



## ***Together-SSWR Annual Report 2024-2025***

### **Mission**

To be an innovative catalyst for transformative mental wellness in our community.

### **About**

Our Society, which began formally in January 2024, is a collective of volunteers who came together 5 years ago during COVID, to help improve mental wellness in South Surrey-White Rock. Since then, with seed funding from Peace Arch Hospital Foundation, Together has rapidly expanded to over 50 volunteers and 2 staff. Through innovation and collaboration, our teams work enthusiastically to help transform mental wellness and build resiliency for all community members.

### **BOARD**

Jennifer McIvor, Chair

Jasmeet Singh, Vice Chair

Stephanie Beck, Secretary/Treasurer

Keri Drennan, Board Member

### **CATALYST MEMBERS**

Penny Bradley, Co-Chair

Jennifer McIvor, Co-Chair

Elizabeth Bannerman

Deshpal Grewal

Melanie Huck

Cinny Bubber

### **STAFF**

Anna Glibka

Jamie Newell

Together's mission and collective impact model have fostered a strong and ever-growing mental wellness movement in our community. The 2024–25 year has been a period of tremendous growth, as we focus on strengthening the foundation necessary for long-term development and sustainability.

The 2024 year began with a major milestone: the official establishment of Together as a Society under the BC Societies Act. This new status required the formation of a Board of Directors and the initiation of policy and procedure development.

Collaboration with other organizations played a key role in this process. Alex House generously provided policy templates, and leaders from Peace Arch Hospice and the Peace Arch Hospital Foundation also contributed their policy expertise.

Together is a rapidly growing grassroots collective that is 96% volunteer-run and committed to an ambitious mission. As such, the complexity of developing policies and training programs is carefully managed and continually refined to meet the unique needs of our organization.

### ***New Office***

In May 2024, Together signed a three-year lease for an office space that is centrally located, has good square footage, and fits well within our budget. To have an office has been critical for establishing ourselves in the community, providing a central location for community members to access our information, for volunteers to pick up supplies and interact with each other, and a place for us to hold meetings. We have found it has also been invaluable to have a space to move the café groups when unexpected changes occur in the public venues.

### ***First Initiative Launch***

Summer 2024 was an incredibly busy and exciting time as we began rebranding and preparing for the launch of our first Together Café. The Together Café is a uniquely high-quality initiative designed to live in community spaces. Each café consists of a 12-session workshop series developed by our dedicated volunteer-professionals (psychologists and counsellors in private practice—as well as experts from our partner organizations, Fraser Health and Sources).

The first café launched in September 2024 at Laura's Coffee Shop, aligning with our goal to engage local businesses and embed mental wellness directly within the community. Attendance has been consistently strong, with nearly every session at full capacity.

Since then, three additional cafés have launched at Semiahmoo Library (now the White Rock Community Centre), Roadhouse Grill, and White Rock Library. Each café collects feedback and evaluation data from all participants, and the responses have been overwhelmingly positive. We are excited to begin analyzing the impact data in more detail.

### ***Hiring and Volunteer Growth***

Volunteer growth continues to be significant, as our team has doubled in size to over 50 volunteers—and we anticipate welcoming another 15-20 in the coming year. We've dedicated considerable effort into developing new volunteer policies and procedures, including the creation of our own training programs.

In December 2024, we held our first Volunteer Orientation and Social, where we introduced these new policies and procedures and provided a timely team-building opportunity for our rapidly

growing organization (see picture below). The event was well attended and a great success—a wonderful way to close out the year.

Recently, we expanded our leadership team by hiring a full-time Senior Program Manager, Anna Glibka, and a new part-time Media, Events, and Operations Facilitator, Jamie Newel, as well as welcoming two new Board Members Keri Drennan and Rosie Sidhu. They all bring valuable skills that will support many aspects of our organizational management and growth.

Finding the right leadership fit across the organization has been a challenge. Together is a grassroots, volunteer-driven initiative that requires individuals who are flexible, self-motivated, collaborative, creative, and purpose-driven. Building a diverse team that meets these needs—while also ensuring the necessary infrastructure, such as staffing—is no small task. Nonetheless, the motivation, commitment, and energy amongst the teams remains high. We expect to continue our strong development as we build out the teams.

### ***Strategic Planning and Rebranding***

During this busy period, we also engaged a strategic planning consultant. A full-day planning session was held with the Board, Catalyst, and key volunteers, during which we reviewed our mission, vision, values, and both short- and long-term strategic goals.

Rebranding was another exciting and collaborative initiative. New signage, brochures, clothing, and an updated website were launched in time for the start of our Outreach event season. The teams are energized and enthusiastic about our fresh new look.

### **Social Media and Web Presence**

Our social media following has grown by 50%, from 620 followers in October 2023 to 954. With our recent rebranding and the addition of dedicated staff to manage social media, we expect both follower numbers and engagement to continue rising.

On our website, [www.together-sswr.com](http://www.together-sswr.com), monthly unique visits increased by 64%. In 2024, we averaged 230 unique monthly visitors, totaling 2,800 visitors for the year—up from 1,700 in 2023. So far this year, we're averaging 364 unique monthly visits—a 50% increase, likely driven by rebranding efforts and increased promotion of our cafés.

Our website continues to perform exceptionally well in the mental wellness non-profit sector. We typically outperform other Canadian mental health sites by 80–90% in key areas such as unique visits, session length, and direct engagement from social media. With the launch of our newly redesigned website, we anticipate further improvements across all key metrics.

### **Volunteer Growth**

Our volunteer base has more than doubled in the past year. The Outreach Team grew by 8 new members, bringing the total to 14 active volunteers, plus 3 retired volunteers who remain available as backups. This year, they have 15 events planned and have introduced a training system for new

volunteers. In 2024 alone, the team distributed over 1,000 Together resource brochures and engaged in more than 400 meaningful interactions with community members.

The Café Team also saw significant growth, expanding to 29 members. Between Sept 2024 and March 2025 they hosted 7 sessions at Laura's Café, with full attendance ranging from 12 to 18 participants per session. This year sessions have began at White Rock Community Centre, White Rock Library, and Roadhouse Grill. Launching these four cafés fulfilled our café expansion goal for the year. Congrats team! Possible cafe expansion is already under development for 2026.

### **Café Marketing and Outreach**

Marketing for the cafés has been extensive and highly collaborative. Team members have posted flyers throughout the community. Partner organizations have promoted the cafés through their own networks. The local newspaper has printed 2 articles on the Cafes. Social media campaigns have been run regularly to boost visibility. Its a top priority for us to ensure accessibility to services through a variety of advertising formats.

### ***Finances:***

The Society remains in a stable financial position, with expenses carefully managed and revenues aligned with expectations. This year, we made strategic investments in volunteer engagement, equipping our new office, and a few other newly identified expenses to support our growing initiatives.

Importantly, the Board has established a Revenue Generation Team, which has begun exploring opportunities to further strengthen our financial foundation. In addition to finalizing our Gift Policy, the team is also supporting a culture of philanthropy, identifying alternative revenue streams, and developing a strategic and proactive focus for grant procurement.

Following our AGM, we will be eligible to register for charitable status. Gaining charitable status will allow us to pursue additional revenue streams. Financial sustainability is essential for our grassroots organization to achieve long-term success. We remain optimistic that our innovative and collaborative work will continue to attract strong financial support.

***Finally, as a mental wellness, grass roots collective, it's important that we not only embody our values but that we also promote them into action. In reflecting over this year, I hope all of our volunteers and staff are proud to see their hard work truly materialize into profound impacts for many community members and meaningful progress towards mental wellness for all.***

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer McIvor,  
Chair, Board of Directors

