

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of lavender flowers. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing distinct purple petals and others as buds. The stems are thin and green, and the overall color palette is a range of purples and blues, creating a calm and natural aesthetic.

epilepsy  
southwestern  
ontario

# **2021–2022** **ANNUAL REPORT**

**A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

[www.epilepsyswo.ca](http://www.epilepsyswo.ca)



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## OUR MISSION

We provide a network of services that educate, support and build community awareness.

## OUR VISION

We strive to create a community free of barriers for persons affected by epilepsy.



## OUR VALUES

We provide services tailored to individual needs and are dedicated to being inclusive and collaborative.

# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## TO OUR COMMUNITY OF RELENTLESS WARRIORS,

As we close the books on another year, we take pause and reflect on the accomplishments of the organization over the last twelve months. A key highlight would certainly be the development, evaluation and publication of our Teacher Toolkit. We are extremely grateful for the investment made by Ontario Trillium Foundation (program development) and Ontario Brain Institute (program evaluation) to improve the wellbeing of students living with epilepsy. We take great pride in offering evidence-based programs and services, and are proud to add the Teacher Toolkit to this list.

There have been many changes and adaptations over the last year, as we continued to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Services and events slowly transitioned from virtual to hybrid, and new programs were implemented to address the changing needs of our families living with epilepsy. Special thanks to the ESWO team for their unwavering commitment to improving the lives of people living with epilepsy, our amazing volunteers who contributed 1842 hours of service, our generous donors who help to keep our programs running and our ESWO Board of Directors for their guidance and leadership through such unprecedented times.

We are excited about the year ahead, with a new strategic plan leading the way! Most of all, we look forward to serving our Purple Nation and continued to be inspired by your stories of strength and resilience!

Warm regards,



Michelle Franklin  
Chief Executive Officer





# LIVING WITH EPILEPSY

## ERIN CHUTE

In 2012, I started feeling unfamiliar things in my body and head. I went to my doctor to find out what was going on with me. Tests were ordered – MRI's, CT scans, and a heart monitor. Everything came back negative, which was frustrating because I wanted answers. My doctor referred me to a neurologist. After a few months, I started to notice a pattern – they were happening around the same days every month, right around my menstrual cycle.



Then came September 18, 2013– a day I will never forget. I drove to work, got to my desk, sat down and I had one of my “dizzy spells.” I don’t remember anything after that. I woke up in the hospital after a tonic clonic seizure. I cried. I didn’t know what it was or why it was happening to me. The doctor tried to explain to me what it meant, but I was so confused nothing really sunk in at that time.

I lost my license; I lost my independence.

In October 2013 when I met with the neurologist, I learned the symptoms I was having were called “Focal Seizures.” I was diagnosed with Catamenial Epilepsy – a condition based on a change in hormones in a women’s cycle. A week after I had my seizure, I found out I was pregnant with my third child! Although I was happy to be pregnant, I was so scared. It was bad timing. I wondered, what if I have more seizures during pregnancy? Is my medication safe for the baby? I knew I was going to worry the entire pregnancy.

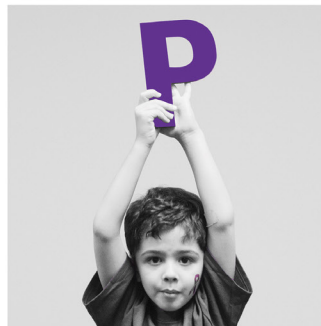
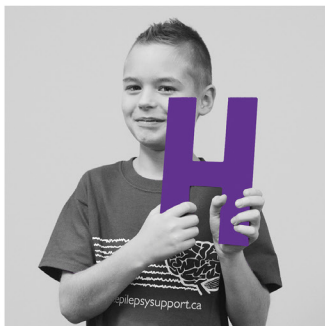
The medication I was put on was safe to take while being pregnant. Luckily during my pregnancy, it seemed to control my seizures and I didn’t experience any more “dizzy spells.” In June 2014, I gave birth to a happy, healthy baby girl. It was a very scary pregnancy, and I was so worried that there might be some complications due to the medication, but it turned out okay which I am so thankful for.

Shortly after having my tonic clonic seizure and finding out I was pregnant, I heard about Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario. They were hosting an information night in my area, so I attended with my mom and my aunt. I learned a lot about the different types of epilepsy, causes, medical interventions, and resources available. I was glad to finally be able to talk to people who were familiar with my situation and feel very supported.

# H.O.P.E. AWARD

## TECHDOZ

Techdoz has allowed Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario (ESWO) to remain current and thrive in an ever changing technological world. With the in-kind support of Techdoz, the professionalism of ESWO online events have been enhanced, and client support has been made more accessible. Their staff team works tirelessly to provide prompt knowledge and expertise, addressing any technical difficulties that arise. On behalf of ESWO, thank you, Techdoz for your continuous sponsorship and support.



# PROVIDING SUPPORT

Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario aims to bring individuals living with epilepsy together to ensure they do not feel alone in their diagnosis. Through the support system we have built, individuals and their families can form a sense of belonging amongst others within their community. Our programming allows individuals to experience their growth of confidence, strength, and appreciation within themselves alongside our other clients.

## BY THE NUMBERS

83

newly diagnosed families received  
a Clinic to Community session with  
an Epilepsy Educator

208

new clients

144

individuals attended 17 different  
meetings to support students in their  
school environment

81

sessions of Making Mindfulness  
Matter were facilitated for children  
and their caregivers

"I have taken the UpLift program through ESWO, and I am now one of the co-facilitators living with epilepsy for the program. I really enjoyed taking the program and learning the steps to help understand my thoughts and feelings and where they come from and how they affect me. Growing up, I didn't know anyone who had epilepsy. This has been a great learning experience for me and has helped me feel and know that I am not alone. This program and the people who run it are amazing. Every time I co-facilitate a class I am reminded of what I have learned, and it helps me more than I can say. Being able to understand why I feel the way I do at times and now knowing how to handle it, is a life saver."

**Brittany Desat**

Client and UpLift Co-facilitator



# EDUCATION

Our public education programming gives us the opportunity to inform the communities of Southwestern Ontario about epilepsy and seizure disorders while training them in seizure first aid. During our age-appropriate presentations, we provide authoritative information to reduce the associated stigma among our future generations. These programs will allow for an inclusive, supportive, inviting, and safe environment for people living with epilepsy.



"It is essential for children with epilepsy to have classroom presentations to inform schools/teachers/students regarding epilepsy. These presentations answer SO many questions and take away the stigma of having epilepsy.

So much of the anxiety/fear of being around someone with epilepsy comes from just "not knowing" what to do in a certain situation and how to help."

**Kaylyn Wagner**  
Parent of a child with epilepsy

## BY THE NUMBERS

882

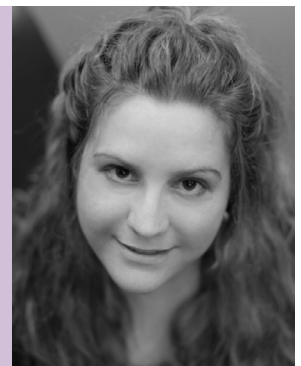
students received classroom presentations in 43 schools

1864

individuals were provided epilepsy information and seizure first aid training

"We feel very blessed to have our local Epilepsy Educator part of our lives. Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario has given us a peace of mind, knowing our daughter is safe at school. The epilepsy education provided allows the teachers to have more confidence and security for giving our daughter Ella the care she needs during her seizure episodes. We are so grateful and appreciative that this is available. "

**Rosa De Martinis**  
Parent of a child with epilepsy





# RAISING AWARENESS

We provide information to create awareness within our community to help remove the barriers that prevent those living with epilepsy from actively being involved in their community. March Epilepsy Month is a national platform to start a discussion around epilepsy and we encourage our entire purple nation to get involved. During March Epilepsy Awareness Month 2022 our community was able to finally come together in person to raise awareness after being virtual for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the 2022 events included the Annual Sam Jam open mic, Tropical Togetherness Day at Colasanti's, and a junior hockey game otherwise known as the 'Purple Game', where players had purple tape on their sticks and coaches wore purple ties. Schools had epilepsy presentations and decorated their doors purple to show support for students with epilepsy and help us raise awareness. As always, it was truly heart-warming seeing our Purple Nation come together during March Epilepsy Awareness month.



## Sam Jam

Sam Jam raised \$510.50 for ESWO in memory of Sam Fen, who lost his life to Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP). ESWO is touched to be a recipient of funds in Sam's honour.

"Seeing as epilepsy has greatly impacted the lives of the people I love, I was drawn to ESWO. I started volunteering with ESWO about a year ago when I sat on the Annual Seize the Day committee, and since then, I have helped with the Annual Gala and this upcoming run/walk. Through volunteering with ESWO, my knowledge about epilepsy has grown immensely along with my drive to bring awareness.

Volunteering has allowed me to meet many incredible people, from the people I've volunteered alongside to the clients I meet at the events. I love seeing people from all different walks of life come together to bring awareness to the thing that has affected many of us, epilepsy.

With a welcoming community and a rewarding feeling, I plan to continue volunteering with ESWO for many years to come! I wish to motivate others to get involved and join the ESWO family!"

**Emily Koppers**

Volunteer



# THIRD PARTY

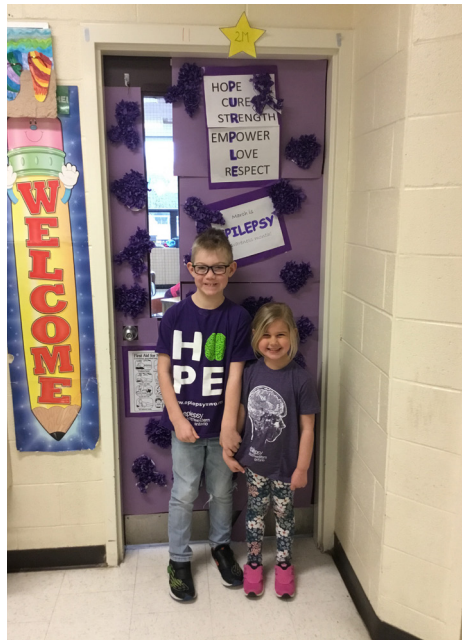
## 1 IN 100 CAMPAIGN: CHAD CARSON

There are approximately 1 in 100 people in Canada living with epilepsy, one of them being eight-year-old Chad Carson.

Shortly before his fifth birthday, Chad was diagnosed with focal onset epilepsy. Living with epilepsy has made Chad determined to bring awareness to this statistic, and he did exactly that with his 1 in 100 Campaign. In honour of March Epilepsy Awareness month, Chad set his monthly goal to collect 100 ten-dollar bills, as well as commit to biking 100km.

Not only did Chad reach his goals, but he exceeded his expectations. By the end of the month, Chad raised \$3,445 and biked 140.08 kilometers. All the funds he raised were donated to ESWO to help keep kids like Chad safe at school and provide help for their families.

Through his passion to raise epilepsy awareness, Chad has demonstrated what is possible when you put your mind to it. We believe Chad's 1 in 100 Campaign will be an inspiration for future ESWO fundraisers to come.



# FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUE	2022	2021
Ontario Trillium Foundation	\$4,900	\$35,200
Net Fundraising	\$167,891	\$163,230
Donations	\$102,917	\$57,755
United Way	-	-
OBI	\$42,963	\$1,926
Grants	\$78,808	\$35,054
Summer Camp	-	\$1,310
COVID Government Subsidies	\$57,211	\$135,342
Other Income	\$8,157	\$2,451
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$462,847</b>	<b>\$432,268</b>
EXPENDITURES	2022	2021
Program Expenses	\$359,896	\$284,368
Administration Expenses	\$76,127	\$75,399
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$434,621</b>	<b>\$359,767</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses	(\$28,226)	(\$72,501)





**1-866-EPILEPSY**

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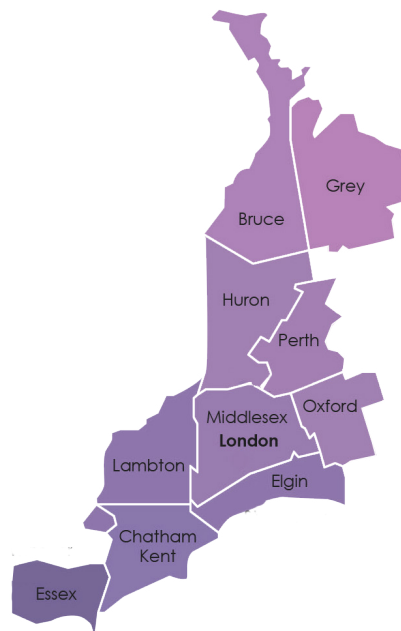
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**Find Us On Social Media** @epilepsyswo



Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario provides service in London Middlesex, Sarnia Lambton, Chatham Kent, Windsor Essex, Oxford, Elgin, Huron Perth, and Grey Bruce.

**Charitable Reg No:** 11890-0802-RR0001