, a newcomer who felt as if she had no access to culturally relevant and supportive spaces in her new environment. Yusra joined some of our program offerings as a start. "It did not happen over night, but over time I started to see positive changes in my life. I've grown to see the good in people again, to trust others and to trust myself" When asked how she feels these days Yusra responded "Our program always made us feel safe and accepted with no judgement. This has allowed me to become confident – I feel strong – like I can voice my opinions. I leave Muslim Social Services overwhelmed with so much happiness that I want to share with my children".

In addition to participating in our Progressive program, Yusra has also been a devoted volunteer at numerous Muslim Social Service events and initiatives. "Working with the staff I've come to understand why the program has been as impactful has it has been for me and others – everyone here has such a positive, welcoming, and kind energy and it shines through in the work they do. I especially want to mention Duaa – her hard work does not go unnoticed, and she was an amazing help in my journey to becoming the type of woman I am today."



Support our Women

Your donation will help our organization sustain and scale our efforts in providing support to women who are newcomers or those who are suffering from isolation.

Donation Link

e-transfer:

msskwdonations@gmail.com

call:

519-772-4399 ext. 2707





It Truly Doesn't Go Unnoticed

Yusra is not the only associate of MSS that can speak to this. Any person that works with Duaa Al-Aghar, the Executive Director of MSS, will quickly tell you how kind, driven, passionate, and committed she has been since taking over the position just under two years ago. This has reflected in the work she has done for the community by establishing important relationships for Muslim Social Services with other organizations to help tackle key systemic issues that currently exist within our region. Duaa has also been intentional in fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect in our organization through her patient and consistent leadership style. Her hardwork has not gone unnoticed by the community either as she recently was nominated for an Oktoberfest Woman of the Year award. This calibre of leadership has undoubtedly translated to the team that is devoted to achieving the mission of Muslim Social Services on a larger scale starting with a new set of program offerings.



Resilient Families, Strong Neighbourhoods

Within newcomer and low-income households exist systemic issues that prevent families from blossoming into their best selves.

This program aims to combat this issue by providing a safe space where family members can learn how to function better as a family unit, while also providing resources to aid with the typical struggles faced with newcomer and low-income households such as employment, food, and housing. As a grassroots organization, this initiative cannot be completed alone. We appreciate any and all support provided toward providing systemic change to newcomer and immigrant family households in our region.





No Space for Hate

Ramadan 2023 has come and gone with hopefully many Muslims having enjoyed the many blessings and benefits that come with participating in this holy month. It, sadly, was also a month where there was an increase in Islamic hate crimes in our region with incidents occurring in Milton and right here in Waterloo Region. Muslim Social Services stands firmly against Islamophobic behaviour and was proud to host a community iftar planned with the intention of addressing this very issue. We understand that much of the conflict in community today exists because of misunderstanding.

To combat this, MSS hosted a community iftar event on April 15th. Many different walks of life, Muslim and non-Muslim, political members and community members gathered on this night to share the meal that breaks the fast while getting to know one another and the customs of Islam. The prophet (may God be pleased with him) would always seek to combat hate with love, and we as an organization hope to follow his footsteps by continuing to show the religion of Islam in a loving, welcoming, and empathetic way. We thank all of you who donated your time and money to ensuring this event was successful. We truly could not have done it without you.

Support our Anti-Islamophobia Initiatives

The more people understand the intentions of Muslims the more peace there is between Muslims and non-Muslims. Help us support our initiatives in destigmatizing Islam in the community. Help us reduce the risk of hate crimes against people of this faith.

Give today.





There's never a bad time for it

Healing Through Art

Healing Through Art is a program that integrates creativity, belonging, and growth. This program is designed to give immigrant and refugee children the tools to understand and express themselves. This program is designed to have children learn mindfulness skills, develop compassion, themes of identity of belonging, grief and loss, healthy relationships and positive self-talk. With Healing Through Art, children are given the opportunity to celebrate their unique diversity and personal story of immigration to Canada and to grow to understand their place in this world

Healing Through Art and Music for Parents

With the success of the Healing Through Art comes the birth of our new Healing Through Art and Music for Parents. This program is meant to be a transformative experience designed to promote well-being and personal growth through creative expression. This program is open to all, regardless of previous musical experience or skill level. Our main focus is on fostering a sense of unity and connection through group music making and art exploration. Participants will discover the therapeutic benefits of engaging in various art forms, such as dancing, singing, and visual art, allowing for profound self-expression and emotional release.



Ready to change your perspective?



Ready to do something positive for yourself?

Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region

Counselling Services Talk with MSS professional, licensed counsellors

New counselling office in Cambridge

Cambridge Muslim Society (Jamia Umar Al-Farooq Masjid)
282 Elgin St N, Cambridge, ON N1R 7H9

To book an appointment, call us: (519) 772 4399 ext. 3725
<https://www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org/>

info@muslimsocialserviceskw.org

(519) 772 4399 ext. 3725

There's never a bad time for it

MSS Counselling Services

Muslim Social Services strives to provide a safe and culturally sensitive therapeutic environment that aims to support its diverse community of clients through their journey in understanding and achieve a sense of healing in the area of Mental Health. Our counselling services are often tailored to the client's needs and goals for therapy, with a cultural perspective at hand as well with all counsellors being open to learning about each client's own cultural background.

Here are some client testimonials:

"I want to express my deep gratitude for the transformative impact your counselling services have had on my life as a woman. Through your guidance, I have embraced my authentic self, overcome emotional wounds, and built resilience. Your support has empowered me to navigate life's challenges, cultivate healthier relationships, and live life on my own terms. Thank you for changing my life for the better".

"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the positive impact your counselling services have had on my life as a youth boy. Through your support, I have gained self-awareness, learned valuable coping skills, and developed the confidence to face challenges. Your guidance has equipped me with effective communication tools, enabling me to build healthier relationships. Thank you for making a significant difference in my life".



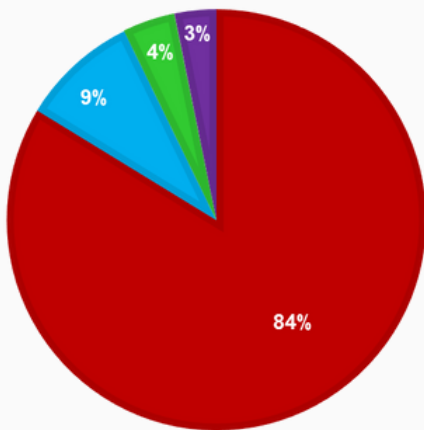


A Financial Breakdown

Here you can view a simplistic breakdown of the organization's revenues and expenditures. For a more detailed report, our financial statements can be found in the annual report or on our website.

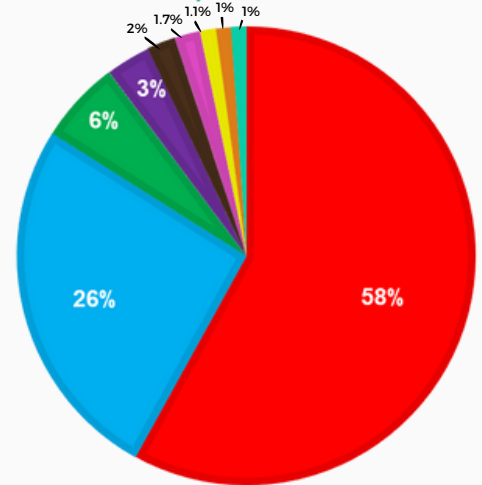
Breakdown Of Revenues

■ Grants ■ Social Assistance ■ General Donations ■ Counselling Services



Breakdown Of Expenses

■ Salaries and Benefits
■ Program cost
■ Social assistance
■ Occupancy cost
■ Sub-contracts
■ Legal and Professional fees



Read our Annual Report

Find out about the operations and finances of MSS over the 2022-2023 year.

[Click Here to Read!](#)





Increase Your Impact with Monthly Giving!

Consider becoming a **MONTHLY DONOR!** Monthly giving provides ongoing program support to newcomers and marginalized individuals within the region. To become a donor, please give us a call at 519-772-4399 ext. 2707

Make a Difference. Donate Today.

3 easy ways to give financially:



Online at:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/74512?v2=true>

e-transfer at:

msskwdonations@gmail.com

Call us at:

519-772-4399 ext. 2707

Volunteer



Please visit

www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org

to learn about the latest opportunities to help