

JDD

Journal on Developmental Disabilities
Le journal sur les handicaps du développement

La publication officielle de l'association ontarienne sur les handicaps du développement
The official publication of the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities



Centering the Voices of Direct Support Professionals Part One

Volume 30, Number 2 2025



**Ontario Association on
Developmental Disabilities**

Journal on Developmental Disabilities / Le journal sur les handicaps du développement
published by the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities, Toronto, ON

ISSN 1917-7909 (Online) ISSN 1188-9136 (Print)
© Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities

Artist Statement – Hearts 4 Joy Submission

Journal on Developmental Disabilities – Special Issue on Direct Support Professionals

This multimedia piece was collaboratively envisioned and created by the artists and staff at Hearts 4 Joy, a nonprofit skill-development program for adults with intellectual exceptionalities. Our mission is rooted in building belonging, creativity, and confidence through arts-based programming—and this piece is a celebration of those values.

The artwork bursts with color, texture, and life—just like the work of Direct Support Professionals. Using paint, collage, marker, and digital layering, we visually represent the dynamic, multifaceted nature of support work. Like the professionals who wear many hats each day, the composition is complex and richly layered, revealing the emotional, physical, and relational labor involved.

The silhouetted figures—with arms raised and hearts glowing—stand as symbols of empowerment, connection, and joy. They represent not only those providing support, but also those receiving it—and the essential truth that support is reciprocal. Our participants were co-creators in every stage of this piece, reinforcing our commitment to inclusion, voice, and shared purpose.

The floating hearts and bold, sweeping brushstrokes express love, resilience, and movement forward. Together, they reflect a community built on mutual care and celebration, where every individual is seen, supported, and valued.

As our artists described the piece:

“It’s about love and happiness.”
“Makes me happy.”
“It has joyful people that make me joyful.”

We hope this work communicates the passion, pride, and artistry embedded in the lives of Direct Support Professionals and those they walk alongside. Through this joyful visual story, we honour the beauty of being in it together.