



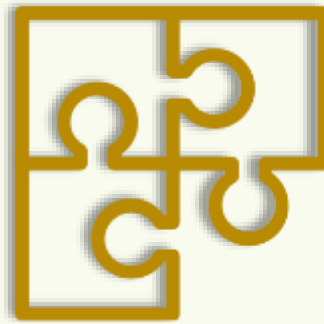
# Planned Lifetime Networks

Waterloo Region

## Building Connections Through Communication

A Strategic Communications Plan Created For: Nadine Heimstra & Planned Lifetime Networks

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**Introduction**



**Integration**



**Inclusivity**

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# BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

## 1.0 The Business Need/Opportunity

### 1.1 Organization Overview

Planned Lifetime Networks (PLN) is a not-for-profit organization based in Waterloo Region that supports families who have a loved one in an isolated situation due to disability. Parents want to provide their loved ones with financial stability, independence, and a personal support network that will sustain their need for community when they are no longer there to provide it for them.<sup>1</sup> Since its founding in 2000, PLN has registered 12 lifetime members who have purchased their services for the rest of their loved one's life. In relation to other organizations offering similar services, this is a small number of members and is a need for PLN that was outlined in the client meeting.

*\*Please refer to Annex A for an in-depth analysis of the organization.*

### 1.2 Business Need

The business need for this organization is to raise awareness in Waterloo Region of the unique services PLN provides for parents who have adult children with disabilities. After conducting interviews with organizations, school boards, and parents of those with disabilities, a low level of awareness was identified of the services PLN provides.

## 2.0 Stakeholder Analysis

### 2.1 Parents of Adult Children with Disabilities

These parents are now caregivers of their child as they have transitioned from the school system. Parents in this audience are between the ages of 40 and 65. In some cases, parents have missed work opportunities or jobs altogether causing them to have a lower income.<sup>2</sup> In 62% of cases the mother is the primary caregiver for their child with a disability, which was represented in the research retrieved from PLN's current members as well.<sup>3</sup> Although parents of children with disabilities tend to have added stress in their lives, they are also more likely to be more loving, caring, creative, responsible and less selfish.<sup>4</sup> Parents and members who were interviewed demonstrated a need for support for their child, but also craved the opportunity to share with other parents and families in similar situations.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.2 Parents of Teenage Children with Disabilities

Currently, there are no efforts directed at this audience by PLN. The demographic and psychographic characteristics of this audience are like parents of adult children as outlined above. Some distinct characteristics include the age difference, financial security, and communication channels. These parents are between the ages of 35 and 40 and may be less established financially and likely have other children who are still under their care as well. This age group is more likely to see social media initiatives and gain support, find parental advice, and share good news.<sup>6</sup> This audience is receptive to information provided by transition teams at high schools because it is provided to them from when their child is 16 and onwards.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3 Organizations with Similar Values and Services

The demographic of this audience is quite diverse, but most contacts retrieved, and interviews conducted were with women ages 30 to 50. People who work for these organizations, including the board of directors at PLN, are passionate about the work they do and tend to have experience working with people with disabilities. In primary research conducted, most organizations seemed willing to collaborate if the services did not overlap or would at least be willing to advocate for PLN through their website, newsletter, or in-person.

### 2.4 WRDSB and WCDSB Transitional Teams

After meeting with representatives from the Regional and Catholic school boards, the awareness of PLN's name is somewhat recognized, but the services provided are not known to this audience. Because transition teams work directly with families, they have experience deciding what organizations and services would be best for the family. Their knowledge of these programs is strong, and they are technical when following the Disability Service of Ontario's guidelines to finding the best fit for each family. This audience prefers face-to-face communication over all other forms of communication.<sup>8</sup>

# BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

*\*Please refer to Annex B for an in-depth stakeholder analysis and Annex C for an analysis of primary research conducted.*

## 3.0 Goals and Objectives

The goal for this communications strategy is to generate awareness of parents, organizations, school boards, and the local community in Waterloo Region.

The objectives created for this communications strategy include:

- Gain a minimum of two members by June 2019, or one year from implementation of the communications strategy
- Collaborate with another organization in the community to host an annual event in May 2019 and generate an attendance of 100 people
- Raise social media following by 20% by June 2019

## 4.0 The Solution Overview

The strategy for this communications plan focuses on leveraging current relationships with other organizations with similar values and services, as well as the community in Waterloo Region. The organization should capitalize on the number of adults with disabilities in Waterloo Region who need the service being provided due to parents being primary caregivers. By doing so, PLN will be able to create sustainable partnerships and create initiatives that will bring in more families, raise awareness in the community, and build the organization's credibility. With a limited amount of resources and personnel to achieve this need, it is important that PLN focuses on a cost-effective communications strategy that will build credibility and reputation in the community.

This strategy has been broken down into three categories: Introduction, Integration, and Inclusivity. Introducing PLN's services at a high school-level provides them an opportunity to reach younger parents who will need their services in the future and can decide if it's right for them with an associate membership. Integration with other organizations in Waterloo Region will build credibility and reputation for the organization. Providing inclusive events and workshops for the entire family will allow parents to focus on themselves, the focus person, and other members of the family with the help of PLN.

*\*Please refer to Annex D for more information regarding the strategy.*

### 4.1 Message Strategy

<b>Parents of Child/Children with Disabilities</b>	<b>Organizations with Similar Values and Services</b>	<b>School Board Transition Teams</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a lifetime filled with choice, voice, trust and safety for your child with a disability.</li><li>• Join your child in creating a network they can be proud of and you can rely on.</li><li>• No matter what age, they're still your baby. Let us help create a future for them.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Together we can build relationships that last a lifetime.</li><li>• We can make a difference in the lives of adults living in isolation due to disability.</li><li>• Providing a peace of mind to parents whose child has a disability.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership fees support our Community Connectors and the focus person.</li><li>• There are more services available on top of financial education and estate planning.</li></ul>

## 4.2 Tactics

### Introduction:

- **Face-to-Face Meetings:** Meetings will be conducted with Work and Transition teams from WRDSB and WCDSB to initiate conversation with parents of teenage children about the services that PLN provides. These meetings will include an information package that outlines the need for funding from parents, the services that PLN provides, and future free and paid workshops that will be available to parents who do not choose the organization for membership.
- **Email Packages:** Emails will be sent to a list of teachers and counsellors who could advocate for PLN and the services on a less formal level than the Work and Transition teams at the school boards. These emails will include an introduction letter, an infographic about the services available at PLN, an outline of workshops that are scheduled for the next six months, and a one-page advertisement that teachers could either print out or pass on electronically to parents who are interested in the service.
- **Booth at “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” Open House:** An important open house that WRDSB and WCDSB facilitate is an annual open house called “Oh, The Places You’ll Go”. This open house includes various organizations providing services for children with disabilities and is an opportunity for parents with limited time to get an idea of many options in one location. At this event, PLN will have the one-page infographics, pamphlets, and promotional swag available for parents to take home and look over which are outlined below.

### Integration:

- **Amplified Art Show:** The annual Art Show that is currently held at THEMUSEUM will be amplified to focus on PLN as the contributor and organization being fundraised for. Not only will promotion for this event be distributed earlier on in the process, but it will be posted online and in local community hotspots that are frequented by parents and families. These places include community centres, libraries, churches, cafes or coffee shops in a close vicinity to THEMUSEUM and other local establishments that would be willing to post the information. A sign-in sheet will be at the event, and an option to subscribe to informative emails will be provided at this time.
- **Promotional Swag:** At the open house, the Art Show, and any other opportunities to promote PLN, small promotional swag will be provided to attendees. The Amplified Art Show is hosted in May, therefore creating an opportunity for seasonal swag to be made available. Sunglasses, frisbees, and hats available in PLN’s colours with the name emblazoned on the front or side would be available for the price of a small donation at the Art Show, and for free at “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” open house.
- **Promotional Material:** To generate more awareness in the community about PLN and the services provided, relationships will be built to use free advertising that is available to organizations in the community. The Waterloo Region Record provides a Community Partnership Program that offers free advertising in their newspaper through a simple application process. Secondly, the Waterloo Region Family Network offers advertisements in their newsletter for other organizations with similar values to their own. A small advertisement for PLN would be put in this resource to further their reach. Finally, posters advertising workshops, events, and volunteer opportunities would be posted at the community hotspots for the remainder of the year following the Art Show.

### Inclusivity:

- **Inclusive Family Workshops:** Workshops will be held that focus on getting the entire family involved. Activities will be presented to families that allow for interaction with one and another, and an opportunity to share stories with other families will be facilitated. This free opportunity would not only raise awareness in the community, but it would allow the parent to see their child flourish in a setting that is building their personal support network without direct assistance from Community Connectors.
- **Social Media:** Other organizations already share information from this organization through Facebook. Event posters, workshop opportunities, and advertisements will be posted on this platform intermittently throughout the year, along with informative articles. To facilitate two-way communication, this tactic will also be used to allow parents and families to share their stories through a Social Media Story Sharing session available quarterly throughout the year.

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- **Board of Director Introductions:** To build credibility and gain support of families who do not understand how the organization was founded, the board of directors will be introduced to the email list provided at events and to members. This will be done through short biographies, and a picture if board members feel comfortable with doing so.

*\*Please refer to Annex G for work samples provided representing tactics mentioned above.*

### 5.0 Implementation and Challenges

#### 5.1 Schedule

A schedule has been created to outline the various stages of this campaign. Each tactic has been distributed in the format of a Gantt chart and broken down by the following stages: planning, execution, and methods of evaluation. This campaign will be implemented in June of 2018 and will be a year-long initiative, ending in the Amplified Art Show in June of 2019.

*\*Please refer to Annex E for a Gantt chart outlining the schedule.*

#### 5.2 Budget

The budget for this campaign as introduced by the client is \$5,000. This budget will be allocated to print materials, promotional items, event execution, new workshops, and paid advertisement if need be. From this budget, 10% will be kept untouched to accommodate any unknown costs that may come up during the duration of the year-long campaign.

*\*Please refer to Annex F for an analysis of the budget.*

#### 5.3 Challenges

With a budget of \$5,000 and one part-time employee, there are added challenges moving forward and implementation of the tactics will need to be strategic. Regarding the minimal budget, many of the tactics are digital or print materials that can be printed for a small cost. Social media will also be used as a free promotional material that allows for two-way communication and support for the parents of the focus person. It is also a great way to demonstrate partnerships and cooperation with other organizations that have a larger following on social media. To overcome the minimal staff, volunteers should be used at any opportunity.

### 6.0 Measurement and Evaluation

Objective	Measurement	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gain two or more associate members by June 2019</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create documentation for new associate members obtained after implementation in June 2018</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generate an increase of two associate members by June 2019</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise social media following by 20% by June 2019</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Followers will be tracked through Facebook Analytics</li><li>• Analyze what posts get higher interaction on quarterly basis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase followers on Facebook page by 25%</li><li>• Increased number of shares, comments, and likes on posts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Host Amplified Art Show in May 2019 and generate attendance of 100 people with one other organization</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create sign-in sheet for event to track number of attendees</li><li>• Send a survey to participants who subscribed about their level of participation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gain attendance of 100 people</li><li>• Create buzz around the event for potential members and families who could use services</li></ul>

## ANNEX A

### Situation Analysis

#### Background

Planned Lifetime Networks (PLN) has been operating in Waterloo since 2000. Since that time, only 12 families have begun using the services that PLN offers. The organization has been trying to gain credibility with members, future members, and the community through social media, and two annual events. Although the annual events, Annual Amble and Side-by-Side Art Show currently attract between 30 and 50 attendees, this is not enough attendance to raise awareness of the publics or stakeholders involved with PLN. The number of attendees has decreased as time has gone on. Social media presence has also been minimal as the resources are not available to sustain consistent content for the Facebook page that has been established. PLN has been discussing a merger with Bridges to Belonging (B2B) but needs a concrete strategy that will develop the credibility and reputation of the organization in the community before the merger can move forward.<sup>9</sup>

#### Consequences

The situation is important to the organization's vision because to create a community that is better together, there needs to be enough members to sustain the organization for the rest of the focus person's life. The vision "We are better together... 'Creating lifetimes of choice, voice, trust and safety,'" is a significant promise to a parent paying for this service, and if the organization is not sustained through their child's life, they will be drastically impacted by the outcome. Furthermore, the mission to support families to develop a good life for their relative with a disability ensures that families will no longer need to worry about what happens when they are no longer around. It is PLN's responsibility to implement a long-term plan to establish that memberships, both present and future, will be properly maintained. Not only would current members be impacted, but also their loved ones with a disability and their extended family if PLN cannot continue paying for community connectors.

If PLN does not make proactive changes, the organization may be faced with some very tough decisions about the future. This may be solved by the financial support of more members. With more substantial events, PLN would likely get more opportunities to fundraise in the future and would find it easier to get volunteers.

#### Resolution

To resolve this situation, PLN must raise awareness of the services they provide in Waterloo Region. Through introduction to parents at an earlier stage in their lives, PLN will be likely to build relationships with them before they are in dire need of the service. Integration with other organizations and with local establishments in the community that offer information will provide an opportunity for people who need the services to access information easier. This also provides an opportunity to build the attendance of the Annual Art Show and raise not only awareness, but also fundraise for the organization. Finally, adding inclusive workshops for families will allow members of the community who are not currently customers of the services to see the value added by PLN for their child that will be maintained when the parent is no longer there to facilitate it themselves. This inclusive element will allow key publics to feel involved and build credibility for PLN.

### Organization Analysis

#### Internal Environment

##### Performance

Currently, the organization has 12 members. Associate members pay \$60 annually for the services provided by PLN, and lifetime members contribute significantly more for the extended services. These members provide an additional source of funding, which guarantees them a community connector and personal support network for their loved one for the rest of their life. Due to expenses, in the last year the organization was in a deficit of \$14,159. In the financial summary for this year, the following categories had less income than the year before: advertising and promotion, meetings and workshops, and fundraising. Due to this financial dip on fundraising, revenue dropped from \$26,352 to \$26,653, while expenses increased from \$28,304 to \$40,812.<sup>10</sup>

## BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

### **Structure**

PLN is lead by a seven-person board of directors. These directors, as well as the part-time coordinator, Nadine Heimstra, try to meet monthly, or as frequently as is possible for all the members. The directors created this organization based on a need that they saw in their personal lives and strive to improve for others in similar situations. Community connectors are also employed to support each focus person as well. A focus person is the loved one of a family who is in a vulnerable situation, whether that be due to disability or circumstance in their life.

### **Ethical Base**

It is important to keep ethics in mind when communicating with families of those with disabilities. Communication must be open, honest, and should avoid any personal questions that would make people feel uncomfortable. Promotional material that focuses on inclusivity and equality is a good strategy, because parents and people with disabilities want their child or themselves to feel as though they are equally as capable as any other person living without a disability<sup>11</sup>. When fees for a service are involved, the direction of that money should be outlined confidently and allow the spender to know the benefit of this service in their life. Currently, it is hard to tell where exactly an associate member's fee is going and there is no disclosure of what a lifetime member will be spending or receiving for this price available to the public.

### **Impediments**

There is a limited amount of resources available for this communications plan. With only one part-time employee working 18 hours a week and a budget of \$5,000 for the year, this strategy must focus on tactics that are inexpensive and are creative. Research will help provide different tactics that focus on two-way communication and material that reaches large audiences from a central location.

### **Niche**

PLN is a non-profit organization that focuses on assisting families to provide a personal network and financial supports for their loved ones when they pass. Currently, the organization focuses on those with disabilities. In Ontario, and mores specifically Waterloo Region, there are many organizations who provide these supports and so there is a lot of competition and advocacy for similar services. Unfortunately, the only area where PLN differs compared to other organizations is the lack of government funding. This was a strategic decision to maintain the values of the organization and to avoid limitations that may come from being associated with the government. It also poses a financial strain that could continue if communication to stakeholders and publics is not done correctly.

### *Public Perception*

#### **Visibility & Reputation**

PLN does not have strong visibility in the community. Since there is only one part-time employee and it is hard to maintain efforts that direct the local community to the services. Board of directors, associate members, and lifetime members are advocates for the organization and recommend the services to people they know in similar situations. The social media presence of PLN is somewhat smaller than competitors with 104 followers on their Facebook page and content being uploaded 1 to 3 times a week.<sup>12</sup> Many other organizations share events that PLN are holding and tag them in their content on their own pages, allowing for visibility. The organizations that share information from PLN tend to have over 300 followers, and some closer to 1,300. These organizations include B2B, The Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN), and The Family Centre where PLN is located. These organizations know what PLN offers and promote their events and services.

Regarding transition teams at high schools in Waterloo Region, the awareness of PLN was minimal. Although they may have heard of the organization, they were unaware of the services provided and how they differ from other organizations such as Disability Services Ontario (DSO) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) that offer similar services at little to no fee. Parents of adult children with disabilities who were interviewed had heard of the organization but did not understand or acknowledge the services they provide to



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people of their demographic. Often, they associated other larger organizations with similar services as their organization of choice, such as CH, B2B and WRFN.

### *External Environment*

#### **Competitors**

There is a lot of competition for services like PLN's in Waterloo Region. In this environment, there are many other organizations that compete with PLN to provide similar supports. Some of these organizations include Parents for Community Living, Community Living, Christian Horizons (CH), Bridges to Belonging (B2B), KW Habilitation (KWH), Extend-a-Family, etc.<sup>13</sup> Many of these organizations have a stronger presence in the community, on social media, and higher attendance when holding events. Many of these organizations have government funding and work alongside one another to promote events and services. The fact that most of these organizations offer services for free is a selling point that PLN does not have. With strong initiatives in the community, competition is slowly growing and both reputation and credibility continue to grow for these larger organizations. Although it is unlikely a new organization will pop up and take over PLN's place in the community, new organizations could have an impact on PLN because Waterloo Region is small enough that key publics are always looking for new supports.

#### **External Impediments**

The environment that PLN operates in is likely to grow in the next two decades as baby boomers become responsible with finding services for their children with disabilities. There are also younger parents who will be looking for services as they continue to age. In Ontario, there are changes being made by the government to support people with disabilities and will continue to change depending on government changes in the next five to ten years.<sup>14</sup> There is no funding supplied by the Government of Canada for PLN, but these changes will allow adult with disabilities more access to money and support that they need.

# BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

## SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The values of the board of directors are upheld and have a strong presence on their website and in informational pieces found online.</li> <li>• The organization focuses on educating the community about financial supports for parents.</li> <li>• Logo is simple and uses generic colours that can be implemented to all branded products.</li> <li>• Informative and aesthetically-appealing promotional materials available on social media and in-person.</li> <li>• Community Connectors work hard to help the focus person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a limited budget since the company ran a deficit last year.</li> <li>• Membership supplies all funding without any external sources.</li> <li>• One part-time employee limits the resources, time and availability for committed work.</li> <li>• The organization focuses on all vulnerable people which makes it hard for potential members to realize what the intent of the organization is.</li> <li>• Minimal presence on social media which stems only from Facebook.</li> <li>• The website does not clearly emphasize what the services are.</li> <li>• The board of directors do not actively represent themselves on the website.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborations and partnerships with similar organizations harboring the same values as PLN.</li> <li>• Holding events for families and children with disabilities.</li> <li>• There are many board members who could share personal stories and experiences.</li> <li>• Social media could be enhanced to match the level of other organizations in Waterloo Region who have interaction online.</li> <li>• Support groups may be willing to collaborate and help promote the services.</li> <li>• Introducing PLN services at a high school level.</li> <li>• Volunteer opportunities directly across from PLN headquarters and in Waterloo Region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many other organizations in Waterloo Region provide similar services.</li> <li>• Government funding has allowed other organizations to offer these services for minimal to no fee compared to PLN</li> <li>• Microboards are thriving in BC, Vancouver, and are growing in Ontario.</li> <li>• There is a lot of competition when it comes to events and fundraising for disability services.</li> <li>• Other organizations cost little to no money for similar or better services supporting adults with disabilities.</li> </ul>

**ANNEX B**

**Analyzing the Publics**

<b>Customers</b>	
<b>Associate &amp; Lifetime Members</b>	Associate and lifetime members make up the primary customer base for PLN. This is an important stakeholder to keep in mind as they invest a lot of money in the organization to maintain a personal support network for their child. Current members are typically over the age of 40 and have one or more child with a disability who has been in their primary care.
<b>Parents of Children with Disabilities</b>	This stakeholder is important to the organization as they contribute to further donations made to PLN and are likely to become customers if their family needs the service provided by PLN. Parents range from the age of 25 to 60 and are involved in the caregiving process for their child or children with disabilities. As it sits, this is a prospective customer and could create more revenue to sustain PLN in the future with the right communication about the services provided.
<b>Producers</b>	
<b>Board of Directors &amp; Coordinator</b>	The board of directors and coordinator produce all work that is outputted by PLN. It is assumed that when the organization was founded, the founding members had a stake in the company. Now, their values and their names are put forth as part of the brand for PLN. It is important to keep their values, initiatives and thoughts in mind when moving forward with this communications plan.
<b>Lifetime &amp; Associate Members</b>	Lifetime and associate members are also producers because they provide money to the organization to receive the services provided by PLN. With 12 members, these producers contributed \$10,823.00 toward the annual revenue from 2017. <sup>15</sup> This is equivalent to over 2/5 of the revenue from this year. Based on the financial changes from 2016 to 2017, it looks as though the number of these members has increased, but it does not specify how many out of the 12 were brought on within that timeframe.
<b>Donors</b>	Donors contributed half as much as lifetime and associate members did in the last fiscal year. This, however, does not include donations from fundraising initiatives. These producers were not outlined in the financial statement or discussed in the client meeting. It would be of interest to learn more about them and further communication and build positive relationships with this stakeholder.
<b>Enablers</b>	
<b>Bridges to Belonging</b>	B2B is not only an opinion leader in Waterloo Region, but it is an organization that could be considered a colleague to PLN. There has been talk of a merger with this organization and so it is important to keep the values and needs of this organization at the forefront of any plan that is being developed in case it will be involved soon.

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<p><b>The Family Centre</b></p>	<p>The Family Centre allows PLN to rent space for a small fee. This enables the coordinator to complete work and allows the organization to host workshops in the space as well. The address for PLN is also at The Family Centre even though the organization may not be reachable at this location at all times.</p>
<p><b>Limiters</b></p>	
<p><b>Similar Organizations in Waterloo Region</b></p>	<p>Other organizations in Waterloo Region that are competitors of PLN include, but are not limited to: Adults in Motion, Leg Up, Extend-a-Family, Try It on For Size, WRFN, CH, DSO, Community Living, KW Habilitation, and Parents for Community Living. Although these limiters cannot stop PLN from being an organization, they can recruit prospective customers of PLN, making it hard to maintain a customer base.</p>

### *Audience*

The primary audience for this campaign involves anyone in Waterloo Region who has been, or is impacted by, disabilities because they will be exposed to posters, pamphlets, social media initiatives and events held in the community. A secondary audience for this campaign are other organizations with similar values to PLN who would be willing to work in collaboration with the organization. Finally, a tertiary audience are small businesses or establishments in the community that would be willing to integrate promotional material into their locations.

### *Key Publics*

#### **Parents of Adult Children with Disabilities**

Fifteen per cent of the population in Ontario is made up with people with disabilities, with 49 per cent of people needing help with a daily chore such as household work. Within that, 80 per cent of these people with disabilities get help from family in the same household.<sup>16</sup> In most cases, the mother provides primary care for the child, and only 30 per cent of cases both the mother and the father are primary caregivers.<sup>17</sup> A significant percentage of parents change partners or spouses when dealing with the added stress of having a child with a disability.<sup>18</sup> Parents of adult children are generally between the age of 40 and 65, as their child has transitioned from the school system into their care full-time. This public reported that cost is the biggest obstacle when caring for an adult child with a disability, showing a 6% increase in families beyond the Low-Income Cut-Off.<sup>19</sup> Although parents of younger children with disabilities feel stress, isolation, grief and other emotions, parents who have had time to get used to their situation become more tolerant, accepting, and experience more compassion toward people in general.<sup>20</sup> The next step in their lives is to plan for a future where they will not be there to provide for their child, causing stress of a different calibre.

Parents of adult children with disabilities are taking their child places where they can look for personal relationships and tend to make friends at places that they visit often, have meaningful interactions with, and are hospitable and welcoming.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, tactics targeted at this public were focused on local establishments that build relationships with their attendees such as community centres, churches, coffee shops, and doctor's office. These locations are also shown to be places where people with disabilities themselves tend to frequent, so if they are likely to go there, their primary caregiver would most likely frequent it with them once in awhile.<sup>22</sup> Messages that appeal to this public include inclusive imagery that fosters belonging for their child, especially regarding creating a person support network for their child.<sup>23</sup>

**Persona:** Karen is a 47-year-old mother of three who cares for her 22-year-old son who has Down Syndrome, Ryan. Her 18-year-old daughter is off to college, and her 25-year-old son lives nearby. Karen has been separated from her husband for 15 years but has found a new partner who she has been with for the past seven years. She is the primary caregiver for Ryan because last year he had to transition out of the

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school system and works a part-time job as a tax attorney locally. Karen reads many pamphlets about care that could be provided for Ryan and goes to open houses searching for more information. Karen is warm-hearted and creative in coming up with tasks for Ryan to do, but she has a bad hip and is worried about the impact this will have on Ryan's care. Karen needs a support system that will help Ryan when she cannot provide him with the same care.

**Benefit Statement:** PLN will benefit parents with adult children of disabilities by providing them with information, free workshops, planning tactics, and support to ease their worries about leaving their child without a primary caregiver they have had their entire lives. Community connectors will offer peace of mind by working directly with parents and the focus person to find activities, gifts, and community supporters who will maintain a personal network for their child for a lifetime.

### Parents of Teenage Children with Disabilities

Parents with teenage children with disabilities have a lot of the same qualities as parents with adult children with disabilities. These parents tend to be younger, between the ages of 34 and 40. They are still receiving information from high schools in Waterloo Region providing them with different options for services that are available to them and their child as they transition from the school system to adulthood in the real world. These parents are bombarded with information and are constantly looking for more. These parents are looking for consistency, repetition, and a place to get information from credible organizations while still having the opportunity to share personal stories, which is what social media provides for them.<sup>24</sup> Parents in this age group look for timely, valuable information on social media that provides two-way communication, experiences and compassion. It is also a vital source for finding resources and organizations providing services in one place.<sup>25</sup>

Since these parents are younger, and still adjusting to their lives with a teenage child with disability, they tend to feel stressed, lonely and socially marginalized.<sup>26</sup> This is one reason why parent groups, social media, peer mentoring, and emotional support from other parents with children who have a disability is important currently in their life.<sup>27</sup> Like parents with adult children with disabilities, parents have started working fewer hours, turned down promotions, or passed up jobs related to their child's income, taking an average of \$15,000 less in annual income than parents of kids without disability.<sup>28</sup> Parents in this age group are also likely to be supporting more children at home who are still under their care. For this reason, parents are trying to maintain family life and ensure positive adjustments for other siblings who do not have a disability.<sup>29</sup> Providing a space where these parents can spend time with their entire family and be inclusive to the child with a disability would be a clever way to target them.

**Persona:** Teresa is a 35-year-old mother of two girls, Sarah and Laura. Sarah is 9 years old and looks up to her big sister Laura, who is 13 and entering high school. Laura has cerebral palsy and uses many assistive devices in her daily life. Their father, Carl, works long hours to make up for the minimal time Teresa can spend working while caring for Sarah and Laura. As Laura is transitioning into high school, Teresa needs to pull away from the caregiver role and try to be more of a parent to both of her children. Teresa is on social media in her free time to find supports that can help the entire family transition through this challenging time together. She often frequents coffee shops and community centres when she has both of her children with her because they are welcoming establishments.

**Benefit Statement:** PLN will benefit parents of teenage children with disabilities by providing workshops that allow the entire family to get involved at no cost. This will further the parent's decision in choosing PLN to help them when the time comes to plan for their future. By beginning this planning period earlier on in a parent's life, they will feel more comfortable if an emergency were to occur earlier than expected.

### Work and Transition Teams at High Schools

Schools in Ontario provide parents with tools and strategies to support their child when they are no longer in the school system.<sup>30</sup> This information is provided to WRDSB and WCDSB in a couple of diverse ways,

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including open houses, Work and Transition teams and teachers and counsellors who work in the special education departments in Waterloo Region. The representatives of the schools met with were all females between the age of 30 and 45. These teams are made up of professionals who have typically worked with children and adults with disabilities for over ten years, either in a school setting or non-profit setting. They have a strong knowledge of what parents need during this time of transition and are wary of DSO and ODSP standards, to provide parents with the best services at the lowest cost. During interviews, cost of services was a large question for these representatives because they know first-hand the struggle parents have when providing for a child of any age with a disability. The main priority for this public is to help their students with disabilities and help their parents in the difficult transition period that they will soon be entering.

**Persona:** Samantha is a part of the Work and Transition team for WRDSB. She is 41 years old and has volunteered with a non-profit agency on the side for almost 20 years now. This agency supports children with disabilities to provide them with daily activities and a day program. Her experience in both her job and her non-profit career have helped her see how difficult the transition to adulthood is for the child and their parents. To help prepare for meetings with families, she does her research thoroughly and meets with credible organizations to see how viable their services would be to parents. She is diligent when using the checklist provided by DSO but would be willing to send informal information to parents if it seemed helpful to them. Samantha must know what fees are involved and what services can be offered for free to struggling families that she often sees.

ANNEX C

Primary Research

Summary

Due to the niche publics that were targeted for this communications strategy, personal interviews were the most effective way to receive valuable information in a timely manner. To do so, face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, and email interviews were conducted with the primary and secondary stakeholders of this plan.

Due to time constraints and having niche publics, interviews were the best way to get effective and efficient answers for further insights. To find candidates, personal networks and research came into play to find contacts that were willing to communicate openly and honestly about PLN and their services. Research was brought forth by the five team members with PLN as a client, and further secondary research was conducted outside of the group setting. Full transcripts of each interview conducted will be available upon request of the client.

Type of Interview	Number of Interviews
Parent Interviews	10
Transition Team/Teacher Interviews	5
Organization Interviews	2

Key Takeaways

- Parents were mostly unaware of PLN and the services provided.
- They would like more information about the organization but are wary of the cost.
- An open house with other organizations would be most beneficial because they can learn about multiple supports at once.
- Parents would prefer face-to-face communication, emails, or social media interaction.
- Other organizations know of the services and advocate for PLN online through social media platforms.
- Some would be willing to collaborate if it does not take away from their own services.
- No one from the schools represented had heard of PLN.
- School boards would love to learn more about PLN, so they can feel confident distributing information on their behalf and would prefer face-to-face communication.
- School boards were under the impression after looking into the company that they only offered financial workshops, and were unaware of the other services provided by PLN.

Research Results (Condensed)

To give an overview of the results, the answers have been summarized. The interview questions are outlined below and separated into each public for accessibility of information.

Parent Interviews

What is your involvement to those with disabilities or those in a vulnerable situation?

Nine out of the ten parents who were interviewed were mothers of a child or children with a disability ranging in severity. Most respondents stated that their child with a disability was between the age of 20 and 27.

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### **Do you know what a social network is?**

Respondents would often take a guess at the meaning of a social network. Answers included: someone to lean on when times are hard, a community of people who help the focus person support themselves, or simply someone people who are willing to socialize and spend time with the focus person.

### **Are you aware of Planned Lifetime Networks and the services that it provides?**

Board members who were parents were aware of the organization because they use the service. Other respondents would recognize the name of the organization but were unaware of the services provided by PLN. Respondents who knew more about the organization but were using other organizations with similar services were uninterested in the membership fee.

### **What organization or organizations do you associate with helping the loved ones of those with disabilities or those in a vulnerable situation?**

Many of the same organizations came up in almost every interview conducted outside of current members. This list included: Community Living, Parents for Community Living, Christian Horizons, and DSO. Some organizations that were only mentioned once or twice included Fulfill, Waterloo Region Down Syndrome Society and Regional Support Associates.

### **In what ways would information best be presented to you about PLN and the services it provides? / What type of information would be beneficial to you and your loved one and in what format (ie. email, newsletter, brochure, events)?**

The common theme with all respondents was that they would prefer to hear about the services in a manner that is personal, such as face-to-face or in a phone call. Direct mail and pamphlets were common answers as well but did not provide the same individualized touch that talking directly to a representative does. Half of the respondents felt as though Facebook would also be a beneficial way to reach them as it takes less time and effort for both parties.

### **Would you consider attending an event, open house, or information night about PLN?**

Answers varied regarding this question. Although parents would like to learn more about PLN, they are unlikely to seek out an open house specifically for one organization. If the organization had a booth at different events such as "Oh, The Places You'll Go" or the "Buddy Walk," they would be willing to go to the booth and learn more about PLN. One respondent said they would enjoy an open house specifically for PLN because it would give them a chance to talk to current members and other parents about the services provided.

### **Do you think a community walk, art show, or potluck would be beneficial to you and your loved one?**

Three out of four respondents would be interested in attending an event like these options. The social aspect was a big selling point because they would have an opportunity to meet other parents and families in situations like their own. One respondent said that although they would like to go, having multiple children with a disability often makes it harder to find something that they would enjoy. For example, one child would love to go to the potluck, but the other child would not feel comfortable eating food that was not cooked at home. The respondent who would not attend this type of event did not see the benefit it would have to them or their child.

### **If not, what type of events would be effective in creating a social network for your loved one?**

Like the previous question, preferences change from person to person. A similar trend that was found from this question was that most parents, and their child, would love to do something that interests their child. This included sports, music, or hobbies that could involve many different people at one time.

### **Can you see a benefit that having PLN in your life would have?**

Out of the four respondents who are not currently members of PLN, only two people opted in to answering this question. Both said they would see the benefit and would love to learn more about the organization. The



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lack of response from the other two respondents is questionable. They either did not feel comfortable answering this question or had previously stated that they use free services that provide similar, if not more, options to PLN for minimal to no price at all.

### **Transition Team/Teacher Interviews**

#### **What is your involvement to those with disabilities or those in a vulnerable situation?**

Respondents from this section including special education teachers and teachers working in the Work and Transition sector for WRDSB and WCDSB. Much of their experience is helping students find volunteer opportunities, job opportunities, or simply providing the student and their parents with information for services when they can no longer stay in high school. WRFN and DSO are services that these teachers use to provide families with a service or organization that best suits their needs.

#### **Are you aware of Planned Lifetime Networks and the services that it provides?**

None of the representatives from the school boards had heard of PLN or the services they provide.

#### **What organization or organizations do you associate with helping the loved ones of those with disabilities or those in a vulnerable situation?**

Adults in Motion, Leg Up, Extend-a-Family, Try It on For Size, WRFN, and DSO.

#### **In what ways would information best be presented to you about PLN and the services it provides?**

A lot of the time these teachers will use DSO or WRFN to help find the best suitable placement for a child transitioning out of school. Contacting or working with these organizations would be beneficial, but if that is not the options, teachers would likely respond to emails and pass information along in a more informal manner to parents they think would use the services.

#### **Would you consider attending an event, open house, or information night about PLN?**

None of the respondents would attend an open house or information night specifically about PLN. Although they would love to know more about the organization, they feel as though if they're getting information it should be from multiple organizations because they need to decide what is best for each family. Every respondent from the school boards mentioned the open house "Oh, The Places You'll Go" as an event where parents who have children that will be out of high school soon attend. It hosts many different organizations but provides the face-to-face conversation that parents need to be able to discuss services openly with organizations.

#### **As a teacher or counsellor, would you feel comfortable distributing information about PLN and its services?**

Respondents from the Work and Transition teams were on the edge about distributing information about PLN because they must follow a DSO checklist. Teachers on the other hand, would be willing to distribute information if they felt as though it was a credible organization. Often in these interviews, teachers were wary of where the annual fees were going and how the organization would stay afloat for the entirety of the child's life.

#### **What action do families generally take when their loved one leaves high school?**

Hopefully, before leaving high school the parents have taken the time to choose services for their child. Work and Transition teams at the school boards start as early as the age of 16 to provide parents and the focus person with options that would suit their family.

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### **Organization Interviews**

#### **Are you aware of Planned Lifetime Networks and the services that it provides?**

A representative from CH had not heard of PLN before, but representatives from WRFN and Parents for Community Living both had.

#### **What organization or organizations do you associate with helping the loved ones of those with disabilities or those in a vulnerable situation?**

CH, DSO, Community Living, KW Habilitation, Parents for Community Living.

#### **Would you be willing to collaborate with PLN to raise awareness for the services it provides? If not, why?**

CH would be unlikely to collaborate with PLN because they offer similar services but would be open to putting a link on their website. WRFN does not collaborate with organizations but does already advocate for PLN by handing out information about the services and includes an advertisement in their newsletter.

#### **How do you promote the services your organization provides?**

Promotion from these organizations include: promotion at high school and colleges, in videos, news releases, community centres, through DSO, via partnerships, advertisements on bus shelters, in magazines, on social media and through the radio.

#### **How do you provide information to your members?**

Typically, through newsletters, annual reports, annual general meeting, direct mail, events and social media.

#### **What type of information pieces generate the most conversation about your organization (ie. brochures, event, open houses, email, etc.)?**

The information that generated the most conversation tended to be social media, face-to-face conversations and booths at service fairs.

#### **What events do you feel your public is most receptive to?**

CH was the only respondent for this question, but they said that annual community meetings and fundraising events gained the most attendees.

## ANNEX D

### Proactive Strategy

#### *Alliances*

To raise awareness and credibility of the organization, PLN should focus on creating alliances with other organizations with similar values and local businesses or establishments such as school boards, community centres, churches, coffee shops, and doctor's offices. Since PLN is already advocated for on social media platforms of competitors, they would be more credible by building partnerships with these organizations for events and promotional materials. Other organizations also have the following on social media and in the community that would help raise awareness for their events, workshops, and services. These alliances will also gain PLN the opportunity to promote their services at new and innovative locations. Alliances ensure that key publics will get information from credible locations in the community, and in locations that they frequent on a regular basis.

#### *Audience Participation*

To gain more members for the organization, a triggering event will be participated in to generate action from the key public that is parents whose children have disabilities. Attending "Oh, The Places, You'll Go" open house will allow for open, two-way communication to occur and will be an opportunity for the public to either join as a member of PLN, or at least serve as an informational source for this public to raise awareness about the services being provided. Parents and school boards are more likely to respond to information if they have seen what other options are out there and can decide what services best fit their family. The alliance with teachers and Work and Transition team members at high schools will create the same effect, as they will prove to be an advocate for PLN for families who would benefit from the services. Another way to engage with the key publics will be to host the Amplified Art Show, and host family-inclusive workshops. These events will act as staged activities to bring attention and acceptance to the organization. Each of these action strategies will generate talk about PLN, but they will also cause key publics to be involved directly which may correlate into action as they learn more about the services provided.

#### *Communication*

Although some of the action strategies suggested above may result in newsworthy information, the communication strategy for this plan will be to enforce transparent communication. Through social media tactics, board of director introductions, and informational packages, PLN will provide the key publics with transparent communication. On social media, PLN will focus on endorsing all the services provided, including the refurbished annual event, new family workshops, and an emphasis on their membership plan. Email introductions of the board members will allow current and prospective members an opportunity to learn about how PLN was founded, and why it has been impactful on the board members who use the services. This will attract and retain members because it allows them to see the values of the organization without having to find it on their own. Finally, informational packages will be given to school boards and sent via email for easy distribution. Pamphlets and single-paged advertisements will also be available at local establishments that have similar values to PLN, such as community centres, churches, coffee shops, and doctor's offices. This will allow transparent communication to be available to all key publics in ways that best fit their needs.

### Message Strategy

#### *Message Appeals*

##### **Parents of Children with Disabilities**

The message appeal for parents was to focus on love appeal. All parents feel love and affection for their child and in the case of a child with disabilities, these emotions are equally as strong. These parents express joy and strengthened relationships, but above all else a sense of pride is commonly accompanied by a parent whose child has disabilities.<sup>31</sup> By using an appeal that demonstrates their love for their child, as well as a sense of helping them create independence for their child, they are likely to respond positively to the message. Since most caregivers are mothers, using words such as "proud," "rely," and "your baby" will

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resonate with them. Using pathos was the best way to try and create a message that will be remembered based on emotions that are associated with the messaging.

By using PLN's vision to create some messaging for the parents, there is also a sense of rationality. It is rational to want your child to have choices, a voice, trust, and safety in their life. By bringing their child's future into all messages, it makes the parent think of what they can accomplish and where their child's life will be headed in the future when they are no longer there to provide for them.

### **Organizations with Similar Values and Services**

This messaging was created with a rational appeal because the focus of these messages was that value will be added to both organizations if collaboration occurs. After all, all organizations with similar values to PLN are advocating for the same rights, supports, and experiences for people with disabilities. By working together to achieve that goal for even one night, it would be beneficial to the community of people with disabilities and in turn create more credibility for both organizations.

### **School Board Transition Teams**

For messages to the school board Work and Transition teams, there needed to be a focus on rational thinking. People in this public are likely to look at facts and distribute information based on those facts. Since the representatives from school boards that we talked to were unaware of why fees were being used, PLN should be open and honest about the fee and where they are being allocated for the members. It was important to also outline that more services are available on top of workshops because membership fees bring in more money than workshops at this point because parents who do not have as much money are less likely to pay for a workshop that is \$20.

## **Communication Tactics**

### *Interpersonal Communication Tactics*

#### **Face-to-Face Meetings**

Meetings with Work and Transition teams will not only allow PLN to have more advocates for the organization, but it will be used in the long-run to reach parents of teenage children with disabilities. By establishing this relationship with the key public before their need for the service is dire, they will be more likely to consider using PLN's services when the time comes. This would target a public that PLN is currently missing out on by only targeting an older public, with adult children who are outside of the school system when they find out about their services. Ultimately, this tactic will help raise awareness and be advantageous in gaining more members, participation at events, and attendees at workshops. The cost of this tactic would be \$755, including all the resources that will be provided to teachers for future use and distribution to interested families.

This is an expense that will only need to be repeated every four years to ensure that new students and their families are receiving information in a timely manner. Regarding staff time needed, travel and meetings would depend on the location and time allotted by each school but would typically take no more than an hour and a half at each school. To create deliverables for this tactic, staff will need to create promotional and informational material in the same manner that has been done before to promote events or workshops. This tactic would be scheduled to be completed by the time school is in session, so that the organization and teachers have ample time to prepare and meet with one another.

#### **Booth at "Oh, The Places You'll Go" Open House**

This tactic will also focus on parents who have teenage children with disabilities. This is an additional effort that will target parents who are searching for services for their child before they leave the school system. This tactic is focused on raising awareness for this public, that could lead to action if they find their family is a good fit for PLN's services. It was also reach parents whose children may not attend high school, but would like to learn more about services in Waterloo Region. This tactic was chosen because parents interviewed showed disinterest in attending an open house for one organization but would be willing to go to an open house that

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allowed them an opportunity to see many organizations at once. The only disadvantage of this tactic would be the number of competitors at the open house. To combat this, PLN would provide a reusable, branded grocery bag for parents to carry around their information received in, as well as additional promotional swag. This swag would include summer items, such as sunglasses, hats, and frisbees. The reason for summer items is that they can be used all year long, and open houses would generally be hosted in the springtime. This type of swag could be used in all seasons, but spring and summer would be the most effective time to distribute it. Information would also be provided for parents to take home in the form of infographics and pamphlets.

The expense for this tactic would be \$674, which includes the price of the booth, half of the promotional swag outlined in the budget, and half of the pamphlets outlined in the budget. This expense could be used on an annual basis, or PLN could choose to attend the event at their leisure depending on revenue for the year. This tactic would be a good opportunity for board members to attend and share stories with parents about their experience as lifetime or associate members of PLN. To man the booth, volunteers could assist with handing out information and promotional swag, taking away an added cost.

### **Amplified Art Show**

The annual Side-by-Side Art Show has been hosted by PLN before. To generate more attendance, awareness, and action, PLN should partner with an organization such as Bridges to Belonging or WRFN to bring more attention to the annual event. This event will also be advertised in more locations than before, through posters at local establishments including community centres, churches, coffee shops, and doctor's office after establishing that it is okay to do so with the inhabitants of these locations. It will target current members of PLN and community members of Waterloo Region. This would be an appropriate time for PLN to use their current relationship with WRFN and change their advertisement in their newsletter for the upcoming months before and during the event. The advantage to amplifying a current event is that it already holds a place in the hearts of current PLN members, but could be advertised better in the community and through PLN's social media to generate a higher attendance.

The expense for this event \$1,239.60, which includes posters advertising the event, sign-in sheets, pamphlets, promotional swag, and the cost of the space at THEMUSEUM. This expense is justified because the annual event generates awareness and offers an opportunity for publics that may not be primary or secondary an opportunity to learn about the organization. It also allows for PLN to maintain the values they have kept in previous years, but on a larger level. Finally, it generates money through fundraising efforts because artwork is sold to participants and attendees. Staff time will be used to find artwork, establish the booth space, and print out promotional and informational material. Volunteers can be used to distribute posters in local establishments and helping organize the event during the two-week period. This event will be held at the beginning to May, like other years, and will provide summer swag that was produced for both the open house both at "Oh, The Places You'll Go" and this event.

### **Inclusive Family Workshops**

This tactic was created out of a need that was in parent interviews and interviews conducted with school board representatives. Many respondents felt as though paying for a membership fee, or even paying for a workshop focused on finances or estate planning was simply too much for some families supporting children with disabilities who were low-income. Many parent respondents also stated that if they were to go to an event, they would want to see their child flourishing and doing something that they love. This information was supported by online research that stated parents of children with disabilities wanted to attend events that shared their child's interests, gifts, talents and abilities.<sup>32</sup> Finally, parents responded that they enjoyed having an opportunity to converse with other parents in similar situations. This was further backed up by secondary research stating that, "connecting themselves to other families through the creation of a support network for parents with similar experiences has been valuable."<sup>33</sup> To appease these takeaways, inclusive family workshops were designed as a tactic. This is also a tactic that allows non-members to see the value in a personal support network and in PLN itself. It could further be a newsworthy information piece if all goes well.

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These workshops would be run quarterly by PLN at the Family Centre for minimal to no cost for the parents. Each three-day session would provide three to five families with the opportunity to bring the entire family to participate in different craft sessions, sport sessions, and movie sessions. On the third day, parents and families will have the opportunity to discuss with one another, share stories and learn more about PLN. This allows for an inclusive environment for the support person, as well as their parents and siblings. The expense for this event is \$1,120 which includes workshop space and gym space at The Family Centre, and craft supplies for the workshop on a quarterly basis. There would need to be facilitation from staff or board members, but volunteers could also be used to help make the workshops run smoothly. An added cost of a lunch could be added in, but due to preferences it has been left out of this plan, which also gives families an hour each day to go out for lunch with their families or eat in the workshop space.

### *Organizational Media Tactics*

#### **Email Packages**

Email packages will be sent out to Work and Transition teams and high school teachers in special education departments following face-to-face meetings, or in place of said meetings if both parties are unable to attend. These packages will include an introduction letter, a single-page advertisement that can be sent to parents, an outline of all upcoming workshops, and an infographic about the services provided at PLN. This will be used as a piece for teachers to send to parents who do not have the time to come out to the school, or as a basis for information they may have not received during face-to-face meetings. The benefit to email packages is all the information has already been created for print and will be easy to send, easily accessible by the publics, and does not cost any money to produce. It is also a tactic that allows for two-way communication between PLN and teachers from all high schools in Waterloo Region.

#### **Board of Director Introductions**

Knowing who founded the organization, why it was founded, and how they are involved in PLN to this day are important aspects that align values with the credibility of the organization. From results retrieved from board members, most would be willing to write an introduction and get their picture taken for biographies. Although, not having support from all board members, it is unlikely there will be a way to include these biographies on the website. This would be a beneficial way of gaining trust from all publics interested in PLN as an organization, but if that option is not possible, the board should be introduced through emails to current members, people who have subscribed to emails for more information, and those who have signed up for workshops and the Amplified Art Show. This would allow board members to keep their distance from online platforms but would allow interested publics to have transparent communication about the organization.

These introductions would include why they choose to become involved, how they help at PLN today, and any personal stories they would like to tell about how PLN has impacted their lives for the better. Ideally a picture would be involved to make board members feel more relatable, but it is not necessary. The only cost for this tactic would be if a photographer were to be hired for pictures, but with technology a standard smartphone would have picture quality that would work perfectly for an informal introduction.

#### **Social Media**

For the limited resources and time that PLN's coordinator has, the Facebook page that is running is strong. With one to three posts a week and posters created by the company, there are solid aspects of this page that are being used. For this tactic, social media should be used for articles in the industry, workshop updates, event updates, and sharing information from organizations that already do so for PLN. The Family Centre, WRFN, B2B and various other organizations share PLN's information and the same should be done for them. This maintains the relationship that is being built online between the organizations and will help facilitate any further initiatives that PLN wants to include other organizations in. This is especially true because some organizations with similar values have hundreds of followers and parents are more likely to trust credible organizations when they post information online.<sup>34</sup> This tactic should also be used to target current members and parents who have a child with disability. Research shows that parents of children with disabilities love to

## BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

share stories and are responsive to social media posts and online testimonials that allow for two-way communication.<sup>35</sup>

To facilitate two-way communication, online testimonials and posts that will allow for parents to talk with one another, “Social Media Story Sharing” will be a quarterly initiative that PLN offers on their Facebook page. The hope for this tactic is that one board member, or a member of PLN would be willing to start off the Story Sharing initiative after PLN has reached out to them through personalized emails. PLN will post a digital poster advertising the story sharing the week before the post is produced letting followers know of the initiative that will be coming up next week and will outline that everyone and anyone can participate and share stories of their own. This is a tactic that allows the key publics to share openly about what it is like to live with a family member with a disability and highlight the good, or bad, times that have come from this experience. Although this tactic does not focus as much on the person with a disability, it allows the key publics to get involved and share their contributions in their child’s support network and how they are moving forward with the help of PLN.

### **Promotional Swag**

As mentioned in the booth at “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” and Amplified Art Show, promotional swag will be available at these two events. All the swag is branded with PLN’s logo and catch phrase “We’re better together” if room permits it. This swag includes: reusable grocery bags, frisbees, hats, and sunglasses. The events held are generally in the summertime or springtime, and so these promotional items would be beneficial to any family. They are also items that a mother could use, but her teenage or adult child could use as well, no matter what their disability is. The expense of this tactic is \$1,175. Although this may seem like a significant expense, they are all items that can be used for many years to come by the person who takes them, and by PLN themselves. If the organization has a surplus of promotional swag, it can be reused the year after or distributed at any of the workshops. An appropriate time to distribute the leftover items would be at the paid workshops that offer information about financial aid and estate planning, as participants are paying for these workshops.

### *Advertising & Promotional Tactics*

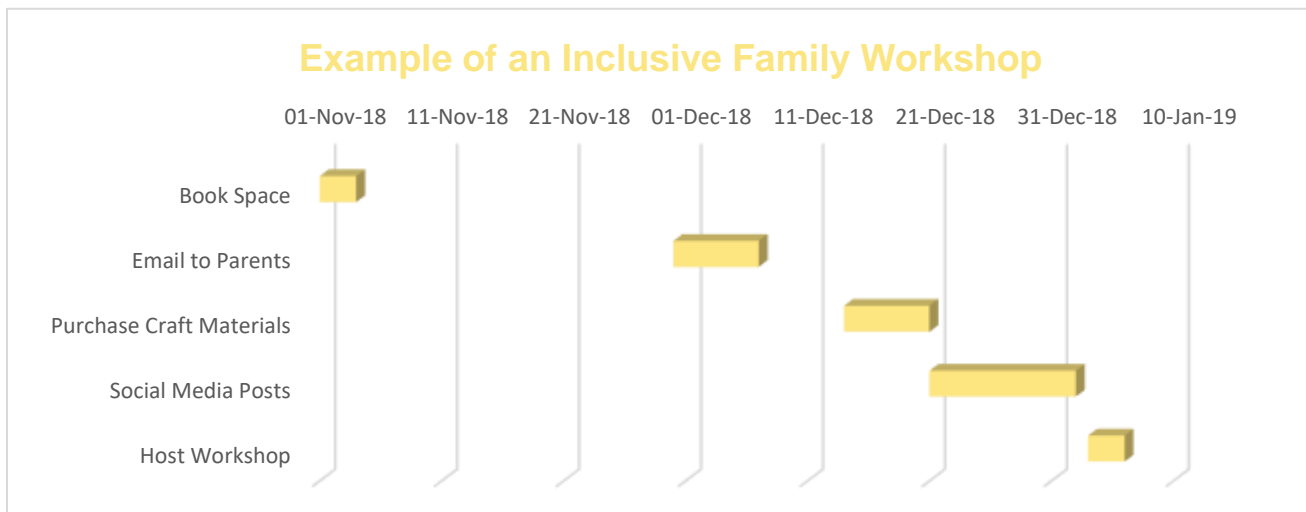
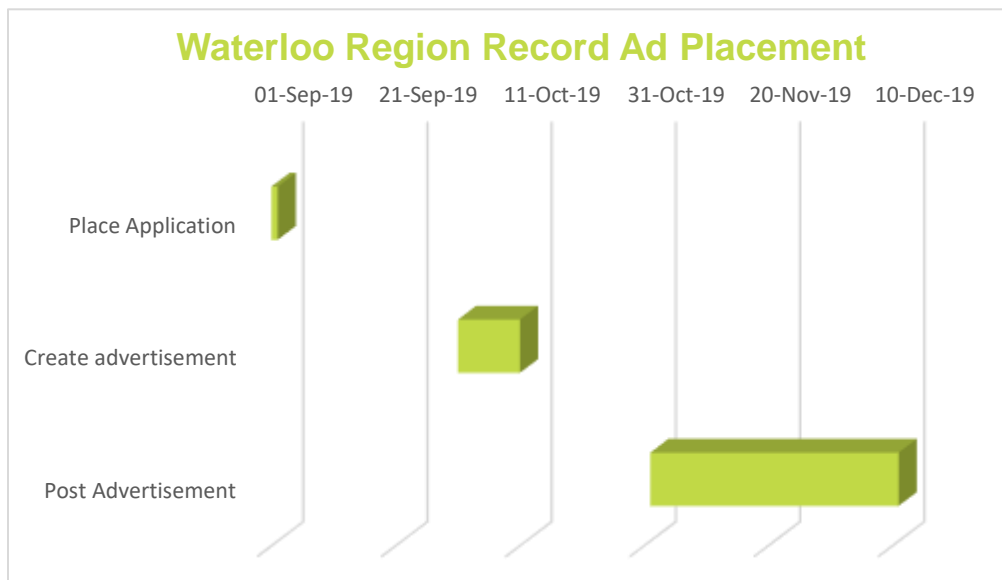
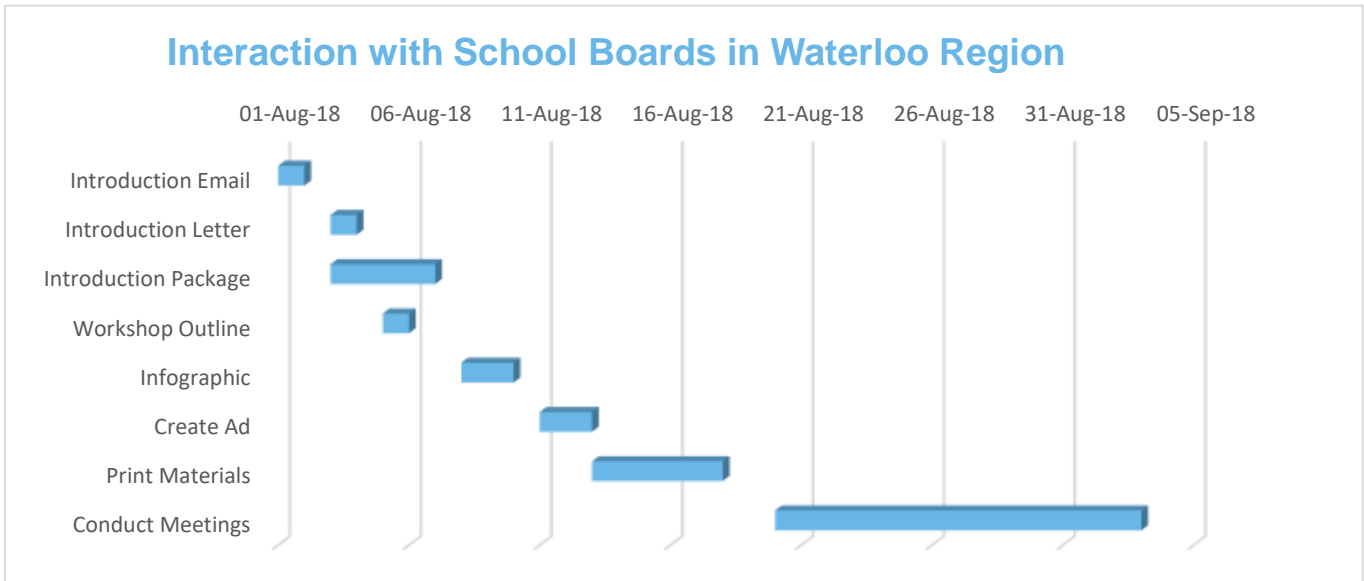
#### **Waterloo Region Record Advertisement**

To reach the audience of this campaign, and further reach key publics, advertisements will be posted in various publications in Waterloo Region that offer free partnerships or event promotion. The Waterloo Region Record provides a Community Partnership Program that allows for free advertising for community initiatives and charitable fundraising.<sup>36</sup> There is an application available online that establishes whether PLN will associate with the value of this partnership, but as it focuses on charities and community involvement it should be a good fit to reach the audience in Waterloo Region. This advertisement will promote paid workshops regarding financial aid and estate planning, as well as the membership that is offered through PLN.

This is an advantageous tactic for PLN because as a non-profit organization, the budget is limited. Although PLN is already advertised in WRFN’s newsletter, it is beneficial to raise awareness in publications that are seen by a larger population. Although these publications focus on Waterloo Region, rather than parents of children with disabilities, it will raise awareness for the Amplified Art Show and family inclusive workshops that are open to all to participate in. It is also a beneficial way to reach donors who may not be directly impacted by a disability within their family.

ANNEX E

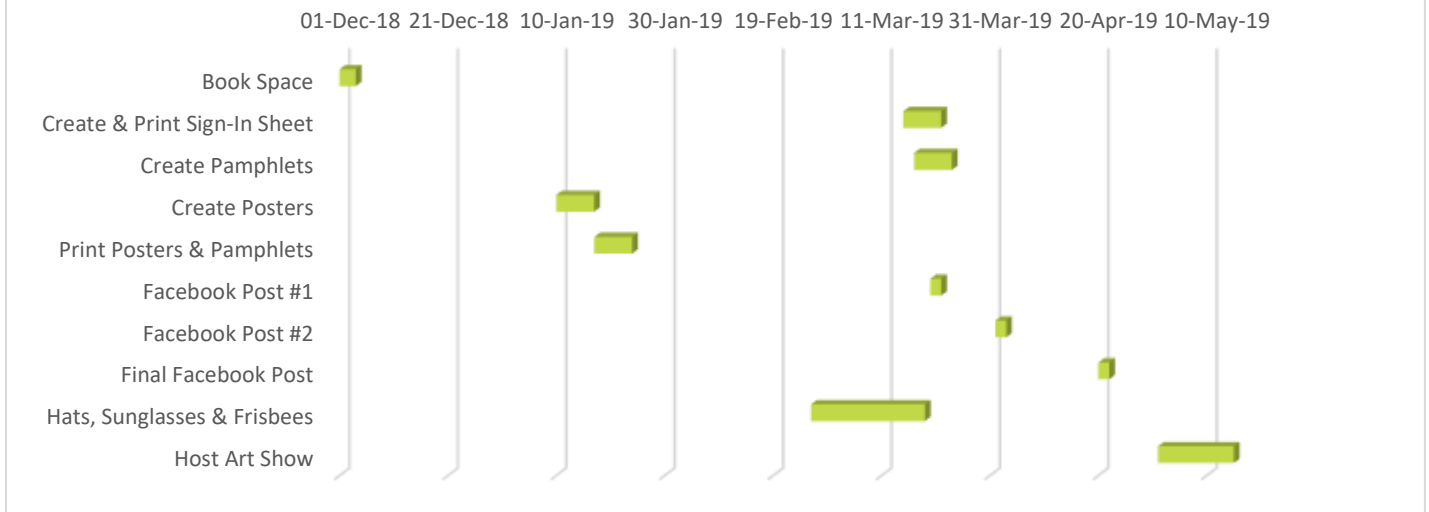
Campaign Schedule



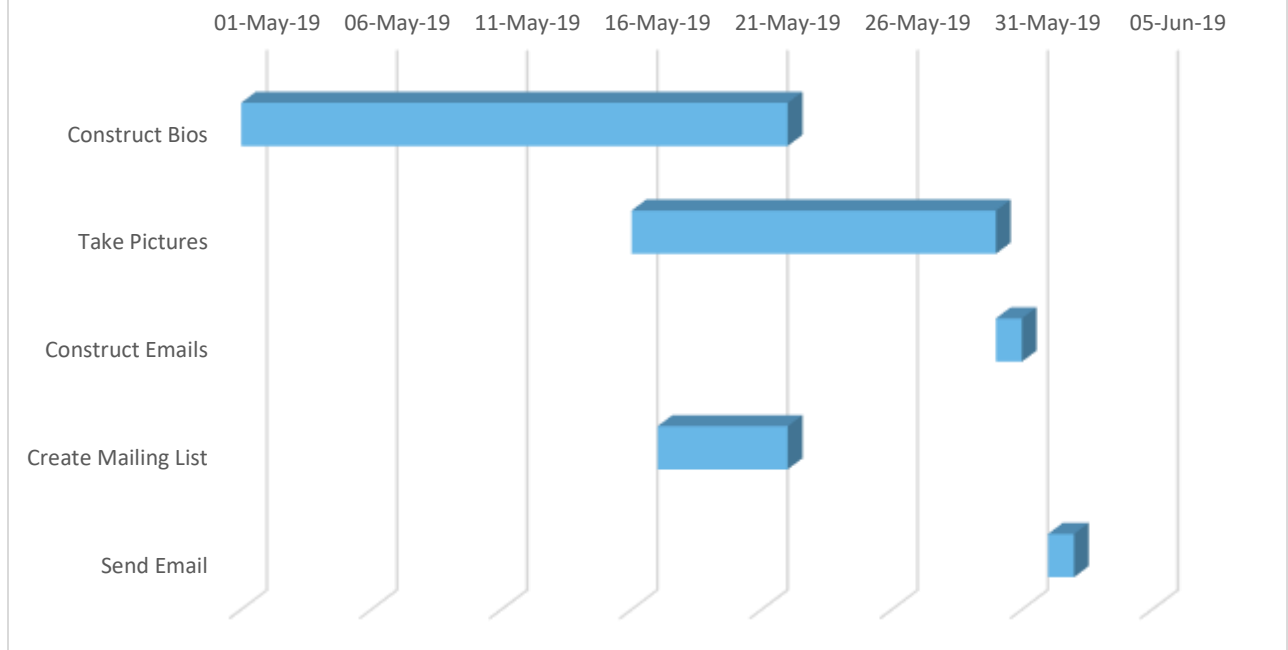


# BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

## Planning & Facilitating the Amplified Art Show



## Board of Director Introductions



ANNEX F

Campaign Budget

Tactic & Deliverables	Quantity	Cost
<b>School Board Initiatives</b>		
<i>Print Introduction Letter</i>	25 @ \$0.40	\$10.00
<i>Print Workshop Outline (8x11, Laminated)</i>	125 @ \$2.40	\$300.00
<i>Print Infographic (11x17)</i>	100	\$120.00
<i>Print Single-Page Advertisement (11x17)</i>	125 @ \$2.60	\$325.00
		\$755.00
<b>Art Show</b>		
<i>Book Space</i>	Two Weeks	\$175.00
<i>Print Sign-In Sheets (8x11)</i>	1 For Each Day=14 @ \$0.40	\$5.60
<i>Print Event Posters (18x24, Laminated)</i>	50	\$350.00
<i>Print Pamphlets (Three-fold)</i>	250	\$120.00
		\$650.60
<b>Promotional Material for Art Show &amp; "Oh, The Places You'll Go"</b>		
<i>Book Booth at "Oh, The Places You'll Go"</i>	1	\$150.00
<i>Hats</i>	100 @ \$5.99	\$299.50
<i>Sunglasses</i>	100 @ \$2.49	\$249.00
<i>Frisbees</i>	200 @ \$1.95	\$378.00
<i>Grocery Bag</i>	100 @ \$2.49	\$249.00
<i>Print Pamphlets (Three-fold)</i>	250	\$120.00
		\$1,445.50
<b>Inclusive Family Workshops</b>		
<i>Book Space for Workshops</i>	3 Days Every 4 Months	\$420.00
<i>Book Gym</i>	½ Day @ \$50.00 x 4	\$200.00
<i>Provide Arts &amp; Crafts Materials</i>	5 Supplies @ \$25.00 x 4	\$500.00
		\$1,120.00
	10% Contingency Cost	\$500.00
<b>Total Cost</b>		<b>\$4,471.10</b>

## BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

### **Budget Summary**

The total budget for this strategic communications plan is \$5,000. Printing costs for posters, advertisements, pamphlets, and infographics were generated on Vistaprint.ca. Simple printing on regular letter paper was generated on Staples.c. THEMUSEUM's space was found from 2016 revenue statements and a 20 per cent increase was added to accommodate for any price changes. Promotional swag was calculated on Myron.ca. Finally, workshops would be held at The Family Centre in Room 2011 at a price of \$35/weekend day. Craft materials were generated on Walmart.ca.

### **Measurement & Evaluation**

#### **Objective #1**

Measurement will be obtained by doing a before-and-after study of the number of members. Assessment via membership forms, financial statements, and monthly documentation of the changes through direct observation of results. This measurement will demonstrate action that was created by the campaign. An outline of all members will be drawn up before execution in June 2018. A progress report will occur at the six-month mark to demonstrate this objective is on track for the year and will be evaluated by coordinator and board of directors at one year's time from the implementation of the communications plan. The coordinator will conduct the final evaluation in June 2019 and document it for further examination in the future.

#### **Objective #2**

Followers will be tracked through direct observation using Facebook Analytics to demonstrate awareness and action achieved by the campaign. A bi-monthly report should be maintained outlining what type of posts get a higher level of interaction on the Facebook page. The coordinator will be responsible for this evaluation, or volunteer who is responsible for social media as was discussed in the client meeting. In June 2019, followers and interaction will be evaluated in a final report created from the results of the bi-monthly reports.

#### **Objective #3**

To generate attraction and awareness of the campaign, a sign-in sheet will be available to the Amplified Art Show to demonstrate how many people came through the art exhibit. A follow-up survey will be distributed from email addresses received on the sign-in sheet and will be sent to current members, as well as any other email lists already obtained by PLN. The level of participation and enthusiasm about the event will be evaluated through this initiative. Finally, social media posts about the event will be evaluated to demonstrate the awareness of the organization before and after the Amplified Art Show. This will evaluate the buzz that was created by the event and demonstrate how effective social media tactics were surrounding the event.

**ANNEX G**

**Work Samples**

Teresa Burch  
Work and Transition Support Team Members  
Waterloo Region District School Board  
51 Ardelt Avenue  
Kitchener, ON  
N2C 2R5

August 21, 2018

Dear Ms. Burch,

My name is Brenda Pearce and I am contacting you on behalf of Planned Lifetime Networks. We are a non-profit organization that supports parents of children with disabilities in planning for their child's future. I am the president of the organization's board of directors and use the services for my child as well.

I am aware that, in your position with Waterloo Region District School Board, you meet with families and connect them with agencies that will best support their child and family's needs. Although you must go through a thorough checklist provided by Disability Services of Ontario, I was hoping I could meet with you and discuss the services we provide to see if there's potential. We provide support in creating a personal network for loved ones with disabilities. This support includes financial planning, workshops on diverse topics, and opportunities for families to support one another through various channels.

It would be of beneficial to communicate with you directly about our memberships, workshops, and events to give you a better idea of who we are and how we can benefit parents. We currently do not receive government funding but rely on our members and fundraising efforts to support adults with disabilities for a lifetime.

In the opportunity that we could provide a much-needed step to make a real difference and mutually benefit parents, we could discuss a time to provide you with more information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Brenda Pearce

# About Planned Lifetime Networks

Call (519) 772-4399 ext. 2760 for more information



A personal network sustains essential relationships  
for people living in isolation

## Workshops

- Family-Inclusive
- Wills & Estate Planning
- Power of Attorney & Guardianship
- "Good Life Sessions"
- Meet & Greet Events

## Associate Memberships

- Create personal network
- Support involvement in the community
- Families share experience, stories, & support
- Annual fee of \$60 toward community connector efforts

## Memberships

## Lifetime Memberships

Parents are encouraged to take a year as an Associate Member to participate in:

- Workshops
- Events
- Orientation meetings

We want you to have confidence in our services before recommending a lifetime with PLN.

## Community Connectors

### Who They Are

- From family's local community
- Matched based on values, interests, compatibility & connections in community

### What They Do

- Get to know the focus person and family
- Explore gifts of focus person & invites others to share in these gifts
- Recruit network members & introduce them
- Plan events, celebration and individual meetings

## Annual Art Show

- Showcases artwork from local artists & work from our "PLN family"
- All proceeds go toward PLN

## Annual Amble

- A walk around The Family Centre

## Personal Donations

## Fundraising



Planned Lifetime Networks  
Waterloo Region

# Amplified Art Show



**Join us on May 1st at 6:30pm for the grand opening.**

Local community artists and members of our "PLN family" have made art just for you. This exhibit showcases that everyone can express themselves through art. Help to create lifetimes filled with choice, voice, trust and safety for adults living with disabilities.

**May 1st until  
May 14th  
at THEMUSEUM**  
10 King Street West, Kitchener

*All proceeds go to Planned Lifetime Networks,  
in collaboration with Bridges to Belonging &  
Waterloo Region Family Network*



Planned Lifetime Networks  
Waterloo Region

# FREE INCLUSIVE FAMILY WORKSHOP

## JOIN US FOR ARTS, CRAFTS, SPORTS, AND MOVIES

Learn how to create a future filled with choice, voice, trust and safety for your child with a disability at our information session on the final day.

Limited registration while space is available.  
Apply online at <http://plnwwr.ca/workshops>

January 4th to  
January 7th  
at The Family Centre  
65 Hansen Avenue, Kitchener



Planned Lifetime Networks  
Waterloo Region

We'd love to introduce you to our  
**Board of Directors**



**Brenda Pearce, Board President**

My name is Brenda and I am the current Board President and have been an Associate Member of PLN for the past six years. I have been in Waterloo for my entire life and watched PLN help 12 families create support networks for their children.

As an Associate Member of PLN, I have a close relationship with many of our members and can relate on a personal level. Not only does my son Michael love spending time with his community connector, but it gives me peace of mind that he

will have support whenever he needs it, and for as long as he needs it.

I chose to become a member of the board because I felt as though with my experience as a parent would offer strong insight into the benefits of PLN and how to provide support to families in need of our services. I would love to get to know each of our members if time permits, so don't be shy if you see me at a workshop, event, or around town.



**Roz Haven, Past President**

As the past president of Planned Lifetime Networks, I have seen firsthand what this wonderful team of directors can do to reduce stress for parents of loved ones with disabilities, or are in isolation due to their circumstances.

My experience with PLN has allowed me to become a Lifetime Member and feel safe about my daughters' future when I am no longer there to provide care and support for her. My wife and I are involved in many organizations supporting children and adults living with disabilities.



**Lorna Aberdein, Director**

Hi, I'm Lorna. As a Director and Lifetime Member at PLN, I am so proud of the steps taken by our board and coordinator to support families in Waterloo Region. With new initiatives being introduced on an annual basis, we are an organization that is focused on helping you and your loved one.

I have been a Lifetime Member for the past 10 years and participate in educational events, as well as our Annual Amble and Art Show. I especially enjoy meeting our wonderful members like yourself and discussing new opportunities for PLN.

**Our mailing address is:**

65 Hanson Ave.  
Kitchener, ON N2C 2E2

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).



## BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

- 
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