Together-SSWR Annual Report From The Chair 2025-2026

MISSION

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

VISION

Mental wellness for all.

ABOUT

Our Society, formally established in January 2024, is a collective of volunteers who first came together six years ago during COVID to help improve mental wellness in South Surrey–White Rock. Since then, with seed funding from the Peace Arch Hospital Foundation, Together-SSWR (Together) has rapidly grown to over 55 volunteers and 2 staff. Through innovation and collaboration, our teams work enthusiastically to transform mental wellness and build resiliency for all.

BOARD

Jennifer McIvor, Chair
Jasmeet Singh, Vice Chair
Stephanie Beck, Secretary
Keri Drennan, Board Member
Rosie Sidhu, Treasurer

SOCIETY MEMBERS-CATALYST TEAM

Penny Bradley, Chair
Jennifer McIvor,
Elizabeth Bannerman
Deshpal Grewal
Melanie Huck

STAFF

Jamie Newell

GROWING, LEARNING, & STRENGTHENING

This year, like the many before it, reflects the significant growth of our grassroots nonprofit. Through tremendous teamwork and meaningful contributions from our wonderful staff and volunteers alike, we continue to move forward in executing on our mission and expanding our impact on community mental wellness. Our shared enthusiasm, dedication, and hard work have carried us through another productive year, one we should all be proud of.

Significant hIghlights of this last year include:

- After a lengthy application process, we achieved the distinction of Canadian Charity status. This is a significant milestone and will allow us to pursue other grants and revenue streams.
- Conservative budget management has allowed us to extend our operations runway. The Revenue Generation Team is hard at work to continue diversifying our revenue streams in a variety of exciting ways.
- Most of our organizational structure (office space, policies & procedures) are now completed.
- We are marking the exciting launch of our Community Spaces Initiative, with Penny Bradley and Deshpal Grewal facilitating.
- We launched Seniors Cafes, with our first grant funded partnership with Brella. This is the beginning of the transition from the pilot to the Together Cafes Licensing model.

Operations:

-Volunteers: Since inception, 99% of Together's team has been volunteers, participating at every level and contributing substantial amounts of energy and time. This early stage of growth takes special people, those willing to be flexible, positive problem-solvers, and to contribute in profound and sometimes unexpected ways. We're grateful to be working alongside such great teammates, and equally grateful that we've been able to attract so many volunteers to support our growth. This year, we recruited 19 new volunteers, half of whom are now part of our new initiative, the Community Spaces Team.

Leadership: This year, Together experienced some turnover in our Director role, with one transition occurring roughly three months into the position. Growth like ours doesn't always follow a straight line, and finding the right fit for a role that's still evolving takes time. We remain committed to building the kind of leadership continuity that will help Together thrive.

-Website and Social Media: With our Media, Events, and Operations Facilitator, Jamie Newel at the helm, and a new volunteer marketing team, our digital presence is growing across all platforms. In particular, increased attention to Facebook has seen a resulting growth of 58% (from 271 to 427 followers). The Facebook growth has also generated significant traffic to our website. Monthly unique visits to our website has grown 22% (361 to 445 visits per month), with further growth in Q1 2027 noted already. Further creative engagement is planned for the upcoming year.

-Revenue and Revenue Generation Team: We have worked hard as a developing organization to steward our funding strategically for supporting both growth and sustainability. Rosie Sidhu, our treasurer, shows we maintain good financial health, supporting our operational expense runway. This runway gives us time to generate opportunities for additional revenue sources.

Our new Revenue Generation Team includes Board Members, Staff, and Catalyst members. They launched several initiatives including developing the Together Gift Acceptance Policies, Strategic Funder Engagement, Community Presentations and relationship building. This year we were awarded the New Horizons Grant to launch our Seniors cafes and Brella partnership.. We also received support from both the City of White Rock and the City of Surrey (Q1, 2026/27) Community grants. There are a number of new grant applications submitted in Q1 of 2027 and we look forward to the possibilities for new partnerships and diversifying our revenue streams.

-Training: Descalation and Positive Community Engagement Training program was created and tailored to our teams, providing every volunteer with a full day of learning and team building. The program will also be used as an element in our cafe licensing, providing similar high quality training for our partner cafes.

Together Constellations:

-Outreach: Our original initiative 6 years ago continues to demonstrate good stability and maturity of operations. Their leadership transition this year included moving co-founder Melanie Huck onto the Revenue Generation team while engaging previous longstanding volunteer, Cinny Buber for team lead. The Outreach team has expanded to 12 volunteers and continues to develop new possibilities for engaging and supporting the public. They are finding the Kindness Exchange a great way to engage the public. In addition to the regular Outreach activities, they have also actively been supporting our Cafes, Kindness Books and new Kindness Cards(Q2 2027), including the placement of them in several local stores and in partnership with the Peace Arch Hospital Auxiliary Stores.

-Cafes: Through the tremendous work of the Café initiative, led by Elizabeth Bannerman and a team of over 20 volunteers, 4 Together Cafés became fully operational, including the creation of additional content. The cafés also incorporate volunteer and program evaluation metrics, which have been instrumental both in program implementation and in preparation for the shift to licensing. The cafés are anticipating a significant and impressive transformation as we move into this new licensing program. With the Together-SSWR all-inclusive "package" available, any partner can easily and cost effectively implement a high-quality café.

-Community Spaces: We have begun our second initiative, Community Spaces (Formally Hello Yellow Benches) through the support of Catalyst leads Penny Bradley and Deshpal Grewel. Similar to our other initiatives there is significant interest, anticipation , and engagement from new volunteers.

Final Reflections

Together's mission is becoming a reality: we ARE transforming mental wellness in our community. And we may possibly transform the way our community thinks about mental wellness and transform the systems that provide the support.

Work this profound doesn't happen without creativity, positivity, and grit, and it doesn't happen alone. I'm proud of all of our Together contributors- the organizations and individuals alike: the ones who started with us, the ones who stay, and the ones who join along the way. Every bit continues to fuel our hope, our energy, and our determination to keep moving forward. Together, all of that tremendous community work is creating real and lasting change.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer McIvor,
Chair, Together-SSWR Board of Directors