

2025/26 ANNUAL REPORT



EPILEPSY
Toronto
See the Person



ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW



MISSION

To promote **independence** and **quality of life** for people with epilepsy and their families through **support services, information, advocacy and public awareness.**

VISION

We envision a world in which **epilepsy and seizures** are widely understood, and where those who live with them **feel fully supported.**

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF IMPACT

As Epilepsy Toronto marks its 70th anniversary, we continue to see both the growing needs and remarkable resilience of the community we serve. Over the past several years, demand for our services has increased dramatically. In the wake of the pandemic, more individuals and families than ever have turned to us for support and community connection. We have risen to meet that need, but doing so has come at a financial cost.

2025 marked an important turning point. Thanks to the support of the provincial and federal governments, along with the generosity of foundations and donors, Epilepsy Toronto rebounded financially and returned to a balanced position for the first time in recent years. That stability allows us to continue growing programs that are changing lives.

In 2025, our agency continued expanding the reach of our services and the visibility of the epilepsy community itself. Our website remains a trusted source of information and resources, with more than 85,000 active viewers last year. We also shared more member stories through video than ever before. For March's Epilepsy Awareness Month campaign, our team produced 22 videos featuring members courageously sharing their lived experiences, and compilation videos were showcased on big screens at Sankofa Square and Billy Bishop Toronto Airport.

Our growing partnership with Sankofa Square has created exciting new opportunities. What began through our collaboration on Winter Glow has evolved into ongoing support for our awareness initiatives and expanded opportunities for our Café for a Cause social enterprise throughout the summer.

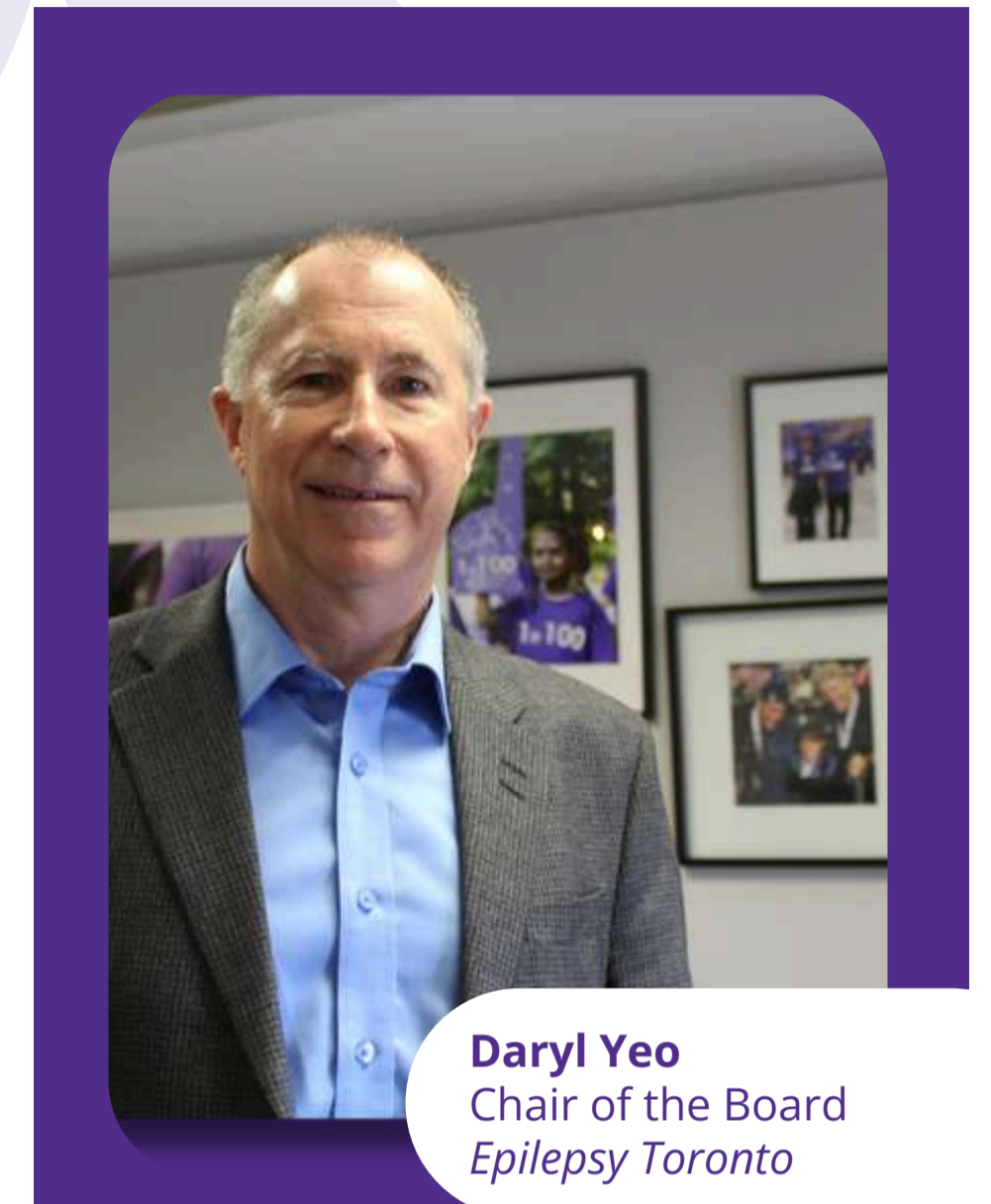
Our Employment Services Department continues to thrive. Due to their success and impact, both our SeizeABILITY! Youth Employment Program and Café for a Cause social enterprise received renewed funding for the next two years, ensuring continued opportunities for people living with epilepsy to gain valuable skills, confidence and employment experience.

We are also proud of the groundbreaking work happening within our Functional Seizures Program.

The success of our Neurobehavioural Therapy counselling highlighted both the effectiveness of this support and the urgent need for greater access to care. In response, we are now piloting a group counselling model that has the potential to expand support across Ontario.

This year also saw the launch of our first support group for families affected by SUDEP. Led by our Director of Children and Youth Services, the program received an overwhelmingly positive response and has opened important conversations about how we can better support grieving families and underserved members of our community.

As we reflect on this past year, one thing remains clear: Epilepsy Toronto continues to evolve, innovate and grow because of the strength of our community. As we celebrate 70 years of service, we are proud of how far we have come and energized by what lies ahead. On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you for your continued trust, generosity and support. Together, we are building a more informed, compassionate and connected future for people living with epilepsy.



Daryl Yeo
Chair of the Board
Epilepsy Toronto

CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

Children & Youth Services continued to provide meaningful opportunities for education, connection and peer support for children, youth and families living with epilepsy.

A key highlight of the year was the Epilepsy Family Learning Day, presented in partnership with the Hospital for Sick Children, which brought together families, caregivers, medical professionals and community partners for a day of learning and connection.

Throughout the year, families also benefited from a growing range of supportive programming, including a SUDEP Bereavement Support Circle, UPLIFT cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) group for Caregivers, and a Caregiver Surgery Support Group (also in partnership with SickKids).

Our team delivered epilepsy education workshops to 2,000 students and teachers across Toronto, promoting seizure awareness and first aid.

Through the Children & Youth Webinar Series, families accessed expert-led sessions on topics including neurodiagnostic testing, developmental services, and safe physical activity for children living with epilepsy.

Community connection remained an important focus throughout the year. Family events such as the Purple Pumpkin Party, Game Nights, and Summer Bonfires created welcoming spaces for participants to build friendships, share experiences and feel supported within the epilepsy community.

‘For the first time since my daughter’s diagnosis 6 years ago, we feel supported from a psychological perspective. Epilepsy has affected many areas of our family’s life, and it was so valuable to be able to talk openly and honestly with others in a similar situation. We are forever grateful.’ **Anonymous quote from annual survey**



Karen - Parent
speaker at Epilepsy
Family Learning Day



C&Y Services Clients
at our Purple
Pumpkin Party



INSIGHT:

78% of parents who participate in our programs say they feel less isolated having met at least one other parent who has a child with epilepsy. (Annual Survey)

SARIAN'S STORY: COURAGE IN PURPLE

At just six years old, Sarian is already showing the world what courage looks like in the face of epilepsy. Diagnosed at the age of five, she has approached every challenge with remarkable strength, resilience and a bright smile that continues to inspire everyone around her.

Since connecting with Epilepsy Toronto, Sarian and her family have become deeply involved in our community. Through Children and Youth Services, they found not only support and resources, but also encouragement, connection and confidence during a difficult time in their epilepsy journey.

In 2025, Sarian became a proud ambassador for the Purple Walk. At our Purple Day Prep Family Event, her joyful energy lit up the room. Inspired by the experience, she began raising awareness in her own community, handing out handmade flyers at school, speaking openly about epilepsy with classmates and teachers and encouraging others to support the Purple Walk.

Throughout 2025, Sarian and her family attended several more of our events, which helped them to feel connected and supported.

Her mother, Melanie, participated in the UPLIFT for Caregivers program, where she found emotional support, encouragement, and tools to help manage the stress and fears that often come with caring for a child living with epilepsy.

These experiences helped empower Sarian to embrace her story with confidence, so much so that this past March, Sarian participated in our awareness campaign, where she openly shared her seizure experiences. The campaign was featured throughout downtown Toronto, helping bring greater visibility and understanding to epilepsy in the community.

Today, Sarian continues to inspire those around her with her determination, openness and extraordinary positivity. Her family often reflects on the words she says during difficult moments: “Trust the process, I will be okay.”

Every step she takes, whether sharing her story or participating in the Purple Walk, is helping create a more informed, compassionate and supportive future for all people living with epilepsy.



Sarian
Children & Youth Services client

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS!

Employment Services continued to expand opportunities for youth and adults living with epilepsy through innovative, accessible and client-centred employment supports.

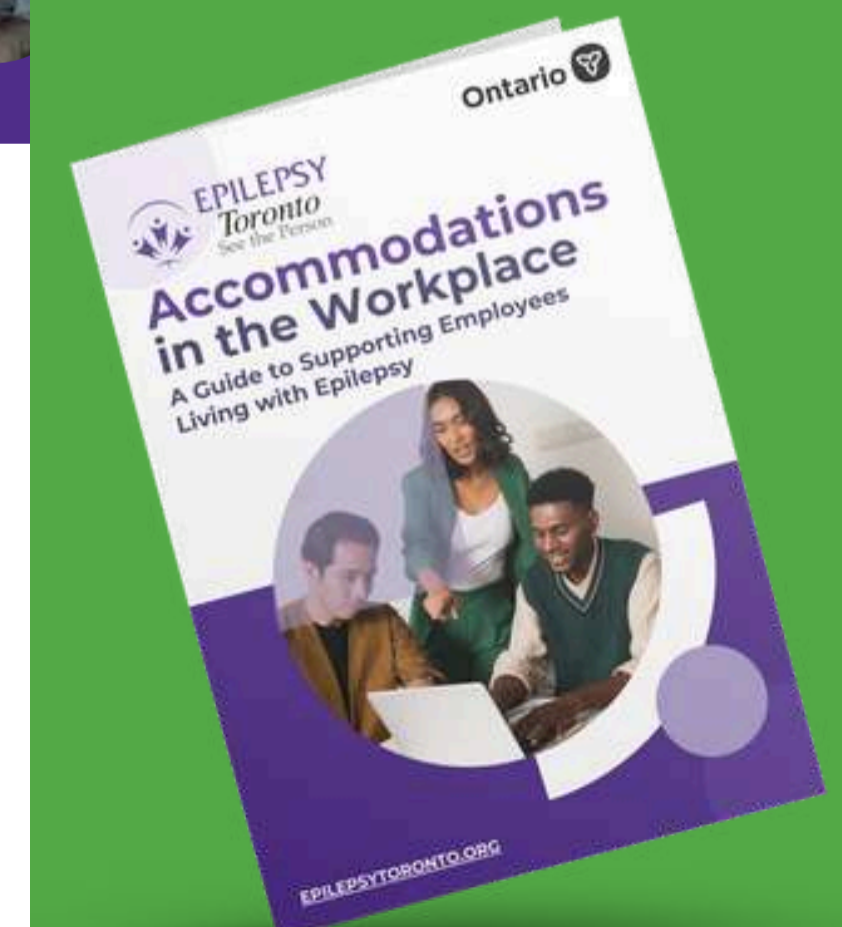
This year, we launched SeizeABILITY!, an exciting new youth employment program for young adults with epilepsy across Ontario. Funded through Employment & Social Development Canada (ESDC), the program offers 8 weeks of intensive training and workplace internships to youth preparing to enter the workforce.

“I thought my life was over when I was diagnosed with epilepsy, but SeizeABILITY! helped me regain the confidence to reconnect with my passions and gave me the ability to see life from a different perspective.” **SeizeABILITY! participant quote.**

Our Employment Services department was honoured to receive both the IES Sustainable Work Award and the IES Innovation Award from Employment Ontario and WCG. These recognitions reflect the long-standing commitment of Epilepsy Toronto to improving sustainable employment outcomes for people living with epilepsy through education, accommodation support, and workplace advocacy.

We also created an Accommodations at Work Guide designed to help employers and HR professionals build more inclusive workplaces for people living with epilepsy. Supported by the Ontario government, the multimedia guide combines practical accommodation strategies with lived experience stories from Epilepsy Toronto members. The accompanying video stories reached more than 42,000 views on our YouTube channel, helping expand awareness and workplace understanding of epilepsy.

Supported by an Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow Grant, Café For A Cause continued to raise funds while providing hands-on employment experience for people living with epilepsy. In 2025, participants worked at community events including Bruce’s Mill Maple Syrup Festival, the Canadian Open, BuskerFest, and Winter Glow, helping build skills, confidence and pathways to future employment.



SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

When one young participant joined the SeizeABILITY! program at Epilepsy Toronto, he was feeling disconnected and uncertain about his future. At the time, he was not employed or attending school and spent much of his time isolated at home playing video games. After entering the program, he quickly became engaged in the educational training and began developing new skills and confidence.

As part of SeizeABILITY!, he later completed a work placement with a property management company, where he flourished in the role.

Throughout the placement, he developed stronger communication skills, greater self-confidence, and a willingness to connect with others. The experience helped him build not only workplace readiness, but also a renewed sense of motivation and purpose.

Following graduation from the program, he successfully applied for a summer job and is now employed and thriving. His mother later shared how impactful the program had been for their family, expressing how proud she was to see her son become more engaged in the community, more hopeful about his future, and more driven to continue growing and improving himself.

Today, he continues moving forward with greater confidence and a stronger sense of direction. Through programs like SeizeABILITY!, Epilepsy Toronto is helping individuals living with epilepsy overcome barriers to employment and create pathways toward independence, connection and opportunity.

INSIGHT:

Employment intake has doubled in the last year, in part due to our new youth programming SeizeABILITY!



SeizeABILITY! Participants
at the program's graduation

ADULT SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

Adult Services continued to expand access to evidence-informed programs that support emotional well-being, self-management, and community connection for adults living with epilepsy and functional seizures.

This year, the team implemented three self-management initiatives: SMART (*Self-Management for People with Epilepsy and a History of Negative Health Events*), PACES (*Program of Active Consumer Engagement in Self-Management*), and UPLIFT (*Using Practice and Learning to Increase Favourable Thoughts*), helping clients strengthen coping skills, build confidence and improve quality of life. And we piloted a new neurobehavioral group therapy (NBT) program specifically for adults with functional seizures that we hope will become the standard of service delivery to this population, province-wide.

The department also hosted a series of educational webinars led by neurologists, psychiatrists and disability advocates, and organized regular social gatherings for adults and their spouses to promote personal and community strength.

“When I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I was completely overwhelmed and had no idea what I needed to know and decide and implement immediately. Rosie (Adult Service staff) helped me understand what was urgent, what could wait, what I needed to decide then, and what I could and should postpone.”
Anonymous quote from annual survey

RECREATION PROGRAM:

Throughout the year, Epilepsy Toronto’s recreation programming continued to create opportunities for connection, creativity, and community for adults living with epilepsy. Programs included museum visits, bowling outings, arts and crafts and a **weekly online programming including Bingo, Trivia and Social Club**. This year also included a special community gardening day at the Epilepsy Toronto office, supported by Sun Life volunteers.



Epilepsy Toronto team
participating in UHN's
Purple Day



INSIGHT:

80% of our clients who receive counselling or participate in support programs experience a reduction in anxiety.
(Annual Survey)



Recreation program
gardening day.

DENISA'S STORY: FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH COMMUNITY

Denisa first connected with Epilepsy Toronto at the age of 14 through the youth group program. At the time, she was searching for connection and understanding. Although she was nervous attending her first meeting, she quickly found a welcoming community where she felt heard, accepted, and supported. Through the program, she formed friendships and experienced something she had not felt in a long time: a sense of normalcy and belonging.

Years later, Denisa returned to Epilepsy Toronto while facing one of the most difficult decisions of her life: brain surgery to help control her seizures. Wanting to connect with others who had experienced similar challenges, she found comfort and guidance through conversations with peers who understood what she was going through. With support from the community around her, Denisa underwent surgery, which significantly reduced her seizure frequency.

Following her recovery, Denisa achieved a lifelong dream of becoming a mother. Today, she is raising two young boys with her husband while balancing work, parenting, and managing her health.

Through the Moms with Epilepsy Group, Denisa found ongoing support from other women who understand the realities and challenges of parenting while living with epilepsy. The group provided a space for encouragement, honesty, and connection during overwhelming moments.

The UPLIFT mindfulness-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) group gave her tools and strategies which she uses to this day in her work and her family life.

Today, Denisa continues to build her life with strength and resilience, supported by a community that has walked alongside her through every stage of her journey.

As Denisa shared, **“The hurdles are easier when you can climb them together.”**



Denisa
Adult Services client

SECURING FUTURES PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Securing Futures Program continued to support individuals living with epilepsy in building independence, confidence and essential life skills through a client-centred and supportive learning environment.

The program curriculum was further enhanced this year with new sessions focused on physical activity and safety, nutrition and healthy cooking, emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, and positive thinking. Numeracy training was also introduced to help participants strengthen budgeting and financial management skills. In addition, clients participated in an in-person community safety session led by the Toronto Police Service.

The families and caregivers of participants remained an important focus of the program. Information sessions were offered on topics including treatment options, accessibility modifications, Passport funding, Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), and housing supports, while virtual caregiver gatherings provided opportunities for emotional support and connection.

To encourage peer relationships and collaborative learning, we introduced two-person review sessions alongside ongoing group and individual supports.

Hybrid cooking classes also continued throughout the year, allowing participants to build practical cooking skills and confidence both at home and in-person alongside their peers.

“My son is a rather shy and reserved person. We were not very confident if he would be able to do the Securing Futures Program. However, to our pleasant surprise, he has been quite keen to get on the zoom sessions every week...We have observed that he has grown so much and has been coming out of his shell. He has gained so much self-confidence; he can carry on conversations with others without feeling tongue-tied.”

Parent quote



HEATHER'S STORY: BUILDING INDEPENDENCE, ONE STEP AT A TIME

For nearly 20 years, Heather has been living with epilepsy. With the support of her family, she worked hard to manage the impact epilepsy had on her daily life. As she entered her late twenties, Heather began thinking more about her future, wanting to gain independence, build connections, and pursue goals that once felt out of reach.

Heather connected with Epilepsy Toronto and was introduced to the Securing Futures program. It became a turning point in her journey.

Through the program, Heather began building practical life skills that supported greater independence and confidence. She participated in cooking classes, where she learned meal planning, food preparation, and safe kitchen practices. Over time, these classes helped strengthen her confidence with daily living tasks and gave her a greater sense of capability.

Heather also developed skills related to household routines and personal organization, helping her feel more prepared for independent living.

As her confidence grew, Heather began taking meaningful steps toward greater independence in her everyday life.

One important milestone was learning to independently manage her medications and medical appointments.

Through the Support Squad and Social Squad groups, Heather also found opportunities to connect with others in the Securing Futures community. These sessions helped her build friendships, strengthen her social confidence, and feel less alone.

That confidence soon extended beyond her personal life. Heather became an advocate for epilepsy through community presentations, using her voice and experiences to help educate and support others.

Heather has achieved several personal and professional milestones. She recently published her first research article and secured a temporary part-time position as a facilitator with Humber Polytechnic's CICE program, an important step forward in both her career and personal independence.

Today, Heather continues to build on the skills, confidence and connections she has gained. She says, ***“What seemed impossible now feels possible, thanks to Securing Futures and Epilepsy Toronto.”***



Mackenzie & Heather
Photo captured on filming day for our Awareness campaign.

PUBLIC EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Public Education continues to advance epilepsy awareness through community education, advocacy and lived experience storytelling aimed at reducing stigma and promoting inclusion.

This year, outreach expanded to a range of audiences, including adult learners, community agencies, Indigenous organizations, healthcare professionals, Humber College staff, Toronto Police Service divisions, and teams within the Ministry of Health. Through these sessions, participants gained a greater understanding of epilepsy, seizure first aid, and the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments.

“The presentation was excellent and made an impact on our officers. Several different units received the valuable training: Major Crime Unit, Community Response Unit, Neighbourhood Community Officers, Criminal Investigation Bureau, Primary Response Unit, Supervisors, Youth Bureau.” **Police officer quote.**

The department also strengthened engagement with Indigenous communities by delivering epilepsy education sessions focused on functional seizures to staff across Ontario Friendship Centres and Indigenous wellness programs. These efforts reflect Epilepsy Toronto’s ongoing commitment to building culturally safer and more inclusive spaces for learning and dialogue.



BELLE’S STORY: TURNING EXPERIENCE INTO ADVOCACY

During the 2025–2026 year, Belle partnered with Epilepsy Toronto to share her lived experience with epilepsy through public education presentations for healthcare professionals, community organizations and government staff across Toronto.

Although Belle had been living with epilepsy for more than a decade, speaking publicly about her experiences initially felt intimidating. Over time, however, she began to see the impact her story had on others. Many participants shared that hearing directly from someone living with epilepsy helped challenge stereotypes and created a deeper understanding of the emotional and invisible realities of the condition.

Through these presentations, Belle also learned from others, gaining greater insight into the diverse experiences of people living with seizures and the importance of approaching epilepsy education with empathy and cultural awareness.

As her confidence grew, Belle went on to share her story with staff at Ontario’s Ministry of Health. What began as fear became a source of empowerment, allowing her to turn her personal experience into advocacy, education and meaningful community connection.

AWARENESS & SPECIAL EVENTS



PURPLE WALK

The Purple Walk continued to be Epilepsy Toronto's signature fundraising event and largest community gathering of the year. In 2025, the event raised a record-breaking **\$172,311**, surpassing its \$150,000 goal, with **403 registered participants** and more than **600 walkers** joining us in downtown Toronto.

BUSKERFEST:

BuskerFest returned for its 26th year, bringing together world-class street performers and thousands of attendees in support of Epilepsy Toronto. The festival once again featured Bark in the Park, the event's dedicated dog-friendly zone, helping create an engaging and inclusive experience for families and visitors of all ages.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR EPILEPSY:

During Epilepsy Awareness Month, Epilepsy Toronto launched a new awareness campaign focused on the message that **every seizure and every epilepsy journey is unique**, featuring the lived experiences of more than **20 clients**.

The campaign's compilation video reached more than **12,000 views** across social media platforms, helping expand awareness and amplify the voices of our members.



WINTER GLOW

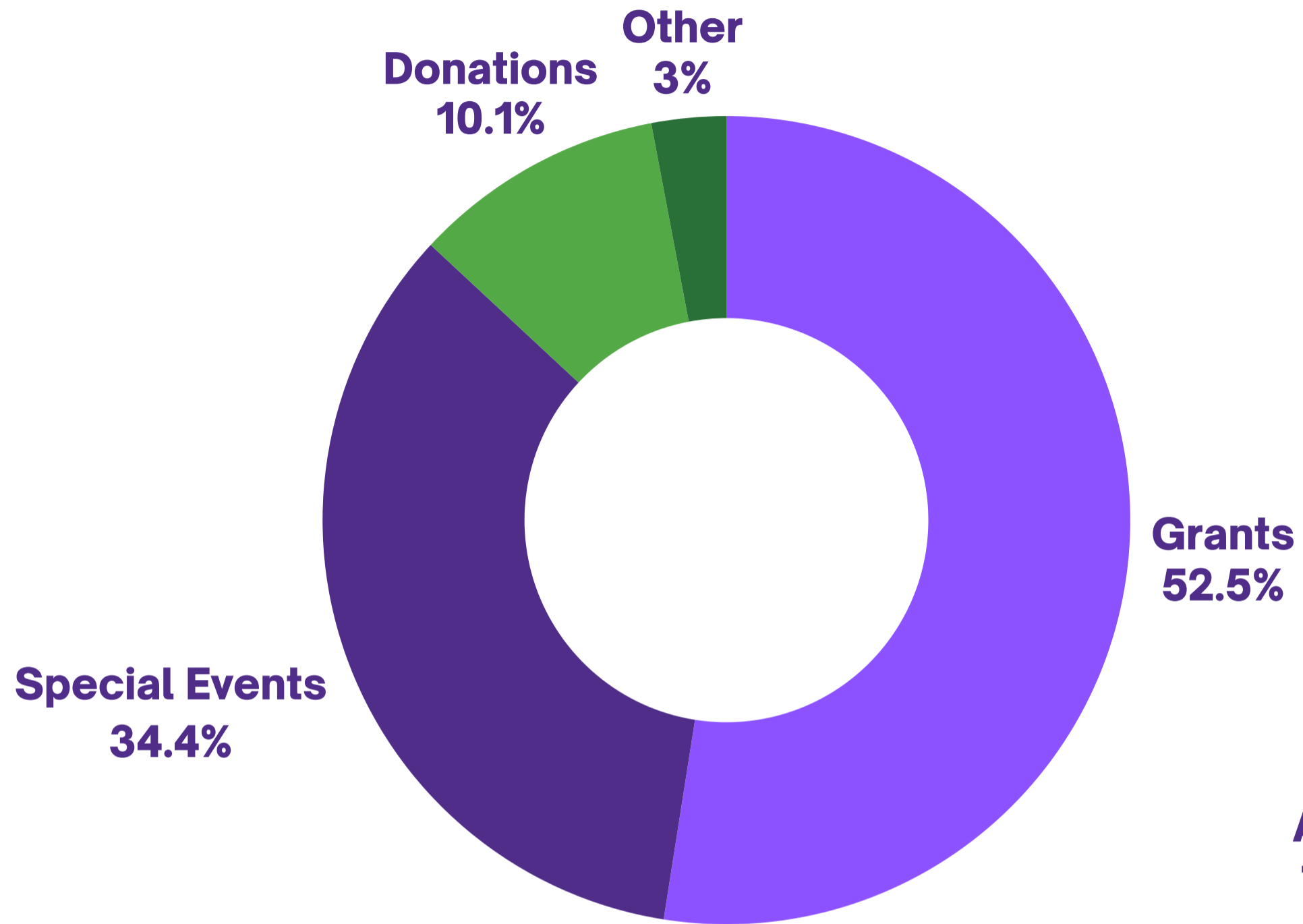
This year, Epilepsy Toronto partnered with Sankofa Square to reimagine its holiday event as **Winter Glow**.



The event also supported Epilepsy Toronto's social enterprise, Café for a Cause, while offering families the opportunity to take photos with Santa in support of the organization's programs and services.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

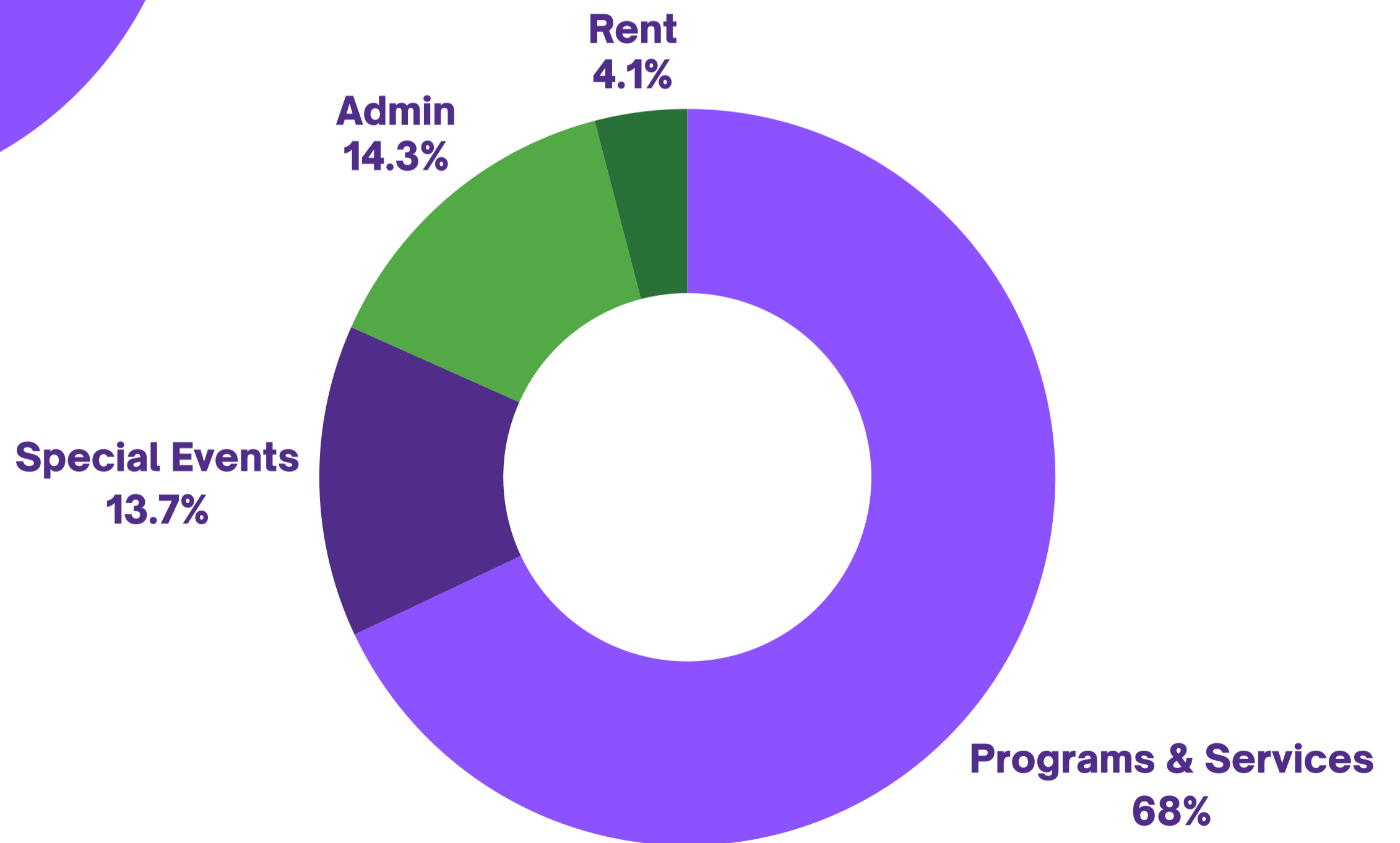


REVENUE

	Grants	1,156,646
	Special Events	758,935
	Donations	222,434
	Other	65,752

EXPENSES

	Programs & Services	1,560,423
	Special Events	314,581
	Admin	327,482
	Rent	93,023



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



COMUNITY SUPPORTERS

- ABC Life Literacy Canada
- AdBands
- Addus
- Armagh House
- Bell Media
- Canadian Epilepsy Alliance
- Community Living Toronto
- Corbrook
- Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), Toronto Region
- Downtown Yonge BIA
- Ell'Events
- Emma IS
- Epilepsy Ontario
- Humber College
- Jazz Pharmaceuticals
- Kindercare Pediatrics
- LivaNova
- March of Dimes
- Nieuport Aviation
- North Toronto Neurology
- Ontario Brain Institute
- Ontario Disability Employment Network
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- Paladin Pharma Inc
- Project ECHO
- Project Sunshine
- Sankofa Square
- SickKids Hospital
- Students for Epilepsy Awareness, U of T
- Sun Life
- Taymax Group
- TD Wealth
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Toronto District School Board
- Toronto Fire Services
- Toronto Police Service - 14 Division
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto Western Hospital
- University of Toronto
- Works 4 You Employment
- WMRCC of Durham



SPECIAL FRIENDS

- Adam Shapiro
- Adriana Gorejko
- Aicha Belghiti
- Alyssa Diamond
- Andrea Greaves
- Ann Blanchette
- Anthony Brum
- Catherine Wang
- Councillor Mary Margaret McMahon
- Daniel Shehori
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- Derek Husser
- Dinah Finkelstein
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- Dr. Elizabeth Kerr
- Dr. Ervin Johnson
- Dr. Evan Lewis
- Dr. Lauren Sham
- Dr. Shanna Lindsay
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- Heather Olivieri
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- Robert Noronha
- Robin Prousky
- Rohit Sharma
- Sara Woodhouse
- Securing Futures Content Specialists
- Steve Lynette
- Steven Salguero
- Taufik Valiante
- Warren Toz



GRANTS & FOUNDATIONS

- Canada Summer Jobs
- City of Toronto Cultural Festival Funding Program
- City of Toronto, Community Service Partnerships
- Courtney Fund
- Government of Canada - Youth Employment and Skills Strategy
- Government of Ontario, Enabling Change
- Harry E Foster Foundation
- Mackenzie Charitable Foundation
- Mauro Family Fund
- Ontario Brain Institute
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Toronto Dominion Bank
- Sherry and Sean Bourne Family Foundation
- United Way
- WCG International Consultants Ltd



C&Y Services Client
Photo captured at
Family Learning Day.

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- **Katie Armstrong**
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- **Geoff Bobb**
Executive Director
- **Jamie Everitt**
Functional Seizure Program Coordinator
- **Lucia Gustave**
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- **Carter Hammett**
Employment Services Manager
- **Danielle Hidber**
Facilitator of Lifeskills
- **Joanna Kapusta**
Office Manager
- **Juhaina Moustapha**
Youth Employment Project Coordinator
- **Mackenzie Muldoon**
Director of Communications
- **Nicole Nelson**
Director of Development - Grants & Foundations
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Adult Services Counsellor
- **Jesse Preston**
Employment Specialist
- **Kirk Raybould**
Job Developer, Employment Services
- **Anchugan Sivagnanam**
SeizeABILITY! Program Manager & Social Worker, Adult Services
- **Rosalee (Rosie) Smith**
Director of Adult Services
- **John Spataro**
Recreation Manager
- **Leah Sultan-Khan**
Director of Community Engagement, Public Education & Life Skills Training
- **Bonnie Taylor**
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TEACHING AWARENESS THROUGH PUPPETRY(TAP)

- Kirsten Sixt

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