

CELEBRATING

65

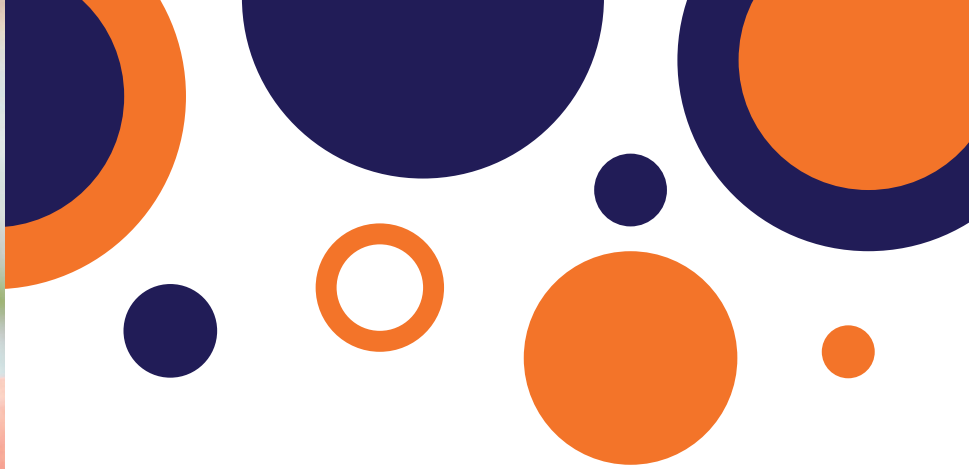
YEARS OF  
POSSIBILITY



George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES

# Annual Report 2025 - 2026



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A look at the stories, milestones, and impact that shaped our year - together.





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# Land Acknowledgement

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George Jeffrey Children's Centre acknowledges that we gather, live, and work on the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation, a signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. We honour the history, culture, and ongoing contributions of Fort William First Nation, the Métis, and all Indigenous Peoples to this community and the surrounding area.

We also respectfully recognize that our work extends across the traditional lands of other First Nations within the Robinson-Superior Treaty territory, as well as Treaty 9 and Treaty 3 lands.

We honour the enduring relationship between Indigenous Peoples and these lands, which have been cared for and cherished for generations. We are committed to the ongoing process of reconciliation through continuous learning, meaningful engagement, and actions that foster respect and understanding.



# A Message from the CEO

**GEORGE JEFFREY**  
**CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

“

The work would not be possible without the staff. It is a privilege to work with a group of people so devoted to making a difference in others' lives.

”



After another busy year, it was rewarding to pause and reflect on the progress we have achieved together over the last year.

One of the most impactful changes was the successful relocation of our north office from its location on Cumberland Street to its new home on Red River Road, marking an exciting new chapter and creating new opportunities for our team and those we serve. Each department across the organization implemented new initiatives, programs, and operational changes that aligned with our current strategic directions while addressing department-specific priorities.

The work would not be possible without our staff. It is a privilege to work with a group of people so devoted to making a difference in others' lives. Throughout the year, I've had the opportunity to meet and talk with many clients and families who express gratitude for our organization and the help they receive from our team. I am grateful for the trust our clients continue to place in us.

I would like to thank all of our staff, those involved at the front-line clinical level, administrative and support staff. All of the work is fundamental to the success of our organization even when it is not always visible. Earlier in the year, employees were recognized for their years of service in appreciation of their dedication and commitment to the organization. We had awards for 35, 25, 10 and 5 years of service.

Thank you to the leadership team for your on-going support. Through change, uncertainty and challenge you continued to lead with professionalism and maintain a deep commitment to staff and clients. You continued to support one another and focus on what matters most, helping us move forward together.

Thank you to the board of directors for generously giving your time, sharing your expertise and perspective, and contributing so thoughtfully to the work. As a result, we have continued to grow and adapt.

To our partners, funders and supporters, locally, regionally and provincially, whom we thank for their trust, partnership and feedback. Especially over this past year as we embarked on a new strategic planning cycle. This includes George Jeffrey Children's Foundation for its tireless efforts in raising funds in support of our mission and programs. We end this reporting period in the midst of strategic planning. Some key themes are emerging from the process, with next steps focused on refining and finalizing priorities and developing implementation plans.

Finalizing and releasing the strategic plan later this year will be another important milestone for the organization. We look forward to turning the insights gathered through consultation into clear priorities and actionable direction. It will provide us with a shared framework to guide decision-making, strengthen accountability, and support consistent progress moving forward.

Finally, it was really special to launch our 65th anniversary year in January with our staff and honoured guests. Throughout 2026 we will continue to proudly celebrate 65 years of possibility alongside our staff, partners, families and community.

I am excited to see what lies ahead and continue our work together.

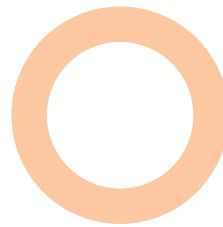
**Tina Bennett**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S CENTRE**



# A Year of Progress and Possibility

Reflecting on the past year with pride and gratitude as we celebrate our 65th Anniversary and look ahead to the future.



**Dear Friends, Partners, and Members of the GJCC Community,**

As another year comes to a close, I am reminded of how quickly time passes. Yet, when I reflect on all that has been accomplished, I am filled with pride to be part of such an exceptional organization. The hard work, thoughtfulness, and attention to detail demonstrated by our staff and leadership are evident throughout the community and deeply appreciated by the children, individuals, and families we serve at George Jeffrey Children's Centre.

Looking back on the past year, the Centre has undertaken significant work to prepare for the future and strengthen the foundation that will guide us in the years ahead. One of our most important accomplishments was the development of a new Strategic Plan. While not an easy undertaking, this work will help shape the future direction of the Centre and ensure we continue to meet the evolving needs of our community, families, and, most importantly, the children in our care.

This plan is particularly meaningful to me and the Board because it was not created through a single perspective. Rather, it reflects the voices and experiences of current and former clients and families, community partners, Board members, and the dedicated staff who deliver services and understand the system best. The result is a thoughtful and inclusive plan grounded in compassion, collaboration, and a shared commitment to those we serve. I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed their

time, insights, and expertise to this important work. We look forward to the public release of the plan in the fall of 2026.

As we consider the future and ask ourselves where we go from here, it is equally important to reflect upon and honour our past. On January 28, George Jeffrey Children's Centre proudly launched its 65th Anniversary celebrations. This milestone provided an opportunity to recognize and thank the many individuals whose vision, dedication, and leadership helped build the organization we are today. It was also a time to celebrate the countless children and families whose lives have been touched by the Centre over the past 65 years. It was truly an honour to be part of such a meaningful celebration.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my fellow Board members for the trust and confidence you placed in me a year ago when I assumed the role of Board Chair. It has been a privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated group of individuals.

I would also like to recognize and thank our departing Board members for their years of service and leadership: Matthew Lindstrom for seven years, Dr. Christopher Mushquash for six years, Jon Racco for seven years, and Dr. Michael Scarcello for six years. On behalf of the Board of Directors of George Jeffrey Children's Centre, thank you for your commitment, dedication, and invaluable contributions to the organization. Your service has made a lasting impact, and it is deeply appreciated.

## **Mark Beazley**

**CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

“

**The hard work,  
thoughtfulness,  
and attention  
to detail  
demonstrated  
by our staff  
and leadership  
are deeply  
appreciated by  
the children,  
individuals,  
and families we  
serve.**

”



# Our Mission

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Enriching lives by delivering specialized rehabilitative and interprofessional services in **client-centred** environments.

# Our Vision

---

Empowered and inspired children, youth, and families.



George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES



# Our Values

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Our values govern our actions and are reflected in our work with children, youth and families, as well as our community partners and each other.



## **DIGNITY + RESPECT**

We provide high quality and compassionate services that honour the unique experiences of every individual.



## **DIVERSITY + INCLUSIVENESS**

We create environments that are shaped by openness, respect, and a willingness to learn and adapt.



## **RECONCILIATION**

We work to build understanding and relationships with Indigenous people for the improved health and well-being of all children, youth, and families.

We serve the diverse needs of all people and communities in Northwestern Ontario, ensuring equitable opportunities to access services across our large geographical catchment area.



## **LEADERSHIP**

We deliver innovative and evidence-informed services by providing an environment that fosters professional development and leadership within our community and the child development and rehabilitation sector.



## **COMMUNITY**

We connect to our clients and our communities by building stronger relationships, meaningful partnerships and exploring opportunities for collaboration.



# Staff Recognition

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THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR  
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.



Appreciation goes out to all of our staff and volunteers for their unwavering dedication and exceptional service. Your commitment to excellence, tireless efforts, and willingness to go above and beyond have been instrumental in our success. We thank every member of our staff for their unique talents, efforts and passion to empower and inspire children, youth and families.

## HAPPY RETIREMENT!

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At the end of 2025 we bid farewell to **Brenda Ruppenstein**, one of our valued Speech-Language Pathologists.

Brenda's career with GJCC came full circle. After making meaningful contributions early on, she returned years later to continue supporting children in developing speech, language, and communication skills. Throughout her career, Brenda has made a meaningful and lasting impact on the children and their families through her work.

**We thank Brenda for her dedication and wish her all of the best for a happy, healthy retirement.**



# Milestones + Years of Service

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The following staff reached service milestones in 2025. Thank you for your years of service and dedication, your contributions are deeply valued and have made a profound impact on our organization's journey. Congratulations!

| STAFF MEMBER                                                                                                             | YEARS OF SERVICE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|  <b>Marlene Trystruha</b> , HIS MANAGER | <b>35 Years</b>  |
|  <b>Nicole Deschamps</b> , SLP          | <b>25 Years</b>  |
|  <b>Sara Chopra</b> , OT                | <b>10 Years</b>  |
|  <b>Lorrie Dykstra</b> , SERVICE NAV.  | <b>10 Years</b>  |
|  <b>Kelly Hansen</b> , SCHEDULER      | <b>10 Years</b>  |
|  <b>Lisa Johnson</b> , BSS            | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Kailee Butchereit</b> , OT        | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Stefanie Chisholm</b> , OT        | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Kaitlin Gagne</b> , CDA           | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Jody Gallo</b> , RECEPTION        | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Melanie Burke</b> , SLP           | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Julia Murphy</b> , CDA            | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Mikko Maunula</b> , PT            | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Sarah Caruso</b> , SLP            | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Linsey Poole</b> , SLP            | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Nicole Johnson</b> , BSS          | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Brenda Ruppenstein</b> , SLP      | <b>5 Years</b>   |
|  <b>Cindy Levanto</b> , FOUNDATION    | <b>5 Years</b>   |



# Management Team

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**Tina Bennett**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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**Michelle Blackburn**

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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**Stacy Greenwood**

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

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**Michael Muratore**

FINANCE MANAGER

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**Marlene Trystruha**

HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICES MANAGER

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**Lindsay McDonald**

MANAGER OF CLIENT SERVICES

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**Amy Brissette**

MANAGER OF CLIENT SERVICES

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**Michelle Kellar**

MANAGER OF BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICES

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**Ashley Woodcock**

CHILD CARE SUPERVISOR

# Board of Directors 2025 - 2026

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The volunteer Board of Directors for George Jeffrey Children's Centre is comprised of individuals with unique strengths and experiences from our community. We strive to have representation from family members as well as business, healthcare, and other professionals.

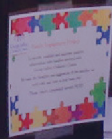
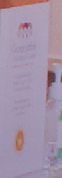
## THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

-  **Mark Beazley**, PRESIDENT
-  **Allen Lee**, VICE-PRESIDENT
-  **Jon Racco**, TREASURER
-  **Andrew Campbell**, SECRETARY
-  **Gillian Baboolal**, DIRECTOR
-  **Nancy Gladun**, DIRECTOR
-  **Matthew Lindstrom**, DIRECTOR
-  **Dr. Michael Scarcello**, DIRECTOR
-  **Robert Schroeder**, DIRECTOR
-  **Dr. Christopher Mushquash**, DIRECTOR
-  **Maggie Fredrickson**, DIRECTOR
-  **Shirley Salt**, DIRECTOR
-  **Kathy Peterson**, HONOURARY MEMBER



moment in childhood  
and lets the future in.

GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION



# Our Services

We offer a wide range of specialized services that support children, youth, and families at every stage of their journey. Our team works together in **client-centred** environments to empower growth, independence, and participation.

## EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOL YEARS

- ✓ **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**
- ✓ **PHYSIOTHERAPY & REGISTERED KINESIOLOGY**
- ✓ **SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY**
- ✓ **SOCIAL WORK**
- ✓ **AUGMENTATIVE & ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION**
- ✓ **BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICES**
- ✓ **INFANT & CHILD DEVELOPMENT (GREENSTONE)**
- ✓ **SEATING AND MOBILITY**
- ✓ **SMARTSTART HUB**
- ✓ **RECREATION AND LEISURE**
- ✓ **FEEDING AND SWALLOWING**



## Little George's Child Care Centre

Our services also include Little George's Child Care Centre, located within Sherbrooke Public School.

Little George's offers licensed full and part-time child care for children aged 18 months to five years of age.



# Little George's Child Care Centre: Growing Stronger Together

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This year at Little George's Child Care Centre has been a year of settling in and growing in our capacity as a team of dedicated educators.

We continue to provide excellent care to our children and families while strengthening our practices, building staff confidence, and fostering a positive and collaborative workplace culture.



“

**A place where children are valued and are supported to learn, grow, and thrive.**

”



## STAFF ENGAGEMENT + PROFESSIONAL GROWTH



Staff engagement and professional growth have been key highlights this year. Our team has focused on enhancing collaboration and planning practices to create intentional and meaningful learning experiences for children. Children's thoughts, ideas, and interests are reflected in their environments, helping to foster a strong sense of belonging at Little George's. This collaborative approach has strengthened our ability to provide high-quality care and respond effectively to the evolving needs of children and families.

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## CELEBRATING GROWTH + COMMUNITY



We have celebrated our children as they navigate important developmental milestones and have continued to provide a welcoming and nurturing environment where they feel safe, valued, and supported. This year, we were proud to celebrate George Jeffrey Children's Centre's 65th anniversary alongside our families and community. We also look forward to celebrating the graduation of 18 preschoolers this August as they prepare for their next educational journey.

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## PARTNERSHIPS + STUDENT SUPPORT



We continue to work in partnership with Confederation College and other post-secondary institutions offering Early Childhood Education programs to support student placements. This year, our staff welcomed four students into our programs, providing mentorship opportunities and contributing to the growth of the profession within our community.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

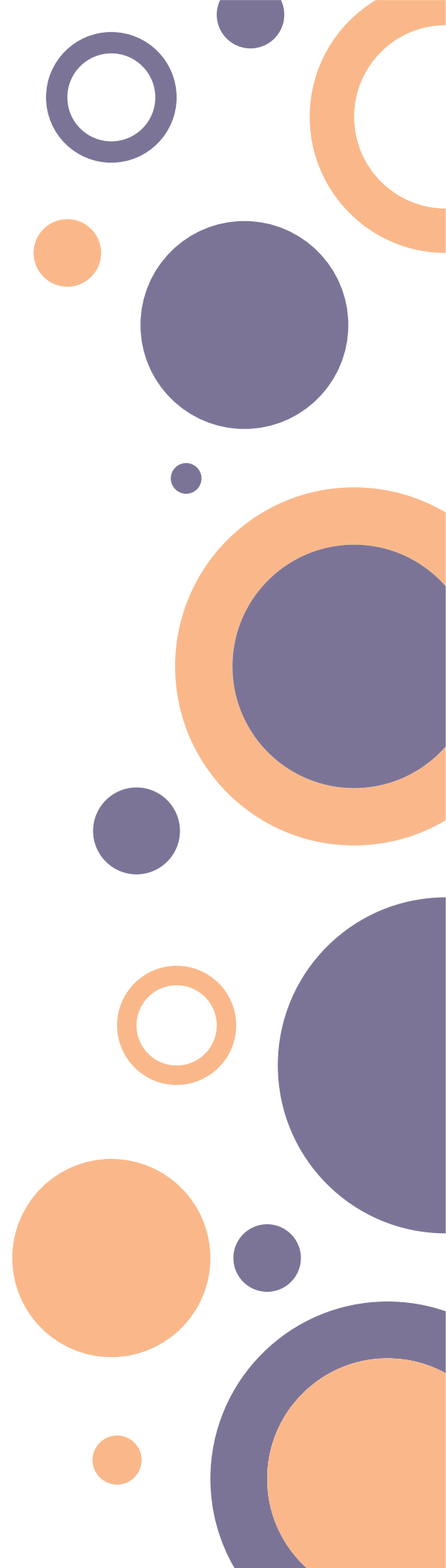


As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the resilience, dedication, and professionalism demonstrated by our team. Their commitment to children, families, and one another continues to make Little George's Child Care Centre a place where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

# Clinical Highlights

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From children served to client visits across community, school, and rural programs, these statistics illustrate the breadth of our impact this year.









# Clinical Statistics

A snapshot of the people, programs, and services that reflect the Centre's reach and impact across Northwestern Ontario over the past year.



**3,428**

**Unique Individuals Served**  
(Children's Treatment Centre)

“

Behind every number is a child, a family, or an individual receiving the support they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

”



## CLIENTS SERVED

**3,428** **Number of Unique Individuals Served** (Children's Treatment Centre)

**2,237** **Community-Based Rehabilitation Services (CRS) \***  
(Thunder Bay - 1940 / Rural Communities - 297)

**1,248** **School-Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRs) \***  
(Thunder Bay - 1098 / Rural Communities - 150)

**173** **Additional Rural Individuals Served \***

\* Note: # of clients is NOT unique. Clients may be receiving services across multiple programs

## CLIENT VISITS OVER THE PAST YEAR

**18,276**

Face to Face

**8,241**

Telephone

**1,560**

Virtual



# Programs + Services Highlights

Throughout the year our programs and services continued to evolve - expanding access, building partnerships, and creating meaningful opportunities for children and families across our community.

## NEW NORTH LOCATION

In November 2025 we successfully relocated our north office from its location on Cumberland Street to a new location on Red River Road. The move has enabled us to improve the experience of clients, employees, and other partners. Staff have felt an increased sense of security, we have reduced safety-related concerns, and it is a more welcoming environment overall.



## HALLOWEEN 2025

A new family engagement initiative was added to the Halloween season. A sensory-friendly trick or treating experience was set up October 24, 2025. Children came dressed in their costumes and practiced their trick or treating skills (communication, turn-taking, carrying a loot bag) throughout the main hallway. They also had a chance to vote on their favourite pumpkins that were on display in the reception area.



## BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICES (BSS)

New curriculums were implemented for the Entry to School (ETS) program; including Preschool Life Skills (PLS), Balance, and the Universal Protocol to support the diverse needs of learners in the program. Balance and PLS focus on teaching children communication, instructional following, tolerance, and friendship skills.

### Transportation Initiative

Thanks to funding from George Jeffrey Children's Foundation (GJCF), additional taxi services helped families access the ETS program.

### March Break Camps

The BSS team successfully piloted March Break camp style programs to support families with varied therapy options.

### CCR Partnerships

We continued our partnership with Child and Community Resources (CCR) by offering Foundational Family Services workshops including toileting, feeding, and behaviour reduction services.

### Caregiver-Mediated Early Years (CMEY)

We provided service to 10 families through CMEY services - part of the Ontario Autism Program - supporting children aged 12-48 months.



## CLINICAL HIGHLIGHTS

### RECREATION + LEISURE

Working collaboratively with clinical disciplines and community partners, the program achieved several exciting milestones this year.



#### Thunderwolves Sledge Hockey

Clients showcased sledge hockey during an intermission at a Thunderwolves game.



#### Border Cats Experience

In the summer of 2025, clients participated in the national anthem on the field with the Border Cats.



#### Bike Clinic

Another successful bike clinic was held in May 2025.



#### 10 Mile Road Race

The local 10 Mile Road Race celebrated its 90th anniversary with a para-adaptive category. Six adaptive athletes, including several GJCC clients, competed.



## STUDENT PLACEMENTS

GJCC hosted eleven (11) students during the 2025-26 fiscal year in SLP, OT, Social Service Work, Kinesiology, and Early Childhood Education

Facilitating placements provides students with hands-on experience and the skills they need for future practice, while inspiring careers in paediatric care and supporting future workforce development.



## SMARTSTART HUB + SERVICE NAVIGATION

The SmartStart Hub expanded its reach through partnerships with TBDSSAB Resource Centres on Windsor Street, Trillium Place, Limbrick, and the District of Thunder Bay - running Play Pals (in-city and district) and Care & Share programs to help families connect with community supports.

The team completed 169 intake assessments through the SmartStart Hub this year.

We were also invited to present at the 'Little Spirits, Big Feelings' panel and at the NITOTEM Early Years Gathering, sharing our knowledge and strengthening community partnerships.

# 169

**Intake assessments  
completed through the  
SmartStart Hub this year.**











“

Our child found  
confidence through  
every milestone.

– Parent

”





# Empowered Kids Ontario (EKO) Membership

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Stronger together. GJCC remains actively involved in all levels of Empowered Kids Ontario (EKO), our provincial membership association.



Through our EKO membership, GJCC representatives participate with committees, working groups and other knowledge networks. Their involvement allows them to contribute expertise, share best practices, collaborate on strategic initiatives and provide support to the development of resources, policies and sector-wide improvements.

## **DATA INTEGRATION AND DASHBOARD PROGRAM (DIDP)**



*In partnership with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)*

Focus this year has been on a sector-wide data initiative, the Data Integration and Dashboard Program (DIDP). Goals for the initiative include enhanced data collection, management, and analytics, reduced manual data entry, support provincial monitoring, improved data breadth and quality for better program oversight and decision making both locally and provincially.

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## **WORKFORCE SURVEY AND SUPPLY SCAN**



Another key initiative in 2025 was the Workforce Survey and Supply Scan. The findings provided valuable insight into workforce and staffing pressures across the sector, the education and training landscape, as well as the broader workforce.

“

**Through collaboration and shared expertise, we are building a stronger, more connected sector that creates better outcomes for children and families.**

”



# A Message from the CEO

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“

Together, we are helping children reach their greatest potential and building on a remarkable 65-year legacy of care for generations to come.

”





# \$470,000

**RAISED BY DONORS, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS,  
COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AND GRANT FUNDERS.**

As George Jeffrey Children's Centre begins to celebrate 65 years of serving children, youth, and families across Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario, I am proud of the strong partnership between the Centre and George Jeffrey Children's Foundation and the vital role our Foundation plays in supporting its mission.

This past year, the Foundation raised more than \$470,000 thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors, sponsors, volunteers, community partners, and grant funders. These funds help enhance programs, services, equipment, and family supports that benefit more than 3,000 children and youth served by the Centre each year.

Donor support continues to make a meaningful difference beyond clinical care. Families once again enjoyed a fully accessible week together through the Wilderness Family Camp Experience at Wilderness Discovery Centre, creating cherished memories in a welcoming, barrier-free environment. Philanthropy also made it possible to pilot the new Client Services Assistant role,

strengthening connections with families and ensuring their voices continue to help shape programs and services across the Centre.

These are just two examples of the many ways our community's generosity enriches the lives of children and families while supporting the Centre's commitment to exceptional, family-centred care.

On behalf of George Jeffrey Children's Foundation, thank you to every donor, volunteer, corporate partner, grant funder, and member of our Foundation Board of Directors for believing in our mission. Together, we are helping children reach their greatest potential and building on a remarkable 65-year legacy of care for generations to come.

**Cindy Levanto**

**PROUD DONOR  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION**



# Our Funding. Our Partners. Our Impact.

The Centre's main funder is the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

George Jeffrey Children's Centre is fortunate to have the support of the George Jeffrey Children's Foundation. We value our strong partnership with the Foundation team, the support of the Foundation Board, and their commitment to raising funds for programs and services offered at the Centre and Little George's Child Care Centre. Funding is also received from The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) to support Little George's Child Care Centre.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD



The views expressed in this publication are the views of George Jeffrey Children's Centre and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

# George Jeffrey Children's Centre

## Statement of Operations

**FOR THE PERIOD ENDING MARCH 31, 2026**

| <b>REVENUE</b>                                      | <b>ACTUAL</b>    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services | 7,239,468        |
| Thunder Bay DSSAB                                   | 626,113          |
| Recoveries + Other Income                           | 1,616,646        |
| Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions      | 422,217          |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>                                | <b>9,904,444</b> |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                                     |                  |
| Salaries + Benefits                                 | 6,536,013        |
| Other Expenses                                      | 2,479,422        |
| Amortization of Capital Assets                      | 422,217          |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                               | <b>9,437,652</b> |
| <b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR</b> | <b>\$466,792</b> |





“

Together we create  
brighter futures for  
children and stronger  
communities.

”

– GEORGE JEFFREY  
CHILDREN'S CENTRE

# Thank You

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To our families, staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners - thank you for being an essential part of our journey. Your support helps us empower children and families every day.



## OUR COMMUNITY

Thank you for your trust and partnership.



## OUR DONORS

Your generosity fuels our missions and makes an impact every day.



## OUR STAFF

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment.



## OUR VOLUNTEERS

Your time and talent help create brighter futures for children and families.



## LOOKING AHEAD

We are excited for the future and remain committed to providing exceptional care, expanding opportunities, and building a community where every child can thrive.

**Together, we can achieve more.**

**Thank you.**



CELEBRATING

65

YEARS OF  
POSSIBILITY



George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES