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**2023/24**

# YEAR END REPORT



**United Way  
Centraide**  
Windsor-Essex  
Chatham-Kent

# Introduction

Imagine if every local youth had the chance to succeed and reach their full potential regardless of the postal code they live in. Together, we can be the change-makers by providing a nurturing environment where youth can thrive.

On Track to Success (OTTS) is a wrap-around support program for students between Grade 9 and 12 and their families. The program is delivered in three priority neighbourhoods with the highest barriers to success: Downtown Windsor, West Windsor and Leamington.

The goal of the program is simple: we want students to reach two important milestones – to graduate high school and to go on to post-secondary education in college, university or a trade.

## On Track To Success's wrap-around supports include:

- A success coach that focuses on student academic success and family wellbeing
- Access to tutoring four times a week
- Social supports and career mentoring
- Additional financial supports to remove barriers to success such as transportation, school supplies, technology, and mental health supports

## 2023-2024 Results

93%

Percentage of students in the program who graduate on time from high school.



80%

Percentage of 2024 graduates who are actively enrolled in a post-secondary program.



95%

Percentage of students who started in the program and are still enrolled.



***We are proud of the dedication and drive the students show us every year!***

## What Comes Next?

OTTS has expanded programming to support the students as they move on after graduation. On Track On Campus supports students during their transition from high school to post-secondary education, increasing the chance that students will stay enrolled and complete their education.

# Year in Review

The OTTS program prides itself on being a wrap-around support system for both students and their families. By providing in-school academic support, career exploration opportunities, as well as individualized mentorship, we watched students blossom this past year. We also prioritized mental and physical wellness and created space for fun and recreation.

Our total number of students increased, and our quality of service rose to the occasion as strategic measures were put in place to see that all students are supported, and their goals nurtured. The diverse backgrounds and experiences of our students continue to be celebrated and with that, trust from them and their families has grown, which expands our reach and impact.

## OTTS WEST WINDSOR

OTTS West Windsor saw a lot of growth during the 2023-2024 academic year! WW started the year strong with all grades attending the Program Kick Off in September. There were some incredible field trips to a variety of workplaces such as Baker Tilly, Windsor Police, and BASF as well as fun programming activities that celebrated different cultures and traditions. We saw some strong academic accomplishments as students took advantage of the supports offered, keeping our after-school tutors busy and tutoring spaces packed.

## OTTS LEAMINGTON

OTTS Leamington students had a great year of social mentoring, volunteer opportunities, career readiness, and transitional support to post-secondary. Emphasis was placed on academics and creating a sense of belonging in the community. Students attended field trips such as Highline Mushrooms, the Automobility and Innovation Centre at Invest WindsorEssex, and EMS Essex, to learn about career options readily available to them. Students were also given the opportunity to volunteer at Southwest Ontario Gleaners to connect with the community as well as gain hours toward their 40-hour graduation requirement. We didn't pass on the fun activities either. Soccer, team games and scavenger hunts created some healthy competition among the students and of course, a lot of laughs.



Career Exploration Field Trip with BASF. Westview Freedom Academy's 2024 Graduation at the Capitol Theatre. Exam tutoring with our some of our amazing tutors - Joey, Matteo, and Tasnia.



Grade 10 student from Cardinal Carter High School, volunteering at Gleaners. Career Exploration field trip to the VR Reality Cave with Invest WindsorEssex. Outdoor games for some Leamington fun

## OTTS DOWNTOWN

OTTS Downtown students have shown great determination and commitment to all aspects of their lives this year. We have had exciting trips to various workplaces such as KPMG, Windsor Police and Valiant TMS for students to explore career interests, as well as extraordinary participation in extracurriculars, including basketball, soccer, tennis, volleyball, badminton, and even a school play. We are especially proud of our grade 12 cohort who collectively were awarded over 20 different scholarships and bursaries!



Edgar and Success Coach Stephanie at his graduation from Catholic Central High School. Sino, grade 12 student at Catholic Central High School in his element. Career Exploration field trip to KPMG for some grade 10s and 11s .

# UJIMA INITIATIVE

This year we explored quite a few career options through various field trips. We visited the Liuna Training facility where we learned about the world of trades, and how students could earn credits for post-secondary and money at the same time. We even made our way to the Aviation Museum and learned about the history of building planes and becoming a pilot!

February 21st remains the highlight of our year! 28 students facilitated our first ever Black History Celebration. The students danced, performed spoken word, created poetry, sang, had a fashion show, and one of them even emceed the entire night. The audience was a mix of parents, fellow OTTS students, school administrators and staff, and United Way, to cheer on the students. The students felt seen and heard, as they shared their version of Black history and pride. The evening ended with a smorgasbord of traditional Caribbean and African dishes and a whole lot of dancing.



Field trip to LiUna to learn all about trades and related opportunities in our region. Fieldtrip to Canadian Aviation Museum. Students facilitated our first ever Black History Celebration.

# Caregiver Engagement

Our Caregiver Engagement program was designed to involve the parents and guardians of the OTTS students in a new way. This past school year we held five sessions. Session topics were informed by surveying caregivers to see what topics were of interest. In total, 27 caregivers joined these sessions, with 10 of them attending more than 1 session.

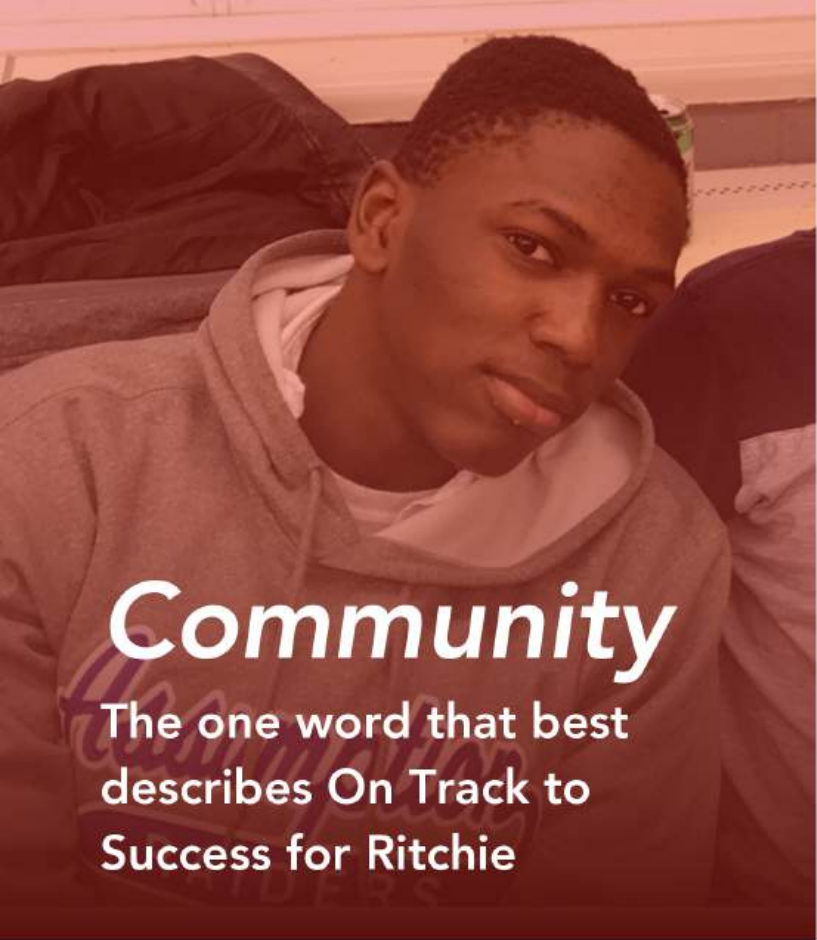


To kick off the school year, Ainslee Winter, local artist and art therapist, facilitated a session where caregivers and students were able to work on a piece of art, using paint and clay with the goal of practicing mindfulness and incorporating play and stress relief. The second session brought in Joanna Conrad from Youth Diversion, discussing the topic of social media, touching upon the pressures of social media and dangers online.

Our third session was hosted by Chris Bergeron of Maryvale and covered the topic of coping with teen's emotions, focusing on how to help teens regulate emotions and supporting caregivers through this. Melissa Lyons, author and speaker, hosted our fourth session. Melissa shared her expertise on the topic of self-care awareness, creating a safe space for personal reflection and sharing. Our final session was in partnership with Kimberly Mann from the Youth Wellness Hub. Caregivers and students worked in pairs to make a delicious loaf of bread to take home.



***We are very grateful to our community partners for their support in making this initiative successful and look forward to continuing this program and having it grow in the future.***



# Community

The one word that best describes On Track to Success for Ritchie

In the On Track to Success program, it's common for Grade 12 students to juggle multiple responsibilities alongside their academics, such as jobs, athletics, and helping with younger siblings. Among these dedicated students was Ritchie, who held the program's "highest attendance record."

Remarkably, he managed this achievement during the challenging COVID-19 era, when all interactions took place on Zoom. Ritchie has since graduated high school and started attending St. Clair College with the support of On Track On Campus.

***Ritchie sat down with his success coach Kaila to discuss what the On Track program has meant to him.***

**Kaila: Ritchie, why don't you start by telling me how you got connected to On Track in the first place.**

Ritchie: I remember my Vice Principal at my grade school sent me the information and I just signed up right away. I remember reading about getting help with homework specifically, and that was a really big selling point for me. I think I was kind of nervous about what the workload would look like in high school, so the idea that I could get help if needed, made [that transition] feel less stressful.

**K: How would you describe the On Track to Success program to someone who has never heard of it?**

R: Honestly, it's just different. It's not like any other program I've heard about. Our Success Coaches are really good at making us do stuff to get out of our shells. [As students] you get exposed to a ton of different people,

companies, tutors from a wide range of backgrounds too. You get to meet a lot of new people and hear more about their stories. I feel like the Coaches really pay attention to each student; what their personal areas of growth or challenges may be. It feels like [Coaches] really want us to grow and push ourselves. Like me for example, I was a pretty shy kid. And it always felt like my Coaches knew that about me and would challenge me to do things to build my people skills and get more comfortable in different social settings.

**K: What role did On Track to Success play for you in high school?**

R: On Track to me was kinda like an after-school program. I didn't necessarily want to go right home after school because I always found home to be pretty boring. If I stayed for On Track [programming] I knew I was going to see people and have some fun. Also eat some great snacks. I liked that I could get help with my homework, finish it all and then hang out too.

**K: And after you graduated high school and started at St Clair College, what role did On Track play for you during that transition?**

R: On Track was still there to keep me “on track”. I liked that my Coach was on campus every week, so that if I needed help with something quick or wasn’t sure where to go, things could be resolved super fast. There was a lot of support around midterms and checking in with me about how I was feeling in my classes; what was going well or not well and what I could do about that to change things up before finals.

**K: Outside of academics, what skills do you think On Track helped you work on?**

R: Interviewing skills for sure. Like I said, I was a pretty shy kid and would get nervous super easily; especially talking to adults or if I was like trying out for something and would be evaluated, you know? Specifically, I remember when I got to be a part of the Executive Mentorship Program (EMP) because of On Track. In EMP I got a lot of 1:1 attention with my interview skills, what I was doing well, how my answers or body language was being perceived in an interview setting, or other things I wasn’t really thinking of or noticing. At one point we had to go around a small group and answer random interview-based questions as if we were in an interview, then we got feedback right after. I really hated that in the moment. But, a few days later I went for an interview at a restaurant, and I was hired on the spot.

The other big skill for me is public speaking. Before On Track, anytime I needed to do a presentation or something I would be shaking, stuttering; just rush my whole way through something and honestly miss or skip half of the things I was supposed to say!

**K: It’s funny you say that, because your speech at our community event, in front of 200+ people I may add, was incredible! You didn’t seem nervous at all!**

R: Thank you. I was still nervous. Honestly, if it wasn’t On Track who asked me, I wouldn’t have done that speech! I was still pretty nervous, but On Track means something to me and that is why I said yes despite being nervous. I felt really good after speaking that night and I have no regrets! I am really proud of myself and that I got through the whole thing without missing any chunks and ensuring my story got across.



Ritchie at his St Clair College Graduation, from the Electrical Techniques Program, June 2024

**K: Ritchie, this has been so fun, thanks for hanging out with me today. Last question for you: Imagine there was a Grade 8 student who was on the fence about joining On Track to Success. What would you say to them?**

R: JUST DO IT! Honestly, you’re going to miss out if you don’t. You want to be a part of this program, I promise. You get to experience so many new and cool things, get exposed to people or places that you may never know otherwise. Don’t worry about being nervous, everyone is amazing and you’ll never regret taking part.

# Partner Spotlight

# WOMEN UNITED™

Women United, a global movement in over 165 communities across six counties, is an inclusive, vibrant community of change-makers bound together by a sense of belonging – to one another, to their community, and to their mission of creating a world of opportunity for everyone.

In Windsor - Essex, this committed group of women are focused on reducing poverty, supporting kids and families, and strengthening neighborhoods. What began with 20 members in 2014 and has grown to become a diverse coalition of 60 women donors united by their shared desire to create lasting change.



Some of Windsor's newest G1 license holders with support from Women United

As a philanthropic giving circle, their specific focus is to empower the youth of the On Track to Success program. Each year, Women United financially support four students in the OTTS program for the full four years of their enrolment and they created an additional extracurricular fund specifically for students to discover and develop their interests outside of the classroom. Students can develop skills and confidence by participating on sports teams, taking art classes, and even becoming licensed drivers, which all set them on a path to a successful life.

Women United members are a powerful network of changemakers, who have a positive influence on each other's lives as well as building the capacity of the On Track students. A highlight for OTTS's grade 12 students and WU members is the annual Say Yes to the Dress event hosted by New Beginnings. Students and mentors spend a wonderful morning choosing dresses and ensuring students feel confident and comfortable ahead of their prom night celebration!



Breakfast at the United Way office before prom dress shopping

"There is something truly special about being a part of a group of women that aspire to make differences in their community. What drew me to Women United was their commitment to the On Track to Success Program. As a former teacher, supporting youth with their education is so important to me." Candice Parent, co-chair.

# Supporter Spotlight



Giuseppe "Joe" Idone, a Guidance Counsellor and Teacher at Assumption College Catholic High School, has been a strong supporter of the OTTS program in West Windsor. After completing a Bachelor of Science with Honours and a diploma in information technology, Joe worked as a system integrator before transitioning to education. He began his teaching career 17 years ago at St. Anne Catholic High School and joined Assumption 10 years ago.

Joe believes the OTTS program has "changed students' lives" by providing opportunities and building confidence. He values the program's ability to give students a voice by letting them know they are seen, heard, and acknowledged. Joe is always in awe of the support system that the program can provide for the students in and out of school along with the sense of community crafted by the OTTS family. Known for his positive attitude and approachability (and a wicked sense of humour!), Joe is always ready to assist and inspire students and coaches alike. Highlights for Joe include the OTTS United Dinner and the collaboration with caring Success Coaches.

Joe embodies what it means to be an educator: compassionate, supportive, and dedicated to student success. He serves as an educator, role model, mentor, and friend, continuing to make a positive impact on the students in West Windsor's OTTS program.

# On Track To Success Donors

The On Track to Success program would not be possible without the generosity of donors. We are grateful to all those who are creating opportunities for local youth, and supporting children from Cradle to Career.

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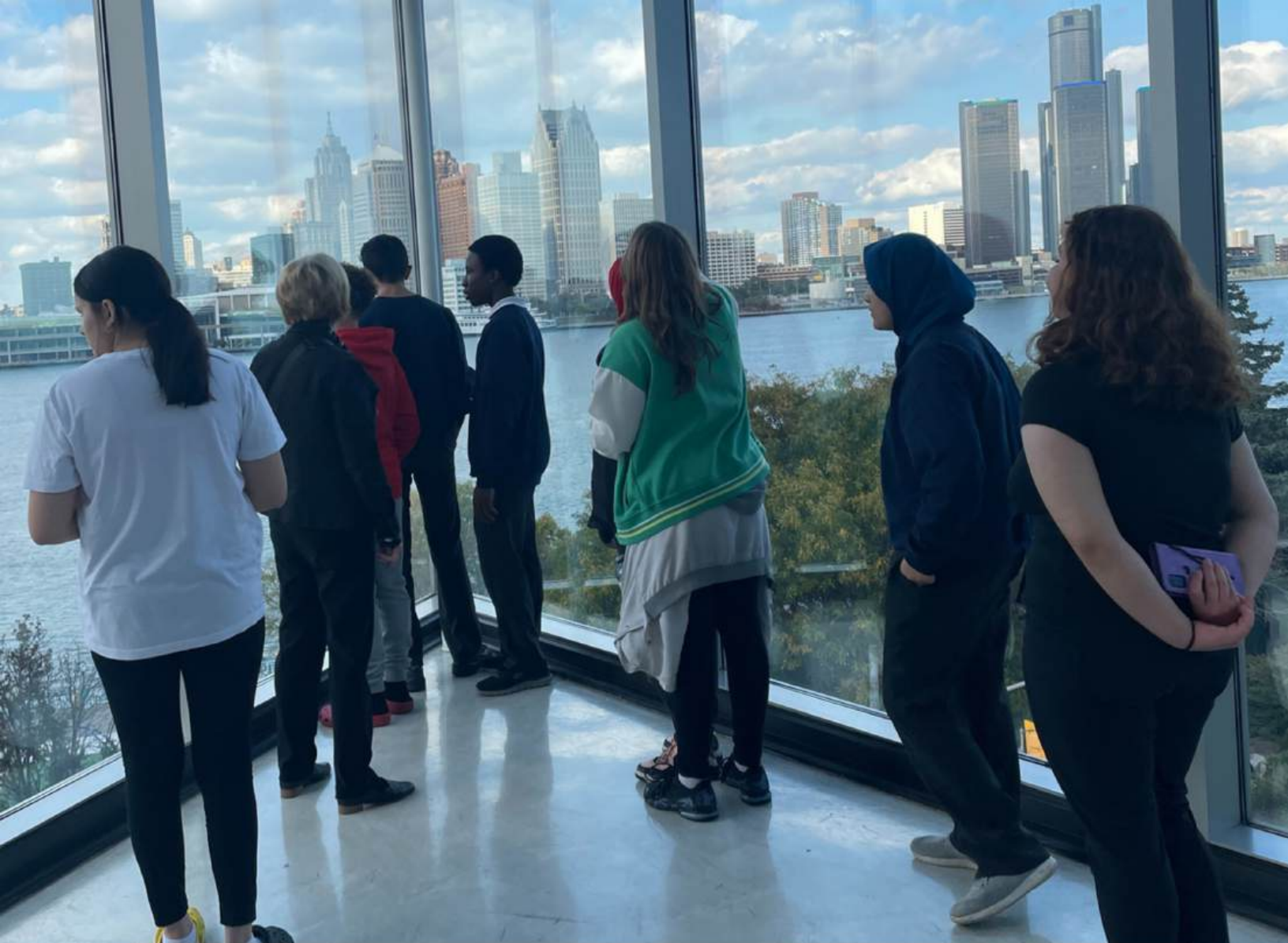
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## \$100,000+

- Women United
- Ministry of Citizenship & Multiculturalism

\*The donors on this list supported On Track to Success from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.



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To see how your donations are being invested visit [weareunited.com/Impact](http://weareunited.com/Impact). United Way strives towards the highest standards of accountability and trust.

Our 2023-24 audited financial statements are available to the public at [weareunited.com/FinancialStatements](http://weareunited.com/FinancialStatements)

If you have any questions about this report, please call 519-259-6164 or email [info@weareunited.com](mailto:info@weareunited.com)

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