



Hopewell Support Services

Annual Report 2025



Serving Guelph-Wellington since 1983

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At Hopewell, we acknowledge that we are situated on treaty land with a deep Indigenous history, on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee (ho-den-no-show-nee), Anishinabewaki (A-nish-in-na-bay-wa-ki), and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, Guelph remains home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

We recognize that we live and work within the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement, a pledge between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinabewaki, and their allied nations to share the land peacefully and protect its resources. This land is also part of the territory covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase (1784, confirmed 1792) with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

We acknowledge the harm caused by colonization, especially the historical marginalization of Indigenous people with developmental disabilities. Many were separated from their families, denied access to their culture, and left without adequate support systems.

At Hopewell, we are committed to honoring the long-standing and ongoing relationships that Indigenous communities, such as the Anishinabewaki and Haudenosaunee, maintain with this land and each other. As part of our reconciliation journey, we strive to find meaningful opportunities to connect with, listen to, and learn from Indigenous communities, while working to repair and heal the harm done.

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Hopewell,

This year, as I reflect on my 19 years with Hopewell and my first as Executive Director, the word resilience comes to mind not as a slogan, but as a lived experience shared by every person in our community.

Hopewell has always been rooted in connection. Since its founding 42 years ago by John and Joanne and their family, this agency has grown and adapted through many changes some joyful, others challenging. Yet our values have remained steady: person-centred, relationship-based, and deeply committed to inclusion. It's a privilege to carry forward that legacy and lead an organization built on care and courage.

This past year brought meaningful transition. We welcomed new individuals into service, strengthened support, and continued to rebuild and grow our leadership and frontline teams. We also said goodbye to three people we had supported throughout their lives. Their loss is deeply felt but so is our gratitude for having known them. We move forward in their honour, even stronger and more grounded.

Whether you've been with Hopewell for decades or joined recently, your contribution matters. The work we do together supporting people to live full lives ripples far beyond our walls. It builds more inclusive communities, creates connection, and inspires change.

As we enter the next chapter, including the launch of Hopewell Kids Connect, I'm filled with gratitude. Thank you for being part of this journey and for all the ways you show up for each other.

With Appreciation,

Jessica Johnston
Executive Director
Hopewell Support Services

Message from the Board Chair

Dear Hopewell Supporters,

On behalf of the Board, I want to express our profound gratitude for your unwavering support over the past year. Your commitment has empowered Hopewell to navigate economic uncertainties with remarkable fiscal resilience, effectively managing our resources and setting the stage for robust growth and exciting new opportunities.

This year marked a significant leadership transition. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Maria Zegarac, our former Executive Director, whose dedication, vision, and steadfast leadership profoundly shaped Hopewell's achievements. Maria's enduring legacy has provided a strong foundation upon which we continue to build and grow.

I am delighted to congratulate Jessica Johnston as she stepped into the role of Executive Director this past fall. Jessica's dynamic vision and unwavering determination are already propelling Hopewell into a promising phase of innovation and expansion, inspiring confidence and excitement for what lies ahead.

Our dedicated Board of Directors has been instrumental throughout these transitions, providing strategic guidance, thoughtful oversight, and steadfast commitment. Their efforts, coupled with the exceptional leadership of our executive team, have ensured that Hopewell remains vibrant, strong, and true to our mission.

Our extraordinary staff, thank you for your daily compassion, resilience, and tireless dedication. Your work profoundly impacts the lives of our clients and their families, who place their trust and confidence in us each day. We are deeply appreciative of your ongoing efforts and unwavering commitment.

This year, we embarked on extensive strategic planning involving all stakeholders—staff, clients, families, and community partners. This collaborative effort has positioned Hopewell exceptionally well to meet future challenges and expand our services, allowing us to support even more families in meaningful ways.

As we reflect on our accomplishments and look ahead, we recognize that our collective strength lies in our shared commitment to the community we serve. We warmly invite your continued support, whether through volunteering, donations, or advocacy, as we pursue our vision of creating fulfilling lives for every individual we serve.

Together, let us continue to make a meaningful difference.

With deepest appreciation,

Jon Christensen
Board Chair, Hopewell Support Services



“People always ask why I use a roster spot for Alex. My answer is simple. He is vital. He brings the players together in ways I never could.”

Coach Dave

Alex has been part of the Hopewell community for more than 20 years. He began in our children’s respite program and has lived at the Ariss home for 19 years.

A few years ago, Alex became an assistant coach for the Arthur lacrosse team. With his communication device, he led pep talks, cheered from the sidelines, and kept team spirits high. His role was not symbolic. It was essential.

When activities returned after the pandemic, the team asked him back without hesitation.

Alex’s presence shaped the team in lasting ways. His teammates and their families noticed how much they had grown just by knowing him.

“This experience gave the boys a chance to connect with someone they might have shied away from,” said one parent.

“It fostered acceptance in a way that few experiences can.” Another added.

“Including Alex helped the kids understand that different does not mean avoid. It means embrace.”

Alex’s story challenges the assumption that people with disabilities are only recipients of support. He gives back. He builds connections. He leads.

This is what inclusion really looks like. And this is what resilience means.

Because a fulfilling life is not something we build alone.

We build it together.

Support That's Steady and Strong: Who We Walked With In 2024 – 2025



Throughout the fiscal year, Hopewell supported individuals and families through consistent, person-centred supportive housing and respite programs. These numbers reflect our ongoing promise: to be present, adaptable, and committed, every day, for every person.

151

Individuals Served in 2024/2025

8

Locations throughout
Guelph / Wellington

114

Children & Adults supported
in Respite Services

73 & 14

Age of oldest and youngest
persons in supported living

100+

Donors, businesses and partners
who supported Hopewell

When Benjamin joined the team at Grange, it was during a time of uncertainty. Staffing shortages had stretched the team thin, and stability felt out of reach. What started as a temporary role quickly became something more, an opportunity to lead with heart and help shape a stronger community.

Benjamin brought more than reliability. His calm presence, genuine care, and steady leadership helped anchor the team. He listened deeply, supported consistently, and modelled a quiet strength that others naturally gravitated toward.

“From day one, I felt the impact of the work and the support of the team,” Benjamin reflects. “That made me want to grow with Hopewell.”

Staying through the hard moments became a turning point, not just for Benjamin, but for Grange itself. Through Hopewell’s referral program, he helped bring in new team members who now form the foundation of a thriving, connected crew.

“Watching the team grow and thrive has been so rewarding,” he says. “It’s incredible to know I’ve played a part in building something lasting.”

For Benjamin, resilience means consistency in the face of challenge, and always returning to what matters most: the people. His commitment helped transform a team in crisis into a community of care. “Hopewell isn’t just a workplace, it’s a place where people lift each other up,” he says. “We grow together.”

Benjamin’s journey reminds us: real change happens through steady, compassionate leadership. His story is one of resilience, and it reflects the very heart of Hopewell’s mission: a fulfilling life, together.



Building Resilience. One Milestone at a Time: Impact from the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

Exceptional Care

- Putting people supported at the heart of everything we do.
- Expanded housing to meet complex needs.
- Supported 36 people full-time across 8 homes; reintroduced respite and served 300+ in the community.
- Grew adult recreation programs and enhanced accessibility through home retrofits.
- Advanced safety and care with new fire protection systems and home upgrades.

Our People

- Building and sustaining a strong, values-driven workforce.
- Formed regional partnerships to attract talent.
- Maintained 140 trained team members amid sector-wide staffing pressures.
- Launched our first Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan with CCDI.
- Strengthened onboarding, student placements, HR data practices, and EDI integration.

Strong & Reputable Organization

- Focusing on sustainability, visibility, and impact.
- Initiated and completed a long-term Fund Development Strategy.
- Reopened essential services and refreshed our brand.
- Honoured as a finalist for the Guelph Chamber's Not-for-Profit of the Year.
- Launched the Together Network and fully embraced our new identity.

Community Connection

- Engaging families, partners, and allies to meet real needs.
- Prioritized family-centred advocacy and inter-agency collaboration.
- Met urgent respite needs and broadened behavioural supports.
- Opened a new Activity Centre; launched inclusive camps and advocacy campaigns.
- Introduced education for emergency services and secured \$ 180,000 for accessibility improvements.



Each year in late November, a growing circle of friends and supporters gathers for Ho Ho Ho Hopewell, a beloved community event rooted in joy, generosity, and connection.

Fifteen years ago, Andrew and Dan were university friends talking over dinner about what it meant to give back. Andrew, whose parents founded Hopewell, wanted to honour their legacy of care. Together, they committed to doing more than just talking. What started as a holiday get-together quickly grew into something bigger. Since then, the event has raised over \$130,000, creating a lasting impact for supported individuals.

Even during the pandemic, when the event paused for a year, the purpose stayed strong. When it returned, it came back more energized than ever.

“I’m always surprised by how willing people are to help,” Andrew says. “You realize how connected we all are when you see who shows up.”

In recent years, Vanessa joined the team and brought new momentum. Her care, leadership, and attention to detail have helped elevate the event while keeping its heart intact.

At its core, Ho Ho Ho Hopewell is about community, compassion, and taking action. It’s proof that small efforts, when shared, create something truly meaningful.

A Celebration of Strength and Spirit

This year's Hopewell Olympics brought together supported individuals and staff for a day that celebrated connection, courage, and community. From relay races to adapted games and spirited dance-offs, the event was a powerful reminder of the joy found in movement and togetherness. In a year marked by change and growth, participants showed up with energy and heart, trying new things and cheering each other on. The Hopewell Olympics were more than just a fun day. It reflected our shared resilience and our ongoing commitment to creating fulfilling lives, together.





Jack was a bright spirit with a laugh that made any room feel like home. Though non-verbal, Jack had his way of communicating. His expressive eyes, joyful laughter, and mischievous grin said everything. Jack moved into our Ariss home in 2021, but his connection to Hopewell began much earlier through our children's respite programs.

He found joy in the simple things like cheering at hockey games, being in nature, and sharing everyday moments with friends, family, and staff who came to know and love him. Jack reminded us daily of the beauty in connection and the power of being fully present. His kindness and joy were a gift to everyone around him.



Crystal was a cherished part of Hopewell for more than 30 years. Her love for music, especially Christmas carols, could brighten even the darkest days. Whether she was playing peekaboo or offering one of her signature hugs, Crystal had a way of making others feel loved and seen. Her joyful presence lifted spirits and brought people together.

She lived a full life surrounded by people who cared deeply for her. Her achievements, both big and small, were celebrated milestones in a community that held her close. Crystal reminded us that joy can be found in the everyday, and that love often shines through in the smallest gestures.



Rosa was part of the Hopewell family for over four decades. Her journey before arriving at Hopewell came with many challenges, but throughout her life, she showed us the quiet strength of the human spirit. Building trust with Rosa took time, patience, and compassion. When she smiled, her entire face lit up, and we knew we had been granted something truly special.

Although Rosa never used words to communicate, her expressive eyes and gentle presence spoke volumes. She loved whales and found deep comfort in music therapy. Some of our most treasured memories are of Rosa in those peaceful moments, her smile revealing a sense of comfort, connection, and belonging.

Rosa taught us to listen beyond words. She reminded us that trust is sacred and that meaningful connections can take many forms. Her legacy lives on in the hearts of those who cared for her, laughed with her, and learned from her.

Thanks to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ariss ground revitalization project transformed an underutilized outdoor area into a vibrant, accessible, and sensory-friendly space that now supports meaningful engagement for over 200 individuals each year.

The redesigned space includes accessible walkways, a communal dining deck, adaptive activity zones, and therapeutic features like gardens and water elements. These enhancements removed physical and sensory barriers, allowing people supported by Hopewell to experience connection, movement, and calm in a natural setting. The project not only fostered inclusion and well-being, but also deepened a sense of belonging within the broader Ariss community first and oldest location of Hopewell in Ariss, Ont.

The revitalization also received strong community support, including from Minister Joseph Racinsky, MPP for Ontario, who attended a small gathering held at Ariss to celebrate the enhanced space.



In a year shaped by change and resilience, donor support created lasting impact. Each contribution helped foster choice, connection, and opportunity for people building. fulfilling lives.

With gratitude, the following donors are recognized for their generosity.

Alana Shepherd	Jane Stamp	Randolph and Susan Breese
Alex Zegarac	Janine Fay	Raymond & Anne Guay
Allan Balfour	Jaren Hayman	Raymond Adamson
Ann Marie/Ted Imre	Jeff and Rose Hiller and family	Richard Fitchett
Anthony Zografos	Jeffery & Spence Ltd.	Richard McFadden
Arlene Stoodley	Jennifer Gysel	Rob and Marisa Cazzola
Audrey Rooseboom	Jennifer Stockall	Robb and Kathie Heyworth
Belle Bennett	Jessica Johnston	Robert Ball
Brenda Smith LaRose	JHJ Ag & Service Ltd.	Ron and Cheryl Vanooteghem
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Elaine Taylor	Maria Zegarac	The Sifton Family Foundation
Elizabeth Penney	Marilyn Watts	Theresa Thatcher
EMKAL IT	Marlene Bauman	Todd Skinner
Enbridge - Waterloo District	Mary Cruciano	Tom Andrew
Evelyn Linton	Mary lafrate	Vanessa Holmes
Expressway Trucks	MedProDirect Inc.	Vince and Rosanna Di Lello
Flash Freight Systems	Melva McGregor	Vince Interisano
Fran Chamberlain	Meredith Kemila	Vince Royea
Friends of Gryphon Football Charitable	Michael Iacocca	Wayne Schooley
Foundation	Michael Paterson	Wendy Jespersen
Gary Stewart	Michael Powers	Wm. Green Roofing Ltd.
Gayle Dennison	Michelle Leyte	2WA Consulting
Gift Funds Canada	Mike Cazzola	
Glenna Lehmann	Mike Crumpton	
Gordon & Dale Finch	Monotype	
Greencor Electric Inc.	Nadejda Poleacov	
Reta Hofstra	Nikki Reavie	
Hammond Power Solutions	Olivia Colosimo	
Hanlon Park Mini Storage	Ontario Trillium Foundation	
Heidi VanderSlikke	Osmington Inc.	
J Supply Co.	Paul McAtamney	
Jane Douglas	Peter and Ornella Miller	
	Pickfield Law Professional Corporation	
	Puresource Natural Products	
	Distributor	
	Rainer Mueller	
	Rally Plumbing	



Our Financial Summary 2024 / 2025

<u>Revenue</u>	<u>FY 2024-25</u>		<u>FY 2023-24</u>	
Provincial Grants	8,610,702	80.6%	7,460,712	77.6%
Federal grants	22,012	0.2%	27,559	0.3%
Other Grants	23,387	0.2%	76,519	0.8%
User Fees	1,295,514	12.1%	1,387,269	14.4%
One time funding- Covid-19	-	0.0%	8,557	0.1%
Fund development	147,925	1.4%	192,837	2.0%
Other income	586,053	5.5%	458,310	4.8%
<u>Total</u>	<u>10,685,594</u>	-	<u>9,611,762</u>	
<u>Expenses</u>				
Salaries and Benefits	7,759,129	73.8%	7,210,832	75.22%
Building Occupancy, Supplies & Other Program Cost	2,412,219	23.0%	2,068,298	21.6%
One-time funding- Covid	-	0.0%	8,557	0.1%
Fund Development	38,218	0.4%	113,922	1.2%
Other Expenses (Incl amort.)	298,617	2.8%	184,358	1.9%
<u>Total</u>	<u>10,508,183</u>	-	<u>9,585,967</u>	
Total excess (deficiency) of Revenues over expenses	177,411		25,794	

Corporate - Fund Development - Other
12.5%



