



Karis Celebrates

Fall 2025 Partner Newsletter

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“I was made for this work,” shares Herb G., one of Karis’ earliest summer camp volunteers. Fresh out of college, Herb answered a call for volunteers at a disability-focused camp. With no experience, but with an open heart, his time at camp sparked a lifelong journey into education—especially with students with disabilities. Now, 57 years later, Herb continues to serve at family camp with joy, leading inclusive games and mentoring new volunteers with warmth and wisdom. **“There was a 15-year-old leading campfire, and I thought ‘that’s a leader!’ It’s inter-generational service here, and if you come with an open heart and open hands, you’ll have a meaningful role to play.”** This year, Karis Disability Services, formerly Christian Horizons, is celebrating 60 years of nurturing communities where everybody belongs—a mission that began

with a summer camp for people with developmental disabilities. We remain deeply committed to creating unforgettable and uplifting vacations for families—to have a place they can retreat to and experience belonging. **“We can’t walk in people’s shoes, but we can walk alongside them,”** shares Herb. Thanks to generous donors like you, we’ve expanded this year to host our first family camps in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and we’ve added more weekend retreats for families. Interested in volunteering? Learn more or support this ministry at karis.org/familycamp.



Herb G. leads a drama workshop at Elim Lodge Summer Camp, 2025

Chelsea, Lilyanna, and Lori's Story Canada



Winter Camp 2019: Where Lilyanna, Lori and Chelsea found a place to belong

Family Camp: Where Every Family Finds Their Place

In Canada, accessible camps are few and far between—especially ones designed for the whole family. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, Karis Disability Services can consistently host family camps in the summer and winter. Karis Family Camp is a place where families can find connection, joy, rest, and belonging.

Meet Chelsea and Lilyanna—two sisters often mistaken for twins.

Chelsea, the older sibling, communicates with a few words, gesturing to herself, telling you “Tea now,” or “Bedtime!” Lilyanna loves to chime in. In discussions and group activities, you’ll hear her enthusiastic “YES! So true!”

She is very curious about the people around her and will ask many questions. Since 2013, Chelsea, Lilyanna, and their mom,

Lori, have gone to many Karis Family Camps both in the winter and summer.

“We don’t have to come here and be hidden; we can be like [we are] and be seen, and that is so beautiful,” said Lori. “God’s word says, ‘on earth as it is in heaven,’ and this is our heaven right here.”

That feeling of support is at the heart of Karis Family Camp. Every camper with a disability is paired with a dedicated volunteer whose mission is to ensure they have an unforgettable, joy-filled experience.

This meaningful one-on-one care allows families to focus on creating good memories together. For many, a Karis Family Camp is the only vacation they get to spend together.

Your support helps create spaces where families feel seen, supported, and celebrated—just as they are.

Images of God: Through the Lens of Disability

This art exhibit, led by Karis staff member, Dr. Keith Dow, showcases the creative expressions of eleven Ontario-based Christian adults with intellectual disabilities. Through collages and photovoice exercises, participants share personal reflections on how they see themselves and God. Their reflections offer glimpses into how God’s presence is experienced in everyday life—in relationships, nature, memories, scripture and sacred practices. Today, the exhibit is on display at Karis Disability Services Waterloo office, located at 26 Peppler Street, Waterloo, ON. Visitors are invited to experience the exhibit and reflect on the diverse ways we “image God” in our lives. Learn more at imagesofgod.ca.



Raee from Hamilton, ON with his art collage and reflection

Sumeya's Story Ethiopia

Empowering Futures

In the vibrant town of Bekoji, Ethiopia, thirteen-year-old Sumeya lives with her devoted mom and dad, along with her two energetic younger siblings. Their days were once shaped by challenge and perseverance, relying solely on their father's modest income as a hard-working security guard. Despite their unwavering determination, the family faced immense financial strain, and Sumeya struggled silently at school.

Born with a hearing impairment, Sumeya's natural eagerness to learn and participate was overshadowed by classrooms unequipped to support her needs. Her confidence diminished as she fell behind, unable to fully engage or thrive in her studies.

But everything changed in June 2019, thanks to the generous support of donors like you and the partnership between Christian Horizons Ethiopia (CHE) and Karis Disability Services. Your donations made it possible for Sumeya to join

a more inclusive and accessible school environment where compassionate teachers can support her unique learning needs. Her family also received meaningful financial assistance and essential school supplies. Most remarkably, her mother participated in an empowering entrepreneurial training that enabled her to start a successful small business—creating a critical second income for the household.

With this additional financial stability, Sumeya's parents purchased her first hearing aid, dramatically enhancing her ability to focus, participate, and flourish in her schoolwork. On weekends, Sumeya excitedly attends CHE programs, where her confidence, communication, and social skills have blossomed. She especially

enjoys practicing Taekwondo alongside other youth with disabilities, proudly discovering her strength and sense of belonging.

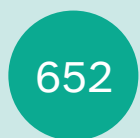
Now in grade eight, Sumeya continues to shine, though her path remains uncertain due to the limited availability of accessible education for higher grades in her region. Still, her resilience is unwavering. She passionately dreams of becoming a teacher who specializes in accessible education, determined to uplift and empower future generations of students with disabilities.

Your continued generosity and heartfelt belief in the power of inclusive support are critical to ensuring girls like Sumeya not only find hope, but also build a promising future.

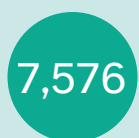


Thanks to your generosity, Sumeya is thriving—and pursuing her dream to uplift others through inclusive education

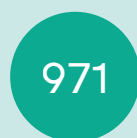
Your Support is Building a More Inclusive World



children with disabilities attending school



children supported in educational programs



children in nutrition programs



sponsored children

Belongathon 2025

Created by Karis Disability Services, Belongathon brings communities together to raise awareness and support for people with developmental disabilities—across Canada and around the world. We walk, roll, and rally with our neighbours to promote belonging, spark advocacy, and celebrate everybody's gifts.

This spring, we hosted our third annual Belongathon, and thanks to your incredible generosity, it was our most impactful event yet! Funds raised will directly support the creation of a much-needed, fully equipped physiotherapy room at Mount Moriah School in Nairobi, Kenya. Locally, your contributions are also helping to make cherished experiences possible—like inclusive, Family Camps throughout Canada that foster connection, rest, and belonging.



Together for Ability: A Celebration of Strength and Spirit in Nairobi, Kenya

Belongathon Celebrations in Nairobi, Kenya

On Saturday, June 7, a joyful community in Nairobi also joined us in heartfelt celebration! Families touched by disability came “Together for Ability” to celebrate their distinctive gifts and to grow together in understanding what it truly means to build a world where everybody belongs. With songs, smiles, and soul-stirring stories, the day was a reminder that when we embrace each other's differences, we build bridges of compassion that elevate us all.

Because of your faithful support,

many of the people who celebrated with us will soon benefit from professional care in the newly constructed physiotherapy room—a tangible expression of hope made possible by you. To learn more about this inclusive education project in Nairobi, Kenya, check out our blog at belongathon.ca!

Your Impact in Numbers

\$112,006 raised
1,700+ participants
17 events: 16 in Ontario and Saskatchewan, and 1 in Kenya

You Make a Difference — Now Help Us Make It Even More Meaningful

We want to get to know you better, whether that's how often you would like to hear from us or the causes closest to your heart. Please take a few minutes to share your feedback, which helps us tailor our communication to suit you better. Scan the QR code to go to the survey.



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