



Winter 2025

# Newsletter

Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region



## What has MSSWR been up to?

MSSWR has recently welcomed new members to the team, including counsellors, program staff, and board members. We hosted events, delivered programs, and provided aid to our community. Keep reading to learn more!

- Distributed **100 food hampers** to children in need in collaboration with Islamic Relief Canada
- Served **250 hot meals** to unhoused individuals in collaboration with Islamic Relief Canada and Ray of Hope
- Hosted an Iftar for **150+ guests** in honour of International Women's Day
- And much more!



## Our Leadership

MSSWR is deeply proud of the positive change we have made in the community. We owe much of this success to the unwavering dedication and leadership of our Executive Director, Duaa Al-Aghar. Under her stewardship, MSSWR has introduced a range of impactful programs, built strong partnerships, and fostered collaborations that focus on enhancing the quality of life for those we serve.

[Read More](#) →



# What's New?



## New Staff Members

### Yasmin Ali - Program and Data Administrator

Yasmin, who has been with MSSWR since 2023, has recently come into her new role as the Program and Data Administrator. Yasmin holds a bachelor's degree in Legal Studies and Sociology from the University of Waterloo and is pursuing a career in law. As a Program and Data Administrator at Muslim Social Services, she combines her passion for community involvement and service with her academic background to support impactful programs and initiatives. Yasmin is dedicated to understanding the intersections of legal systems and societal structures, which informs her approach to program management and data analysis. She strives to ensure that MSSWR's programs are inclusive, accessible, and aligned with the needs of the community, using data-driven insights to promote social justice and create meaningful change. Her work is fuelled by a commitment to empowering others and making a lasting, positive impact.



### Mohammed Hasan - Counsellor

Mohammed has just completed a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University and he has one year of experience in providing therapy services to people across all age groups and ethnicities. Mohammed's approach is firmly rooted in a strengths-based, anti-oppressive and client-centred perspective, which enables him to empower others to overcome challenges by drawing on their inherent abilities and resilience.



Mohammed specializes in trauma and abuse but is also equipped to work with clients with depression, anxiety, anger management issues, grief and loss, fear/phobias, mood swings, eating disorders, body image issues, major life transitions, and relationship difficulties.

Fluent in: English, Urdu, and Hindi. He can also understand basic Punjabi.



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# What's New?



## New Board Member

### Asima Roohi

Asima Roohi is a Barrister, Solicitor, and Notary Public licensed by the Law Society of Ontario. She is the founder of Asima Roohi Professional Corporation, which provides legal services in areas such as immigration, wills and estate administration, landlord-tenant disputes, and small claims.



With a strong background in advocacy and mediation, Asima is dedicated to promoting access to justice and supporting marginalized communities. She is fluent in English, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and Pashto, enabling her to serve a diverse range of clients.

Outside of her legal practice, she is a devoted mother and actively engaged in her community.

## New Counselling Fees

Our sliding scale for counselling fees has recently been updated. Check below for the latest rates:

- \$20-\$30 per session – if client is in financial need.
- \$85 per session – if the client doesn't have insurance, but can afford the rate.
- \$100 per session – if the client has insurance.
- Other rates – to accommodate every client. Please reach out to us.

If you have any questions about counselling or fees, reach out to us at [counsellor@msswr.org](mailto:counsellor@msswr.org).



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# New Partnerships



## KIND MINDS FAMILY WELLNESS

Culture + Research + Community Engagement

We are partnering with Kind Minds Family Wellness, a brilliant organization serving Black families in our community. MSSWR looks forward to our future collaborations!

## CLEAR MIND THERAPY

Clear Mind Therapy and MSSWR have teamed up to deliver mental health workshops, expand our services, and create new opportunities for our community members.

## New Domain Name

We have officially changed our email and website domains to match our new name, Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region!

**Our new email domain is @msswr.org.**

Contact our general inbox at [info@msswr.org](mailto:info@msswr.org)

**Our new website address is [www.msswr.org](http://www.msswr.org).**



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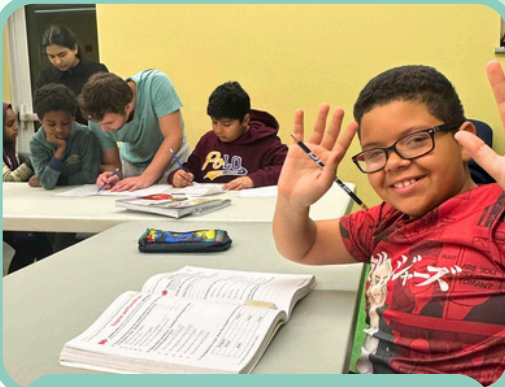
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# Programs: Winter 2025



**Tutoring Program**

In collaboration with Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health, this program offered homework help in math and English to students in grades 3-12. Students connected with tutors and enjoyed snacks as they worked through schoolwork. This program ran weekly on Mondays from 6:00-8:00 PM at The Family Centre.



**Girls in Sports**

This program, in collaboration with Focus on Ethnic Women (FEW), was designed for immigrant girls aged 12-16, and offered an incredible opportunity to develop skills, build confidence, and embrace the spirit of Canadian sports. Participants played volleyball, basketball, badminton, and more! This program ran on Thursdays from 6:00-8:00 PM at Kingsdale Community Centre.



**Healing Through Art**

Healing through Art for Kids and Parents offered space for the whole family to participate in mindful art projects and group healing. Youth practiced expressing their emotions through painting and crafts, while parents built community in a safe, creative atmosphere. This program ran on Tuesdays at 5:30-7:30 PM at Forest Heights Community Centre.

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# Programs: Winter 2025



Rise and Play was a fun and energizing program designed for senior women. It was a great opportunity for women to stay active, socialize, and have fun in a supportive and uplifting environment. This program ran on Wednesdays from 7:00–9:00 PM at Kingsdale Community Centre.



**Rise and Play**

Our Men’s Empowerment program offered space for senior men to come together and care for both their mental and physical health. Participants built community in supportive discussion, followed by group sports! This program ran on Mondays from 7:00–9:00 PM at Kingsdale Community Centre.



**Men's Empowerment**

In collaboration with Forest Hill United Church, the Building Bridges program brought together Muslim and Christian women to create lasting friendships. Participants bonded over cooking shared meals, knitting, and other activities! This program ran on Thursdays from 12:00–1:30 PM at Forest Hill United Church.



**Building Bridges**

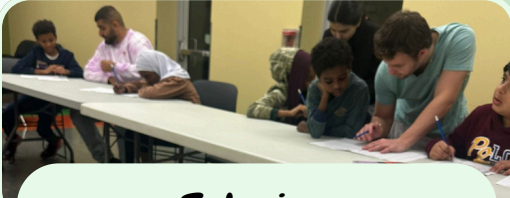
Our longstanding Neighbours Helping Neighbours program ran for another session this term, this time in collaboration with FEW! Newcomer and refugee women came together to share advice and stories, helping each other find community. This program ran on Fridays from 6:00–8:00 PM at Camino.



**Neighbours Helping Neighbours**

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# Upcoming Programs: Spring 2025



## Tutoring

MSSWR is excited to collaborate with Camino to offer free tutoring classes in English and Math for students in grades 3-12. The Tutoring Program will run **Monday evenings at 6:00 PM**, starting April 7th.



## Healing through Art for Kids & Parents

Making art is a fun and creative way to tell stories about our feelings and experiences. This program is open to both kids (age 4-12) and parents. Healing through Art will run **Tuesdays at 5:30 PM**, starting April 8th.




## Employment Program

In partnership with the Workplace Planning Board, we're excited to offer a dynamic Employment Program tailored for youth aged 15-30. This program will run on **Wednesdays at 6:00 PM**, starting April 9th.



## Girls in Sports

In collaboration with Focus for Ethnic Women (FEW), this program is dedicated to empowering young women through physical activity, teamwork, and leadership. It will run **Thursdays at 6:30 PM**, starting April 10th.

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# Upcoming Programs: Spring 2025



In collaboration with Forest Hill United Church, this program highlights the power of unity and collaboration within our diverse community. Building Bridges will run **Thursdays at 12:00 PM**, starting April 10th.



**Building Bridges**

This program empowers refugee, newcomer, and marginalized women in Waterloo Region by fostering social integration and community support. It will run on **Fridays at 6:00 PM**, starting April 11th.



**Neighbours Helping Neighbours**

In partnership with Crow Shield Lodge and Wisahkotewinowak, we're empowering seniors to nurture both the land and each other. This program runs on **Fridays at 11:30 AM**, starting May 2nd.



**Mindful Gardening**

... and more!

For full details and to register, visit  
[www.msswr.org/ourprograms](http://www.msswr.org/ourprograms)



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# MSSWR in the Community

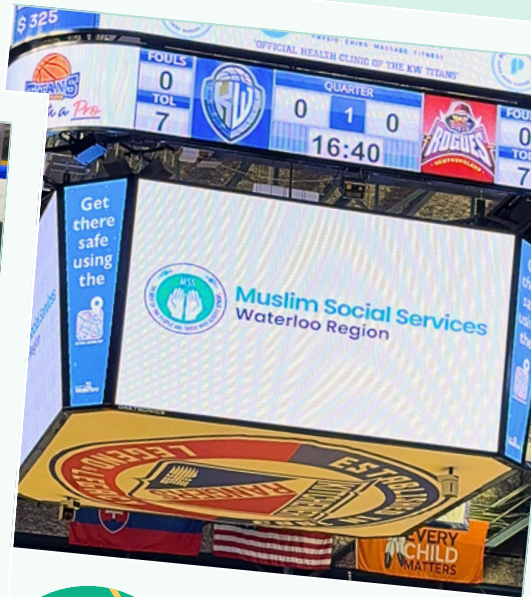


Our Executive Director, Duaa Al-Aghar, was featured on United Voices through United Way WRC! Click **here** to listen!



February 3, 2025

We attended the KW Titans Mental Health Night game in collaboration with United Way WRC! Go Titans Go!



February 22, 2025



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# MSSWR in the Community



We attended the Making Community Connections event hosted by St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centres! Thanks to all the students and community members who stopped by to learn about our work.



**February 4 & 5, 2025**

We made new connections at the 17th annual Global Skills Networking Event hosted by Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region! It was great to meet such a diverse group of talented professionals.



**March 5, 2025**



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# Giving Back: Community Care Dinner

On February 3, 2025, we teamed up with Islamic Relief and Ray of Hope to cook meals for unhoused and low-income community members. Volunteers worked hard to cook and serve **250 meals** for individuals in need. The

menu included delicious BBQ chicken, fresh salad, aromatic rice, and cookies for dessert. Thanks to Islamic Relief, Ray of Hope, and MSSWR volunteers for bringing their skills into the kitchen for our community!

**Click here to read about this event in The Waterloo Region Record!**



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# Giving Back: Food Hampers

On February 21, 2025, we assembled food hampers for families in need in collaboration with Islamic Relief Canada. Over the course of five hours, with over 20 volunteers, MSSWR and IRC volunteers packed **100 boxes full of food!** The hampers were then distributed to families over the following week. A big thank you to everyone who came out to help with this important initiative!



**Food Hamper Checklist:**

- Flour
- Sugar & syrup
- Dates
- Oats
- Coffee
- Halal chicken stock
- Rice
- Canned tomatoes
- Lentils
- Tomato paste
- Oil
- Spices




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# MSSWR in the News



**NEW**



## Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region serves meals, plans Ramadan aid for those in need

The initiative took place at Ray of Hope's King Street location where volunteers worked in the kitchen from 3 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., preparing and serving meals.

Metroland Media / Feb 5

Click here to read about our Community Care Dinner in The Waterloo Region Record!



Click here to read about our gardening project in the WRCF News!

**NEWS**

Thank you to The Record and Waterloo Region Community Foundation for featuring MSSWR!



**NEW**



## HARVESTING CONNECTIONS: Gardening projects coincide with region's growth spurt

Social infrastructure is on the table as Waterloo Region prepares to grow to more than one million people. Waterloo Region Community Foundation(WRCF) defines social infrastructure as "the system of...

Waterloo Region Community Foundation / Feb 25



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# Community Events

On March 13th, we hosted an Iftar in honour of International Women’s Day, sponsored by Oma Fresh Foods. Over **150 attendees** registered for this meaningful event. Guests were treated to a thoughtful address by our executive director, Duaa Al-Aghar, and were visited by Imam Kabbar of Canadian Islamic House. A big thank you to Oma for sponsoring the iftar meals, and making this event possible!



A big thank you to our dedicated volunteers for helping to make this event a success!



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# Recognitions



MSSWR has been nominated for **The Community Impact United Way Waterloo Region Communities Spirit Award**, for the second year in a row! Thank you to United Way WRC for this nomination!

Our Executive Director, Duaa Al-Aghar, was presented with the **King Charles III Coronation Medal** for her exceptional dedication and contributions to our community. Thank you to MPP Jess Dixon for presenting Duaa with this honour!



**MSSWR**  
NOMINATED  
2ND YEAR IN A ROW  
**UNITED WAY**  
WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITIES'  
**SPIRIT AWARDS**  
WE ARE DEEPLY HONORED  
United Way  
Waterloo Region  
Communities

**March 12, 2025**



# Upcoming Events



Keep an eye out for these workshops and events coming soon! For more details, be sure to follow our social media by clicking the icons below.



**Arabic Calligraphy Workshops**  
sponsored by Waterloo Region Heritage Foundation



**Art Shine Workshops**  
in collaboration with Islamic Social Service Association and Institute for Muslim Mental Health



**Tour of Toyota Plant**  
More information coming soon!

**Job Fair**  
More information coming soon!

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# Upcoming Events



Mark your calendars! Our **Annual General Meeting** is scheduled for **June 3rd at 6:00 PM** at Camino, located at 480 Charles St E., Kitchener. We hope to see you there!



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# Make a Difference!

## Click To Donate Today.

3 easy ways to give financially:




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[canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org)

**e-transfer at:**  
[msskwdonations@gmail.com](mailto:msskwdonations@gmail.com)

**Call us at:**  
519-772-4399 ext. 2707

### Volunteer



Please visit

[msswr.org](http://msswr.org)

to learn about the latest opportunities to help

## INCREASE YOUR IMPACT WITH MONTHLY GIVING!

Consider becoming a MONTHLY DONOR! Monthly giving provides ongoing program support to newcomers and marginalized individuals within the region. To become a donor, please give us a call at 519-772-4399 ext. 2707

**DONATE NOW**

