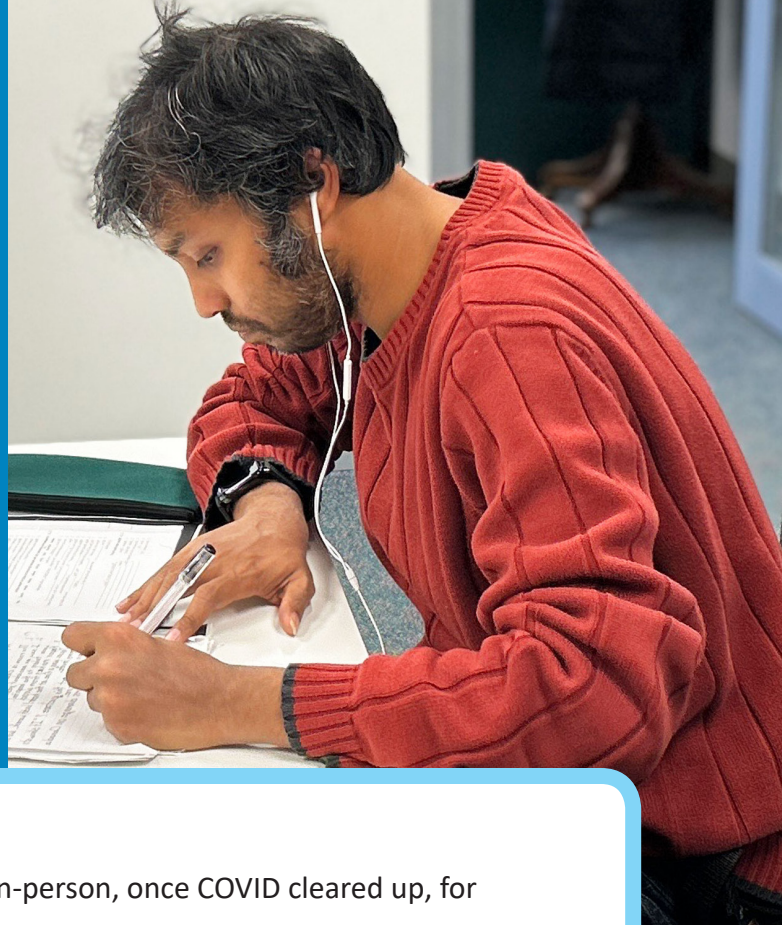




2022-2023 Annual Report



“I attended ALSO online for grade 11 Math and in-person, once COVID cleared up, for grade 12 Math. Presently, I am studying grade 12 Biology with the goal of being accepted into the BSc of Psychology program at Carleton University. I have an invisible impairment due to an acquired brain injury which makes attending evening classes or driving impossible. It also means I need to pace the ‘load’ on my brain carefully.

Individualized teaching has made it possible for me to learn math. I started, really, at a grade 9 level and caught up to the grade 11 curriculum with their help. The teachers accommodate my learning with enough direction and feedback. The presence of a teacher demonstrating how to solve a problem is invaluable. I can compare it to my online learning of math where the lack of demonstration and dialogue left me stymied.

The atmosphere at ALSO reflects the tolerance and accommodation given to each person. The value of inclusion and making an effort to help each individual move ahead, whatever their starting point, is admirable.” - *Deborah*, ALSO student

www.also-ottawa.org

404 McArthur Ave, Ottawa, ON K1K 1G8
613-233-8660 | kim@also-ottawa.org

Contents

- 3. About ALSO
- 4. Our Board of Directors
- 5. A Year in Review
- 6. Success Stories
- 8. From the Board President
- 9. Financial Report



Our Employment Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills Programs are funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario and through the Canada – Ontario Job Fund Agreement.

The Children's Program is funded by the City of Ottawa.

About ALSO

ALSO has been serving the Ottawa community since 1981. ALSO students want to get a job, keep a job, finish high school, access training and/or participate more fully in their community.

The ALSO staff team is a dedicated group of exceptional human beings. We are very fortunate to work with each of them. The success of our students is the result of the partnership that develops between teacher and student. Meeting students where they are, without judgment, building trust and relationship, allows both the teachers and the students to excel. Our success with the adults and families we serve comes from the experience, talent and skill each staff member contributes.

The ALSO Board of Directors continues to support and guide the work we do. They have each demonstrated their commitment to our program by offering their time, talent, expertise and unwavering support for ALSO. This year, Tim Klodt led as Board President. Laura Hillier graciously agreed to remain in the role of Vice President. Over the last year we have reviewed and updated all of our policies and bylaws, maintained the ALSO pension and health benefit plan for staff, and started the strategic planning process. I am very grateful to the Board and staff team for helping to make ALSO what it is today.

ALSO Board and staff do their utmost to remain true to ALSO's mission. Our focus on the adults and families we serve guides us. We continue to offer both in-person and remote learning. The remote learning is a door that, once opened, is difficult to close. Offering a hybrid program allowed us to pivot during the pandemic and it continues to allow us to provide support for students who would otherwise not be able to access adult upgrading. We worked closely with both the City of Ottawa and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to ensure continuity of programming and funding.

This year the City of Ottawa announced that they would not be renewing our contract for the Children's Program. This is very sad news for ALSO and the Heartwood House community. After months of working with the City and other community partners, the decision was made to close the program. The City provided one year of transition funding to support this process.

ALSO volunteers contribute significantly to the success of our program. Cheryl Stephen has volunteered with ALSO for over 12 years. We are very grateful that she continues to share her knowledge, creativity and expertise with us. We work with Carleton University, Algonquin College and the University of Ottawa providing student placements in our Children's Program. We are happy to host the students and appreciate their contributions. Thank you to all of our volunteers, donors and contributors.

Kim Oastler, ALSO Executive Director

Our Board of Directors



Tim Klodt
Board President

Laura Hillier
Vice President

Robert Mawako
Treasurer

Kim Oastler
Secretary/Executive Director

Lynn Asselin
Member at Large

Joyce Chamas
Member at Large

Pavithra Raja
Member at Large

Kevin Scully
Member at Large

A Year in Review

During the 2021-2022 year we were actively engaged with our community through participation with the Local Employment Planning Council, the Rideau Valley Learning Network, the Deaf Literacy Initiative and the Heartwood House Collaboration Project Planning Committee.

We continue to build on our relationship with the Continuing Education Department of the Ottawa District School Board allowing us to offer PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment Review) and high school credit study for students who cannot access the mainstream adult high school classroom. We continue to meet the expectations of our core funder, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD). We continue to offer both in-person and remote learning for students.

A great deal of time and energy has been spent planning for the loss of City funding for the Children's Program. Unfortunately, we have come to the decision to close the program in 2023. We are grateful to the City for the funding provided to date and for the final year of transition funding, allowing us to support the children and families we serve to find alternative childcare options prior to our closure.

We said good-bye to long-time teacher, Mark Caulfield. Mark fulfilled his dream of working with Canada Post as part of his retirement plan. He will be missed greatly. We welcomed Muhammad Ali and Eduardo Lagayan to ALSO. Ali is the first ALSO staff member to work remotely full-time. We are thrilled to have both Eduardo and Ali at ALSO. Welcome!

Highlights

The ALSO staff and Board are really the stars of the show this year. ALSO continues meeting funder targets and successfully supporting the adults and families we serve.

- The Children's Program served 47 children and 37 families.
- ALSO's Adult Upgrading Program served 79 adults.
- ALSO's Deaf Adult Upgrading Program served 26 adults.

Success Stories

Children's Program

This year with COVID restrictions easing and families feeling more comfortable bringing their children into public settings, we saw an increase in our drop-in registration. Many of our families are newcomers and learning English. To help the children adjust to their new environment, we worked a lot on language and cognitive skills. Our focus, in general, is always on physical and emotional development, speech and language development, and gross and fine motor development. We achieve this by observing each child and choosing activities for each individual child to develop and enhance their learning. The majority of children this year showed great interest in science. We had a special week of science experiments using common household materials. The children were very engaged with the special activities and enjoyed the week. We had one placement student this year, Kiana Meness, from Carleton University – Bachelor of Social Work.



Mina Fahim, ALSO Child and Family Educator

Adult and Deaf Adult Upgrading Programs

ALSO teachers and students continued to adapt this past year to the changing conditions brought on by the pandemic. ALSO continues to offer a hybrid model. We have many students choosing online schoolwork. The number of students wanting to come in-person is rising steadily. It has been nice to see more faces in the classrooms in 2022-2023. Online students choose to work through video-conferencing tools (such as Zoom) or choose to work independently and communicate with their teacher by phone and email. This allows for flexibility and ease for students, many of whom are trying to navigate schoolwork while managing demanding work schedules, caring for children or managing their own physical and mental health. In addition to direct instruction, teachers also provide students with information and access to mental health supports and assistance accessing community resources as always.

Yehia worked with the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program. He was supported in developing his language skills (ASL and English) to gain independence and employment. Yehia was offered a job at Amazon. Well done!

Taffan worked with the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program. He was supported in developing his language skills (ASL and English) and in gaining independence. He is progressing very well.

Shirin worked with the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program. She focused on English literacy skill development. She is now enrolled at George Brown College.

Emily worked with the Adult Upgrading Program. She has worked hard to finish her OSSD. Despite being a mother of three and at the same time maintaining a part-time job, she graduated last June 2023. Currently, she is a fashion associate at Reitmans' Canada Ltd, a retail company specializing in women's clothing. Emily also plans to continue her post-secondary studies in entrepreneurship.

Alem worked with the Adult Upgrading Program. At first, she struggled with working on her PLAR History and Geography but with diligence, she was able to complete her PLAR course in due time. While on a tight schedule, she manages her time carefully and is determined to complete her last math course. She hopes to graduate next year and further her goals by pursuing nursing in the future.

James worked with the Adult Upgrading Program. He has been away from school for many years. Despite struggling with mental health issues, James managed to complete his Grade 10 Principles of Mathematics course at an academic level and is now taking his Grade 11 Functions course at a university preparation level. James is adamant that he will complete his goals.

Jessica worked with the Adult Upgrading Program. She came to ALSO to complete her high school education after encountering many barriers when she was younger. She started with the program just before the covid-19 pandemic hit, but managed to persevere through many challenges including: working in a hotel during the pandemic, living downtown during the trucker protest, a torn ACL while playing on Ottawa's first women's football team. However, Jessica maintained consistent attendance and eventually earned her remaining credits to graduate. In addition, Jessica achieved the Principal's Council Award and \$100 scholarship for a student demonstrating success in the classroom and in the community.

Megan worked with the Adult Upgrading Program. She struggled with anxiety during high school, resulting in poor attendance and her leaving school with several credits remaining. Megan found it difficult to stay motivated, which became exacerbated by the pandemic. Megan was able to start a new job in child care, but quickly found that she could not advance to a new position without a high school diploma. Through the coop program and completing her one remaining credit with the support of her teacher, Megan was able to earn her diploma and secure advancement at her workplace. She is now excited to be starting a new career that she had not thought was possible.

- ALSO Adult and Deaf Adult Program teaching teams

From the Board President

In many ways, the 2022-23 fiscal year was marked by a return to relative normalcy. The receding of the global pandemic in Canada allowed for the return of on-site learning, with its many benefits, while keeping the advantages of a hybrid workplace. ALSO has continued to renew its human resources by bringing on a new Deaf Adult Upgrading Literacy Practitioner in Muhhamed Ali. ALSO hired Eduardo Lagayan as the new Adult Upgrading Teacher replacing Mark Caulfield, a long time ALSO Adult Upgrading Teacher who retired.

As expected, circumstances have continued to require ALSO to adapt when faced with curveballs. This included the need to pivot quickly and transition the Children's Program in light of the City of Ottawa's decision to end its funding commitment. Affordability issues due to rising prices have been another challenge for ALSO, as it has been for organizations and individuals in communities across the country. The Board and Executive Director worked collaboratively to meet this challenge by finding innovative ways of improving staff compensation and finding new funding streams, including through a renewed fundraising push.

While addressing immediate operational challenges was important, the Board also prioritized ensuring the organization is set up for future success by initiating a strategic planning process and exploring options for investing the financial reserve. Look out for updates on both of these initiatives in the coming year.

Challenges often come with opportunities, and as such, I am as confident as ever that ALSO is strongly positioned to continue to meet the needs of clients and the community.

Tim Klodt, ALSO Board President



Financial Report

This year we saw a relative return to normalcy. The Board and Executive Director guided ALSO through another year with its successes and challenges. The Board maintained our commitment to the wellbeing of the ALSO staff team through the staff pension plan with OPTrust Select, and our health benefit plan with the Cooperators.



Stand out changes from a quick browse of the year-end financial statements include a decrease in Foundations Revenue and an increase in our Donations Revenue. ALSO did not have significant project based funding this fiscal year. Our focus was on the donation strategy, in addition to finding our way back into the classrooms after the pandemic. We are hugely grateful to William Lowe, who left ALSO a financial bequest in his will. William Lowe sat on the ALSO Board of Directors almost 20 years ago.

Special mention goes to our Executive Director whose Grant writing skills and knowledge of funding initiatives have ensured that ALSO continually makes use of all available alternatives in pushing forward our vision. She ensured that our savings in expenditures far exceeded the decreased revenue, allowing ALSO to close the year with a surplus.

Key financial indicators are continually being monitored with the agreed reserve balance well above the threshold \$80K. ALSO has begun exploring investment options as our reserve balance has remained steady for a number of years. A significant portion of our funding is contingent on achieving required performance indicators. Meeting all accountabilities is therefore critical, and a testament to the contributions of especially our staff. From a key financial indicators standpoint, I'm glad to say that we continue to both meet and exceed expectations.

The next fiscal year will have its own challenges as we end our partnership with the City of Ottawa supporting our Children's Program. This is a huge loss for ALSO and Heartwood House.

Robert Mowako, ALSO Treasurer