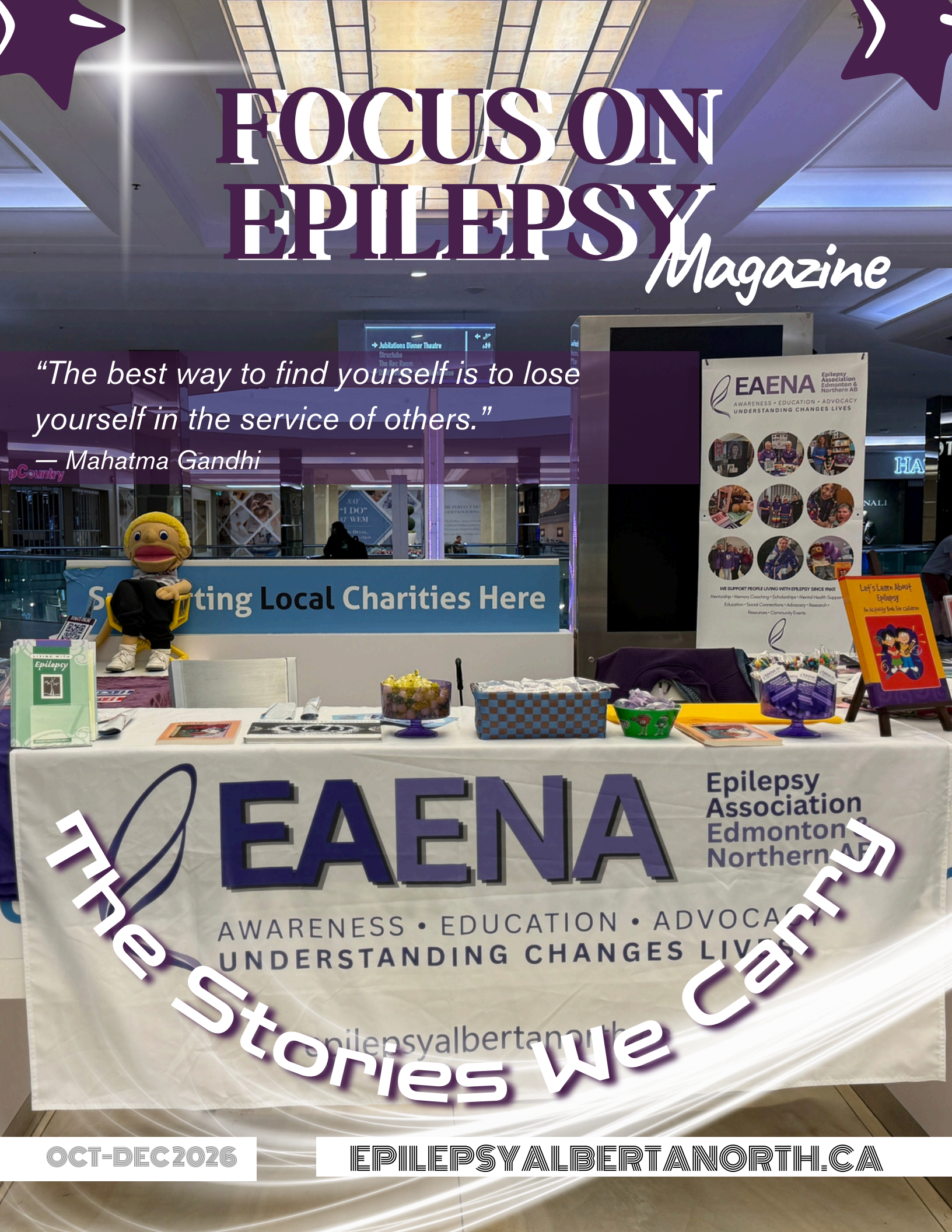
FOCUS ON EPILEPSY Magazine

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."
— Mahatma Gandhi



The Stories We Carry

OCT-DEC 2026

EPILEPSYALBERTANORTH.CA

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About this publication

The EAENA has been publishing an online and in-print version of our quarterly magazine since 2013. All archived copies can be found on our website at https://edmontonepilepsy.org/eea-newsletter/.

We fund this project on our own, and always welcome sponsors to help us continue our mission to support the epilepsy community.

GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS

This issue of the Focus on Epilepsy Magazine was made possible thanks to these individuals and their generosity, in sharing research and editing skills, ideas sharing and formatting and mailing support: Valeria P.; Sam H., Angie C.; Susan W.; Mai H.; Justine B., Ramneek P. and Adithya S.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy Fall!

I hope you had a peaceful summer and found time to enjoy the sunshine, despite all the rain. I'm thankful for the warm fall days we are experiencing…and hope they continue!

When we chose the lens of "The Stories We Carry" this past year, I knew we had the opportunity to tap into so many of your stories. Stories of living with epilepsy. Stories of families navigating new diagnoses. Stories of courage, creativity, advocacy, and hope. We learn from one another through our stories, whether in a formal mentorship capacity within our mentoring program, or through stories shared at display tables, EAENA events, and presentations. Each of these stories matter. I was able to connect with people through the special back to school Purple Hour and mentoring programs; each time I felt gratitude and pride for those who take the brave step to reach out and connect. ***Telling your story over and over again to new people is not easy and I see you.***

Over the summer months, our community has continued to grow and find new ways to connect. We have gathered for Purple Lunch Hours, Epilepsy 101 sessions, Living with Epilepsy sessions, bingos, mentorship and HOBSCOTCH sessions, and so much more. Our French audiobook project continues to grow. Presque toute notre série de livres a été adaptée en livres audio français! We have welcomed new volunteers and directors-in-training, which keeps us sustainable as an association.

Challenges are part of any story, and as an association we certainly face financial challenges. We continue to fall below our annual fundraising goal. This is something I take seriously, as I believe in the good work we are doing in the region. The programs, resources, advocacy, education, and connections that we provide depend on the generosity of our community. At the board retreat this past weekend, we had important conversations about what is sustainable and where we need to focus our resources. ***This will be an ongoing story we must navigate.*** We will continue to find ways to raise money and awareness.

As we look to the final months of the year, there are still many opportunities to come together: our October family workshop, Purple Pumpkin and Talent Show, upcoming Purple Lunch Hours, bingos, and our December holiday gathering.



Consider your own EAENA story. What brought you here? What have you learned? What's your own story? Thank you for trusting the EAENA with your membership and your stories. Every member adds another thread to the fabric of our community and together those threads make something stronger than any one of us could create alone.

Warm regards,

Susan Wilkie

President, EAENA



FROM MY DESK

A Few Reflections as We Enter the Final Quarter

Another year of community service, support, awareness and education about epilepsy is entering its final quarter. Life seems to move at a faster pace in these last few years — or perhaps it is the aging process that brings with it a greater desire to slow down, pause and truly appreciate the great events and milestones that come our way.

As I share a few reflections about our community, I also want to share something very personal and very amazing from my own life: I became a grandmother! Over the last few weeks, while his parents were visiting home, I have had the incredible joy of spending time with my very special grandson. And, as anyone who has experienced this will understand, life seems to be all about him now!

Watching him grow, discovering each tiny and larger milestone of being a newborn, and feeling that instinctive desire to protect him and wish only the very best for his life has been an extraordinary experience. Those feelings made me think about the many families in our epilepsy community and how closely they may mirror their own realities — especially when they first learn of a diagnosis of epilepsy, or as they continue to navigate life with the challenges that this neurological disease can bring.

We work hard for all those families out there. We share that very human connection and the desire to make life a little better for their children, their grandchildren and for themselves. None of us knows why a neurological disease comes about for one child and not another. *We cannot always explain the "why." What we can do is try our best each day to support those around us, to share what we know and to lend a hand beyond our own family circles.*

And that is why this community is so important.

The human condition is a common experience that makes us much closer to one another than we may sometimes realize.

Beyond family affection and our own personal challenges, we, as EAENA, are here to build and nourish safe spaces and welcoming places through events, programs, projects and ongoing sharing. We fundamentally believe that sharing knowledge, sharing experiences and stories (as our President highlights in her article), and walking that extra mile to lend a hand can truly make a difference. I admire every individual who engages with our services, especially in those moments when taking that first step means moving just a little outside of their comfort zone. I see it again and again.

A family member joins a social event. Someone attends an information session. Someone picks up the phone and calls our office simply to ask a question. And then comes the surprise of what happens next.

At our in-person sessions, participants often linger well after the formal session has ended. Why? Because somewhere along the way they discovered another human being who understands where they come from — someone who has faced similar challenges, asked similar questions and, perhaps most importantly, truly gets it.



FROM MY DESK

Our amazing volunteers experience this connection in another way.

We see them give their time, skills and energy while learning something new themselves. They train to become HOBSCOTCH memory coaches. They share a mentorship experience. They help with an epilepsy awareness table. They lead a Seniors' Workshop. They support an event or help bring one of our programs to life.

And the experience is often the same: the more we give, the more we personally gain and take home. It is something that does not come with a price tag. It is the personal satisfaction of knowing that, for a moment, we may have made the world a little better — one person, one conversation and one session at a time.

You will notice that this issue has a few more pages than some of our previous issues. That is intentional. We wanted to take the time — and find the right words — to share some of the amazing experiences we have built together over the last three months, as well as the new opportunities emerging from our initiatives and projects.

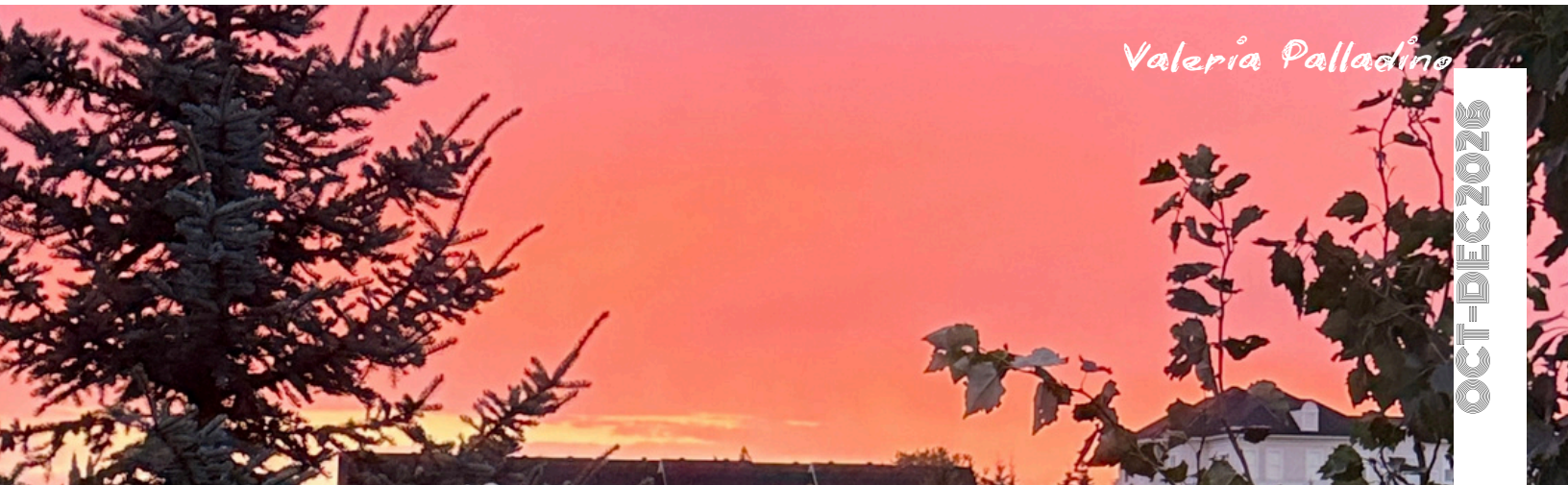
Epilepsy is at the root of all that we do. But the experiences we share because of epilepsy gift us with so much more. Through the stories we carry!

I truly hope you will find something interesting, meaningful or engaging in these pages, wherever you are and whichever point in your own experience with life and epilepsy you may be. You are welcome here. Really.

I hope to see many of you at our upcoming social events, ***especially the Purple Pumpkin and Talent Show on October 24.*** It promises to be an amazing new experience for everyone!
And we need numbers — not only from those courageous individuals who are willing to share their talents, but also from those who can simply be there. Come and be witnesses to that courage. Come and cheer. Come and join our choir for a very special closing event.
Hopefully, I have peaked your interest! Read on!

Have an amazing rest of the year, everyone.

Thank you all for another incredible year of community, connection and service.
We have great plans for 2027!



EEA UPDATES



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- EXPLORE EGYPT
- UNDERSTANDING EPILEPSY
- BINGO GAME
- EPILEPSY 101 SESSIONS
- FRENCH AUDIO BOOKS
- A QUILT: A MESSAGE OF HOPE
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- KOREAN EPILEPSY SUPPORT CENTRE AND ALBERTA DENTAL ASSOCIATION
- MEMBERS' SURVEY
- PURPLE LUNCH HOURS
- AWARENESS TABLES
- BOARD RETREAT
- HOBSCOTCH AND MENTORSHIP

EAENA UPDATES



This is our welcome section, where we revisit what we accomplished during the previous quarter. And, even during these summer months, we have been busy! We are excited to share so many updates — from our return to the Kids Fringe Festival, to hearing from members who attended the Folk Music Festival, to our Bingo game, more Purple Lunch Hour sessions, and our very first in-person visit to the Rogers Charity Classic Golf Tournament as part of our 2026 Birdies Campaign.

We also continued our contribution to epilepsy awareness and education through presentations and the ongoing development of resources for our Kids Mental Health Project.

There is much to be proud of as our epilepsy community continues to grow and our outreach expands beyond the regional borders of our community support. We are beginning to receive international attention for some of our projects, and we plan to continue building collaborations with partner agencies, near and far. We fundamentally believe that the work we do together can — and does — make a difference.

Happy reading!



Rogers Classic sign in Calgary, for the Birdies golf tournament.

KOB AT THE KIDS FRINGE AUGUST 19

On August 19, 2026, our crew of professional puppeteers, sound engineer, and the Executive Directord of EAENA joined the Kids Fringe Festival once more. After a short pause last year, we were very happy to return with our special Kids on the Block performance.

We were thrilled to perform in front of more than 80 children, along with some adults, who were engaged and mesmerized by the actions and words of our three key puppet characters: Brian, Joanne, and Nam.
A few children stayed behind after the show to visit with the puppets and the artists. We even ran out of the free bracelets we usually bring for everyone's enjoyment — a wonderful testimony to the growing interest in, and support for, the positive epilepsy message we share through this performance.



Kids watching the KOB performance at the Kids Fringe in Edmonton.

We want to remind all schools out there that our Kids on the Block show is offered absolutely free of charge. We can make a great impact when we visit elementary schools across our region, where hundreds of students — from Kindergarten to Grade 5 — gather in large gymnasiums to learn about epilepsy, seizures, and how to be a good friend through this engaging and memorable performance.

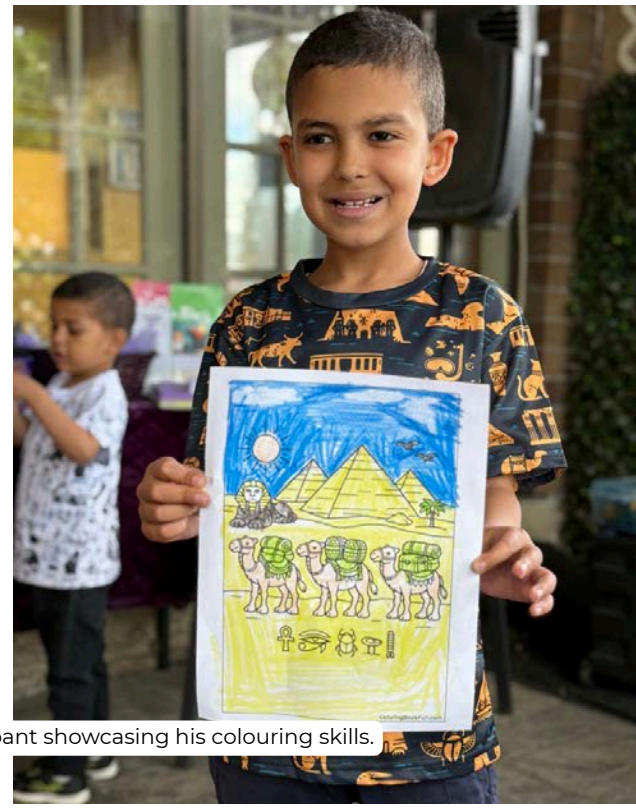
For more details and to request your own performance, visit our dedicated Kids on the Block page: Kids on the Block – EAENA

CLICK HERE!



EXPLORE EGYPT CULTURAL & FUNDRAISING EVENT — AUGUST 15





Egypt images and event participant showcasing his colouring skills.

One of the things we absolutely love about our volunteers is the enthusiasm they bring when sharing their talents, ideas, and cultures with us. Their creativity helps us create events and safe spaces where members of our community can gather, have a truly great time together, forget — even if just for a little while — some of the worries of daily life, and discover new things together.

Sometimes, it is simply about discovering that yes, we can have fun and enjoy ourselves while living with epilepsy! One such event took place on August 15, thanks to one of our strong and dedicated volunteers whom many of you already know: Dr. Mai Heikal. Dr. Heikal regularly contributes to our magazine with articles about epilepsy in children. As a pediatrician with a focus on neurological disorders, she has also volunteered her time with EAENA over the past few months, offering free art workshops. She is not only a talented artist, but also a proud ambassador of her Egyptian heritage and culture.

Dr. Heikal was the driving force behind a very special cultural and fundraising event at Pharoah's Restaurant in south Edmonton. Pharoah's Restaurant , which has an authentic Egyptian atmosphere and specializes in Egyptian cuisine, to make the guests experience true Egyptian vibes. Working closely with the EAENA office, she helped organize a wonderful afternoon combining a special meal, cultural activities, epilepsy awareness, and performances by Radwa Nasr, an Egyptian professional cultural dancer performer, and the owner of the Egyptian Folk Academy, who is dedicated to presenting the Egyptian Folk-dance all over Canada.

EXPLORE EGYPT CULTURAL & FUNDRAISING EVENT – AUGUST 15 (CONT.)

The event was a great success. Ticket sales, together with additional donations from restaurant patrons, allowed us to raise more than $400 — a significant contribution for our small charity and another example of how community support can make a real difference.

Everyone who joined us seemed to leave with a smile, and there was plenty to learn along the way. Dr. Heikal shared interesting facts about Egyptian history and culture through short quizzes, giving participants a fun opportunity to test their knowledge and discover something new.

We also prepared a special video presentation connecting epilepsy and seizures with the history of ancient Egypt, adding another unique dimension to the event. Local radio and streaming station, First One, also supported our event by covering it and interviewing Valeria Palladino (our executive director), Dr. Mai Heikal, and our collaborators Radwa Nasr and Catherine Abdelnoor, the owner of Pharoah's restaurant.

We share a few segments from the translated audio recording from the event. **To view the full video clips, visit: First One News Media on YouTube**



Participants enjoying the event.

As a special keepsake, every participant received a certificate featuring their first name written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Some guests also had the opportunity to purchase beautiful cultural items created by Dr. Heikal especially for the event. The event also included Egyptian-inspired coloring and hieroglyphic writing activities, and a photo booth where guests enjoyed taking pictures as ancient Egyptian Kings and queens.

This was much more than a fundraising event. It was an opportunity to bring people together, celebrate culture, share knowledge, raise awareness about epilepsy, and remind ourselves that our community is capable of creating meaningful and joyful experiences together.

A big thank you to Dr. Mai Heikal, Radwa, Pharoah's Restaurant, First One, and everyone who participated and supported this very special afternoon.



Participants enjoying the event.



OBSERVATIONS FROM FIRST ONE'S LIVE INTERVIEWS



Special guests at the event.

Below are some observations and summaries from the live interviews conducted by First One during our event. Much of the conversation focused on the personal motivations of our event partners and on the information shared by Dr. Heikal about epilepsy.

Why Our Event Partners Chose to Contribute

Catherine – Pharaoh's Restaurant

When Catherine was asked what motivated her to contribute to the event, she shared that she is originally a licensed nurse in Canada and has always been eager to support initiatives that promote the health and well-being of others. Through her medical experience, she has seen firsthand how people living with health challenges can struggle with limited resources and how important it is for them to have opportunities to feel supported, happy, and able to enjoy life. Catherine also spoke about her previous fundraising experience in support of the HIV community. She had shared this experience with Dr. Heikal, our volunteer, who then approached her with the idea of hosting our event at Pharaoh's Restaurant.



Catherine welcomed the idea because it aligned naturally with her own vision for the restaurant. She explained that she strives to make Pharaoh's a place where people can experience her Egyptian heritage through authentic Egyptian cuisine — a place that feels warm, welcoming, and a little like home.

For our event, she thoughtfully selected three well-known Egyptian dishes from her menu to share with our guests:

- Koshary
- Hawawshi
- Chicken Kebab

Her contribution went beyond providing food. She created an environment that allowed our community to experience a taste of Egyptian culture while coming together in support of the Kids Mental Health Project.

OBSERVATIONS FROM FIRST ONE'S LIVE INTERVIEWS

Radwa Nasr – Egyptian Folk Academy

Radwa introduced herself as the founder of the Egyptian Folk Academy, an organization that presents a wide variety of traditional Egyptian folk dances from different regions of Egypt, as well as the Tanoura and Aragoz, a traditional Egyptian puppet show.

Radwa explained that Dr. Heikal invited her to participate in the event because she wanted to introduce our community to Egypt from a perspective beyond the pyramids — the image that most people immediately associate with Egypt. Through folk dance, music, costumes, traditional jewelry, and storytelling, Radwa wanted to share another dimension of Egyptian culture.

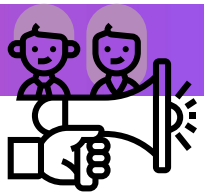
She also spoke about her belief that arts and music can play an important role in supporting well-being and healing, which made her particularly enthusiastic about participating in an event focused on mental health and epilepsy.

During the event, Radwa performed three authentic Egyptian folk dances and explained the significance of the traditional costumes and jewelry. She also participated in the photo booth activity, where guests had the opportunity to experience Ancient Egyptian-inspired costumes, and introduced our community to the Aragoz puppet tradition. Her participation brought movement, music, history, and culture into the event and helped create an experience that was both educational and joyful.



Radwa dancing authentic Egyptian folk dances.





UNDERSTANDING EPILEPSY: SUPPORTING CHILDREN BEYOND THE DIAGNOSIS
(IN THE WORDS OF DR. HEIKAL)



Epilepsy is more than a medical diagnosis. For children and their families, it can also bring anxiety, uncertainty, social challenges, and concerns about school, friendships, and everyday life. Recognizing these needs, EAENA has developed its Mental Health of Children with Epilepsy Project, creating opportunities for children and families to talk about the challenges they face and receive meaningful support. The program includes supportive meetings, educational talks, creative activities such as art classes, weekly psychological support settings, and other activities offered through the Association. The Birdies Charity program is also helping EAENA focus additional attention and resources on children living with epilepsy.

Epilepsy: A Common Neurological Disorder
As Dr. Mai Heikal explains, epilepsy is a chronic neurological disorder that can have different biological causes and affects people of all ages — from newborns to older adults. While seizures can occur for many different reasons, epilepsy has specific clinical criteria for diagnosis and requires appropriate medical management.

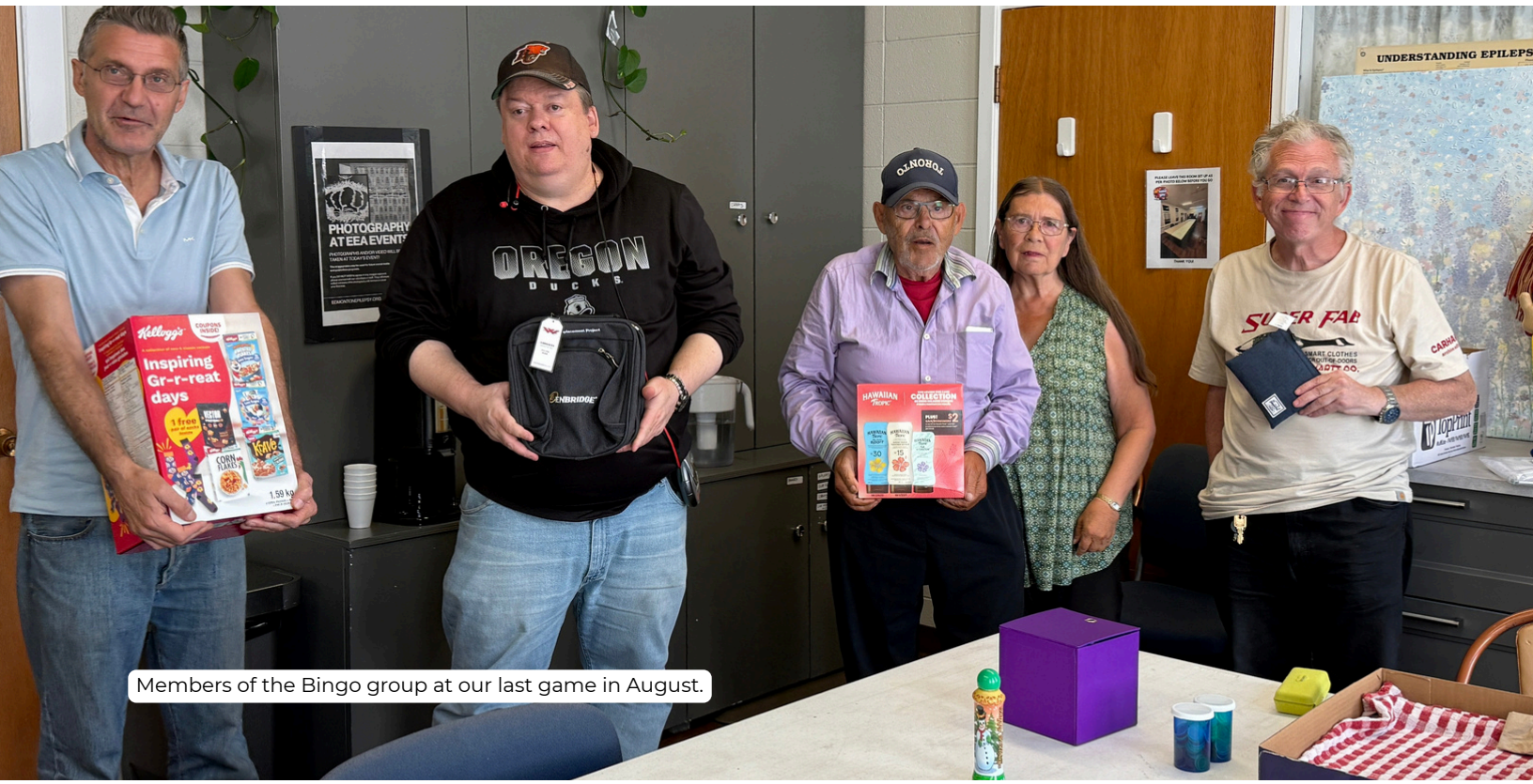
The good news is that about 70% of people with epilepsy can achieve effective seizure control with medication. For others, treatment can be more complex and may involve different medications, combinations of therapies, and, in some cases, epilepsy surgery. For children in particular, proper diagnosis, treatment, medical follow-up, and community acceptance can make an enormous difference. With appropriate care and support, many children with well-controlled epilepsy can live active and fulfilling lives. Some children may eventually outgrow their epilepsy and, under medical supervision, be able to discontinue treatment.

Can Seizures Be Prevented?
While not every seizure can be predicted or prevented, there are important steps that can reduce the risk of breakthrough seizures. Taking prescribed medication correctly, attending medical follow-ups, getting enough sleep, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and seeking timely medical attention when a child becomes ill or develops a fever can all be important. Some people with focal epilepsy may experience an aura or other warning sensation before a seizure. Recognizing these signs can allow the person and those around them to prepare and provide a safe environment. The message is simple: good medical care and healthy daily habits can help people with epilepsy remain seizure-free for long periods of time.

Support Makes a Difference
Beyond medical treatment, acceptance and understanding are essential. Families should not have to navigate epilepsy alone. EAENA provides education, support, activities, and resources designed to help children and families better understand epilepsy and cope with its broader impact.

Dr. Mai's message to families is clear: if you know someone living with epilepsy, encourage them to connect with EAENA. The Association offers support and education, including simple seizure first aid measures that anyone can learn and use when they encounter someone having a seizure. Greater understanding leads to greater confidence — and a more supportive community for children and adults living with epilepsy.

BINGO GAME – AUGUST 27



Members of the Bingo group at our last game in August.

While we skipped our June Bingo session, we came back in August ready to have some fun!

Our August 27 game was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, with some new EAENA members joining the group and enjoying the fun for the first time.

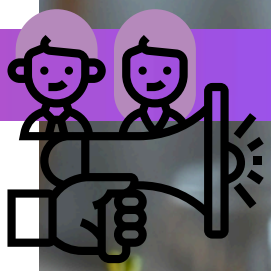
This informal tradition continues to be an important opportunity for a core group of members who enjoy visiting with one another, knowing they have a safe and welcoming space to gather, share a few laughs, and simply enjoy each other's company.

Of course, there are also free prizes to win, coffee and tea to enjoy, and homemade goodies to share! We have two more Bingo dates scheduled before the end of the year, so make sure to mark them on your calendars. There is no fee to participate. Simply give our office a call and reserve your seat for the next game.

Come join us — you might even leave with a prize, but you will definitely leave with a few smiles!

LAST DATES FOR 2026
OCTOBER 29
DECEMBER 17

EPILEPSY 101 SESSIONS — IN PERSON AND ONLINE



One of the strongest aspects of EAENA's community work is our Epilepsy 101 education program. Throughout the year, we offer tailored sessions—live in person, online, or in hybrid format—to a wide range of audiences, both by request and through scheduled community events, teachers' conventions, conferences, workplaces, and other educational settings.

These approximately 90-minute sessions provide participants with a practical introduction to epilepsy and seizures, including common seizure types, treatments, and the ways epilepsy can affect a person's everyday life. Most importantly, participants learn seizure first aid — simple, practical steps that anyone can learn and be prepared to use if they witness someone having a convulsive seizure.

Our presentations draw on EAENA's extensive library of epilepsy resources and books, decades of educational webinars and presentations, and, importantly, the knowledge and lived experience of people within our own epilepsy community. This combination allows us to provide information that is not only medically informed, but also grounded in the realities of living with epilepsy.

Over the past three months, we have delivered Epilepsy 101 sessions to a variety of professionals and community groups, including:

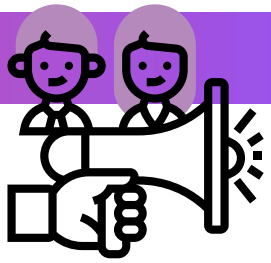
- July 23, 2026: Cornerstone Counselling psychotherapists
- August 4, 2026: Preschool staff
- August 26, 2026: Teaching staff at a French Immersion elementary school in St. Albert
- September 9, 2026: Community members at the EAENA office
- September 21, 2026: Education Assistants with Edmonton Public Schools

These sessions continue to be very well received. They provide participants with an opportunity not only to learn the facts about epilepsy and seizures, but also to ask questions, discuss real-life situations, and better understand how epilepsy can affect a person at different stages of life.

For many participants, the most valuable part is having a safe space to ask the questions they may never have had the opportunity to ask before.

Education is one of the most practical ways we can challenge fear, misinformation, and stigma. With every Epilepsy 101 presentation, we help another group of people feel more informed, more confident, and better prepared to respond when someone has a seizure.

We will continue to bring these sessions into schools, workplaces, professional settings, and the wider community — breaking down stigma and building understanding, one presentation at a time.



FRENCH AUDIOBOOKS: MAKING EPILEPSY INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE

Our work to adapt EAENA's Epilepsy Book series into French audiobooks continues to move forward. Although the funding period for this phase of the project has now been completed, we continue to edit and finalize the French titles, with plans to showcase the completed collection in early 2027.

Some French titles are already available, and we invite you to explore the growing collection on our website: French Epilepsy Titles. This project would not be possible without the generosity and commitment of people who believe in making epilepsy information accessible to more Canadians. A very special thank you goes to Celine H., who has generously volunteered her French-language skills as a voice actor. Working alongside Rob B., our IT support specialist, Celine has helped bring these resources to life, with truly wonderful results.

We are proud that this initiative allows people to access reliable epilepsy information in both of Canada's official languages, while also providing an audio option for people who may find listening more accessible than reading. We continue to look for additional funding opportunities that will allow us to expand this work, share epilepsy information more widely, and continue educating the public about epilepsy and seizure first aid.

And once again, our sincere thanks to our current project sponsor, the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), for supporting the second phase of the French Audiobooks project through its generous grant. Their support is helping us build an audio library that can be accessed and enjoyed by our community and by anyone looking for trustworthy epilepsy information.

One title, one voice, one listener at a time — we are continuing to make epilepsy information more accessible.



SPONSOR

Our project sponsors and donors to date:

- **CIP Project - Alberta Government**
- **ECF (Edmonton Community Foundation)**



A QUILT, A MESSAGE OF HOPE — AND MORE QUILTS TO GIVE AWAY



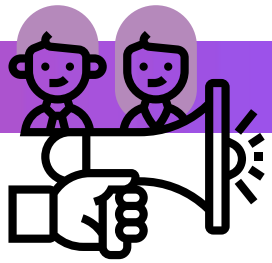
Zoey wrapped up in her new quilt!

If you follow EAENA or are part of our community, you may already know about one of our most special—and truly unique—programs: our Quilt Program. **The idea is simple, but the meaning behind it is profound.**

We work with funders and sponsors who help cover the cost of materials needed to create specialty quilts. The finished quilts are then gifted to individuals living with epilepsy who have been connected to us in different ways—through medical professionals, direct contact with our office, or through family members and loved ones.

Recipients can be of any age. While we often give quilts to children, we also support adults who may be facing a particularly difficult diagnosis, an upcoming brain surgery, or another challenging period in their epilepsy journey. Each quilt is created specifically with the recipient in mind. It is more than a blanket. It becomes a tangible expression of warmth, care, encouragement, and the support of an entire community.





A QUILT, A MESSAGE OF HOPE — AND MORE QUILTS TO GIVE AWAY (CONT.)

A Special Gift for Zoey

On July 20, 2026, we held our second informal quilt-gifting ceremony with the Oikle family.
Their daughter, Zoey, was scheduled for a specialized procedure to investigate the possibility of implanting deep brain stimulation devices as part of her seizure management. Before heading to the hospital, the family stopped by our office to receive her quilt. **Zoey absolutely loved it.**

The family kindly gave us permission to share a photograph of Zoey with her quilt while she was in her hospital bed—a picture that beautifully captures the meaning behind this program.

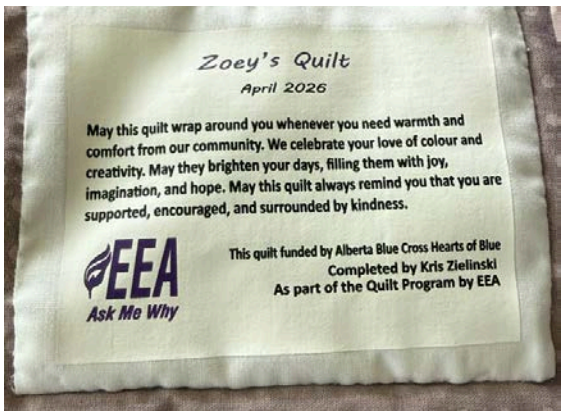
While medical professionals provide the clinical care needed to manage epilepsy, we believe that a community can offer something different but equally meaningful: encouragement, compassion, connection, and hope.
A quilt designed especially for one person carries that message in a very tangible way.
It says:

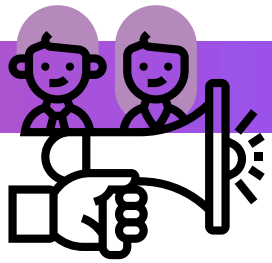
You are not alone. We see you. We are thinking of you. We are here to lend a hand in whatever way we can. Every stitch represents the care of people who may never meet the recipient but understand, in one way or another, what it means to live with epilepsy or to love someone who does.

More Quilts Ready to Find Their New Homes

We are also delighted to share that we have received **two more completed quilts**, both ready to be gifted to individuals living with epilepsy. This year's Quilt Program has been fully sponsored by **Hearts of Blue, by Blue Cross**, whose support has helped make these meaningful gifts possible.

If you or someone you know is living with epilepsy and may benefit from receiving one of these quilts, please reach out to our office at **info@epilepsyalbertanorth.ca**. We will coordinate the gifting process and add a specially dedicated label to personalize the quilt for its recipient. **Because sometimes, during a difficult chapter, knowing that a community is standing beside you can mean more than words can say.**





XTALKS WEBINAR AND INTERVIEW

This summer, EAENA had the opportunity to bring our community perspective to an international audience through two related engagements with XTalks, an online platform connecting life sciences professionals and facilitating conversations across the health and research communities.

Bringing Advocacy into Neurology Research

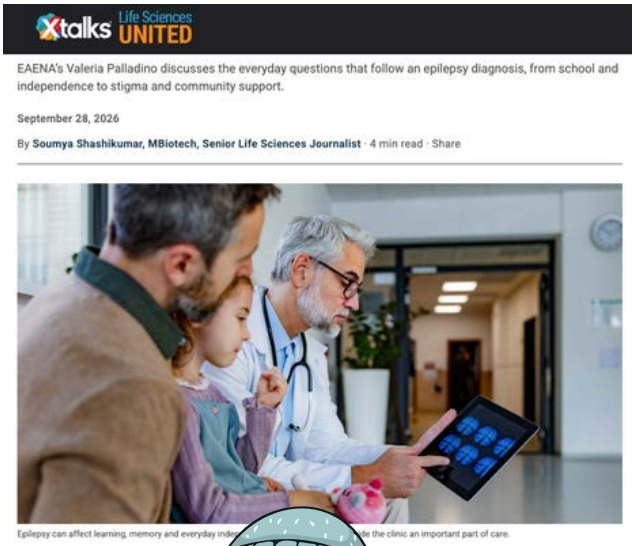
On July 13, 2026, our Executive Director, Valeria Palladino, was invited to participate as a panelist in a special webinar exploring the role that advocacy and community perspectives can play in improving neurological research.
The webinar, “How Advocacy Perspectives Can Improve Neurology Research,” brought together different perspectives on why meaningful engagement with patients, families, caregivers, and community organizations matters when shaping research.

For EAENA, opportunities such as this are particularly important. Our organization brings decades of community experience, along with the lived experiences of people and families affected by epilepsy. We believe that research is strengthened when those experiences are heard—not simply at the end of a research project, but throughout the process of identifying needs, developing questions, communicating findings, and considering how research can ultimately make a difference in people's lives.

The full webinar recording is available through XTalks. Registration is required to access the recording:
Watch the XTalks webinar: How Advocacy Perspectives Can Improve Neurology Research.

Continuing the Conversation

Following the webinar, Valeria also participated in a **follow-up audio interview with XTalks**, providing another opportunity to talk about EAENA's work and the importance of connecting the professional and research communities with organizations that work directly with people living with neurological conditions.


Xtalks Life Sciences UNITED

EAENA's Valeria Palladino discusses the everyday questions that follow an epilepsy diagnosis, from school and independence to stigma and community support.

September 28, 2026

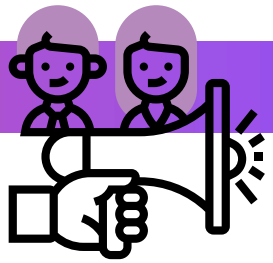
By **Soumya Shashikumar, MBiotech, Senior Life Sciences Journalist** · 4 min read · Share

Epilepsy can affect learning, memory and everyday ind… the clinic an important part of care.

These conversations give us an opportunity to share what we see and hear every day in our community: the questions people have, the gaps they encounter, the practical challenges of living with epilepsy, and the importance of building trust between researchers and the people whose lives their work is intended to improve.
For a grassroots organization like EAENA, international exposure is not simply about promoting what we do. It is another way of ensuring that **the voices and experiences of people living with epilepsy remain part of the larger conversation about neurological research, advocacy, and better care.**



For the interview article see pages in our “Epilepsy News” section.



KOREAN EPILEPSY SUPPORT CENTRE AND ALBERTA DENTAL ASSOCIATION: NEW COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

We are especially excited to share this update. During the summer months, EAENA was approached by two organizations outside our traditional circle of influence—one here in Alberta and one from across the world—with opportunities to collaborate and expand access to reliable epilepsy information.

Helping Alberta Dentists Better Support Patients with Epilepsy

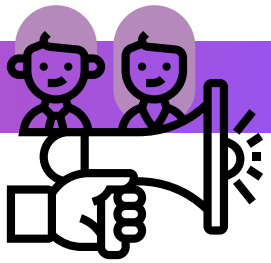
Members of the Alberta Dental Association reached out to our office to explore a potential collaboration focused on developing practical resources for the more than 3,100 registered dentists in Alberta.

The goal is to help dental professionals better understand epilepsy and feel more confident when providing care to patients who live with seizures. The resources we are discussing could include checklists, educational materials, and video resources that explain epilepsy in practical terms and highlight simple questions, accommodations, and safety considerations that can make a dental visit more comfortable and successful. We immediately welcomed the opportunity.

The collaboration has the potential to help dental professionals better understand the realities of living with epilepsy, including seizures, treatments, and possible side effects of anti-seizure medications. It can also provide practical guidance on ways to reduce anxiety and discomfort, improve communication, and promote greater safety during dental care and hygiene appointments.

Most importantly, this is another opportunity to bring epilepsy education to professionals who may interact with people living with epilepsy regularly but may not have received specific training about the condition. We are currently working with the Association to establish timelines and determine the next steps for this exciting initiative.





KOREAN EPILEPSY SUPPORT CENTRE AND ALBERTA DENTAL ASSOCIATION: NEW COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES (CONT.)

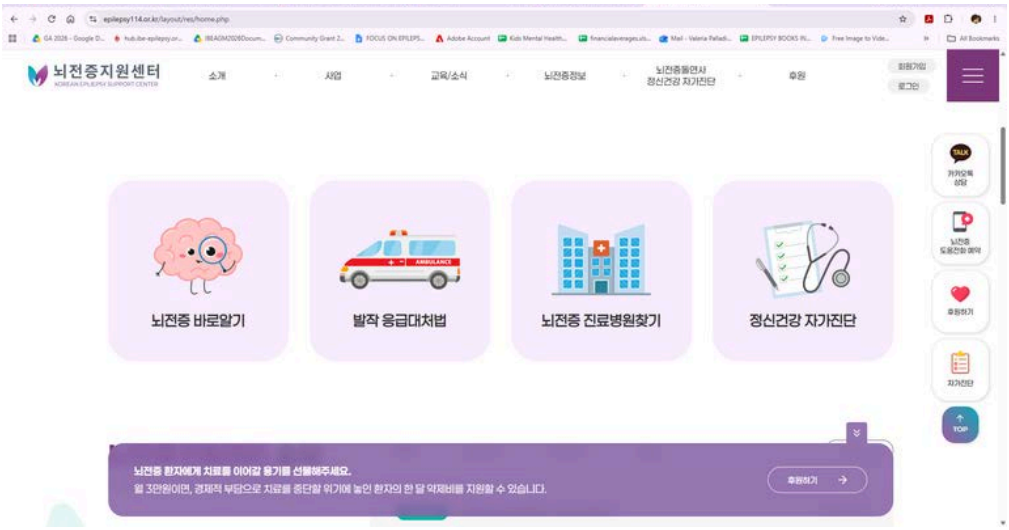
From Edmonton to Seoul

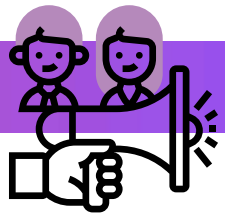
On the international front, we were equally excited to hear from the Korean Epilepsy Support Center (KESC), an IBE Associate Chapter.

KESC reached out to EAENA to explore the possibility of translating some of our Epilepsy Book series into Korean. We subsequently coordinated a Zoom meeting to learn more about their plans and discuss the requirements for moving forward. The possibility of having our resources translated into Korean is particularly exciting because it could allow reliable, easy-to-understand epilepsy information to reach an entirely new audience—while maintaining the principles that have guided our book program from the beginning: free access for the public and clear recognition of EAENA as the original source and contributor to the materials.

We will continue to keep our community informed as both of these potential collaborations develop throughout 2027. For us, these conversations represent more than new projects. They are another indication that the work EAENA has been doing for decades—creating practical resources, sharing knowledge, listening to our community, and making information freely accessible—is reaching people and organizations well beyond our immediate circle.

From an Alberta dental office to a conversation across the world in Seoul, every new connection creates another opportunity to reduce epilepsy stigma, increase understanding, improve access to reliable information, and ultimately contribute to a better quality of life for people living with epilepsy. We are excited to see where these two new partnerships may take us in 2027!





WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US - MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Listening, learning and growing together

Our 2026 Member Survey gives us a closer look at what matters to the people and families who make up the EAENA community.

At EAENA, we often talk about building a stronger epilepsy community. But what does that really mean to the people who are part of it? This year, we asked our members through a voluntary, anonymous survey conducted online and on paper, as we usually do every few years to get a sense of how our work and commitment help shape our epilepsy community.

Our 2026 Member Survey gave members an opportunity to tell us what they value, what they need, what makes it difficult to participate, and what they would like to see from EAENA in the future. And their answers gave us plenty to think about.

A COMMUNITY THAT VALUES CONNECTION

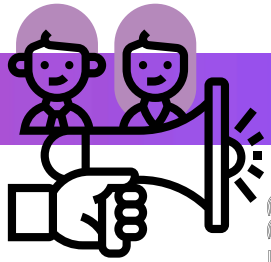
One message came through very clearly: members value EAENA and the sense of connection it provides. More than 80% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with EAENA at 4 or 5 out of 5. Members told us that the website, social events, FOCUS magazine, education, support and opportunities to connect with others continue to be important parts of what EAENA offers.

One member described EAENA as a place with ***"wonderful people" and volunteers who understand what it means to live with epilepsy."***

That is exactly what we hope EAENA will continue to be — a place where people feel understood.

"Living with epilepsy can sometimes feel isolating. Finding people who understand can make all the difference."





WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US - MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS (CONT.)

MORE THAN PROGRAMS — A PLACE TO BELONG

One of the most interesting messages from the survey is that members are looking for more than information about epilepsy. They want opportunities to meet people. They want to get out of the house. They want to bring their families somewhere safe and welcoming. They want to laugh, create, learn, talk and simply spend time with people who understand.

Members suggested crafts, bingo, coffee get-togethers, field trips, and holiday celebrations. Others suggested programs specifically for adults, children, spouses and parents. These ideas may seem simple, but they tell us something important. For some people living with epilepsy, ordinary social activities can become complicated. Transportation, work schedules, family responsibilities, anxiety about seizures and concerns about accessibility can all become barriers.

One member explained that simply having a safe place to bring family members — without worrying about losing the cost of an admission fee if a seizure occurs or the situation becomes overwhelming — makes participating much easier. **That is the kind of feedback that stays with us.** This is also, in case you did not know, one of the original goals why our charity was founded back in 1960.

WHAT MEMBERS ASKED FOR

Our survey highlighted several areas where members would like to see EAENA continue to grow:

💻 **More online connection**
Adult sessions and opportunities to connect online, especially for people who cannot easily attend in person.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Family programs**
Opportunities for children, parents, spouses and families to meet others who understand their experiences.

🎨 **Social & recreational activities**
Crafts, bingo, coffee gatherings, field trips, and holiday celebrations.

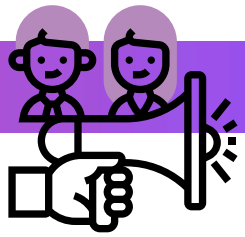
🧠 **Practical support**
One-to-one counselling, navigation and assistance with issues such as employment, housing, AISH and food security. If we do not have the resources to support these needs directly, we can connect members to the right agencies.

🚌 **Greater accessibility**
Transportation and participation options for members living outside Edmonton or facing mobility and other barriers.

📅 **Better communication**
A monthly calendar, monthly highlights and more information about upcoming programs and FOCUS on EPILEPSY content.

🙋 **Flexible volunteering**
Ways for members to contribute their skills and time, including options that can be done around work and family commitments.

📚 **Current epilepsy information**
Education on seizure terminology, medication-resistant epilepsy, TBI and epilepsy, cognitive epilepsy and other topics members want to understand better.



WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US - MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS (CONT.)

MAKING CONNECTION POSSIBLE

Online connection matters

Almost two-thirds of respondents expressed interest in adult sessions offered online. Members told us they live outside Edmonton, have transportation challenges, work during the week, have family responsibilities or, in some cases, are unable to leave home. For these members, online programming is not simply a convenience. It can be the difference between participating and being left out.

At the same time, members continue to value face-to-face connection. Our survey tells us that EAENA does not need to choose between online and in-person programming. There is value in both. Our challenge is to find ways to make both available with our limited access to funding. But we do listen and will continue to be creative in ways to reach and support our members.

Saturdays may open more doors

Timing matters, too. Saturday mornings and early afternoons were the most frequently selected preferences for in-person activities. Several comments explained that weekday work schedules, distance and family commitments can make other times difficult. Sometimes accessibility begins with something as simple as choosing a time when people can actually come.

"The question isn't only what should we offer? It is also when and how can people realistically join us?"

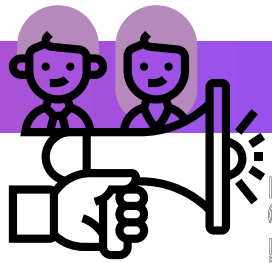
Families need a place too

Another theme that stood out was the desire for more family-focused opportunities.

Members suggested a play group for younger children with epilepsy, support for parents as children move into puberty, and opportunities for spouses of adults living with epilepsy. **The current project "Kids with Epilepsy: Challenges and Solutions for Mental Health" is the perfect venue to meet these needs.**

These suggestions remind us that epilepsy rarely affects only one person. Parents worry. Partners adjust their lives. Children may feel different from their peers. Families learn how to respond to seizures, medications, appointments and uncertainty. Creating opportunities for family members to meet others who understand those experiences can be just as valuable as providing information about epilepsy itself.





WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US - MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS (CONT.)

LISTENING BEYOND EPILEPSY

The survey also highlighted needs that go beyond traditional epilepsy education.
Members mentioned wanting more one-to-one counselling and assistance with employment, housing, AISH and food security. Others expressed interest in having access to counselling at the EAENA office, even for one or two days each week. These comments were directly mentioning a free volunteer-based service our agency used to offer up to about 10 years ago. It is important for us to know this is still a valued offer, while we deal with extremely limited resources for us to re-establish that routine.

These comments reinforce something we already know:

Living with epilepsy can affect many areas of life.
Sometimes a person does not need another brochure. They need someone to listen, help them find the right resource or simply help them figure out what to do next. That is where navigation and individualized support can make a real difference.

Volunteers want to help
We also heard from members who want to contribute. However, not everyone can commit to a regular shift or spend an entire Saturday at an event. Some people may be able to help for an hour. Others may have professional skills, creative talents, lived experience or ideas that could benefit EAENA from home. We want to keep finding ways for people to contribute **in the way that works for them.**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are listening — and your feedback will help shape our next steps.
The survey does not mean that every suggestion can immediately become a new program. EAENA is a small organization, and we need to be thoughtful about our resources.
But the feedback gives us a clearer picture of where members see opportunities for growth.
We will continue exploring ways to:

- Offer more online and in-person opportunities
- Develop family, children, parent and spouse programming
- Create more social and recreational activities
- Strengthen one-to-one support and navigation
- Make participation easier for members facing transportation barriers
- Improve regular communication about programs and events
- Create flexible volunteer opportunities
- Provide practical, current epilepsy education

Most importantly, we will continue listening.



WHAT OUR MEMBERS TOLD US - MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS (CONT.)

GROWING TOGETHER

Perhaps the most encouraging part of the survey was the appreciation members expressed for EAENA.
One member wrote that the Association, staff and board are doing a terrific job with limited resources and that they are impressed by the creativity, activities, services and growth of the website.
Another simply wrote:

“Thanks for all you do.”

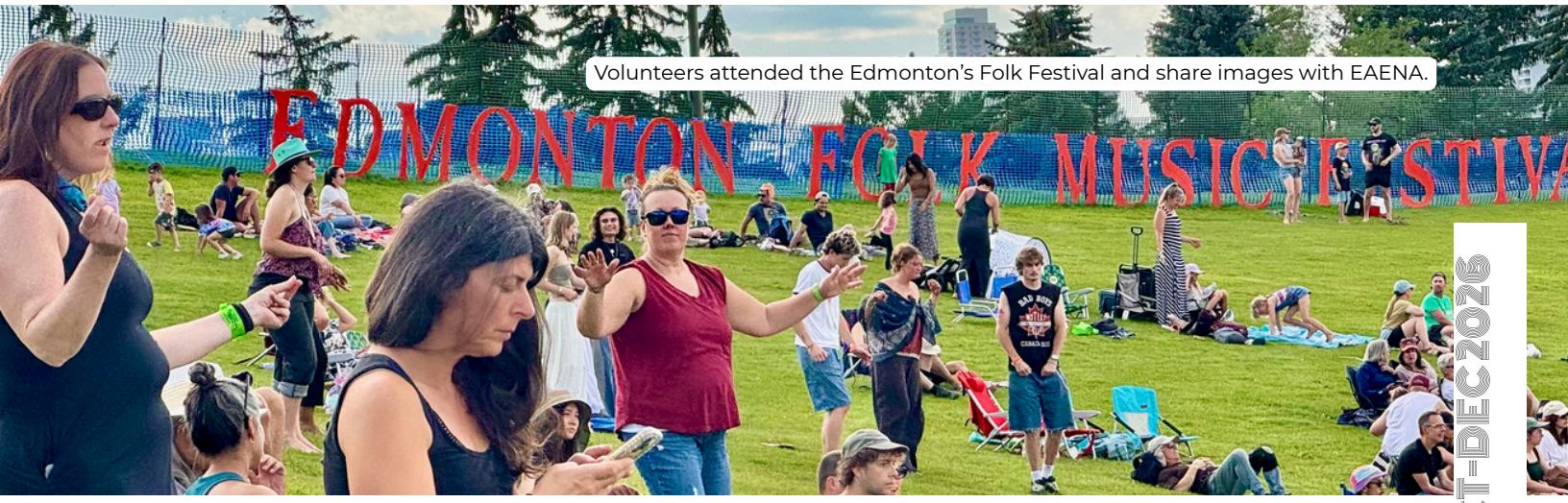
And another:

“Love you guys.”

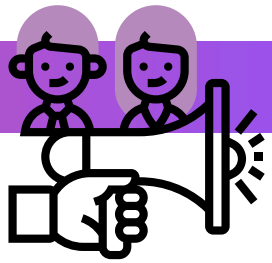
We do not take those words for granted.

EAENA is a small organization supported by dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, donors and community partners. Every program represents people giving their time, energy, knowledge and resources to make life a little easier for someone affected by epilepsy. The survey reminds us that we are on the right path — and that there is always more to learn.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our 2026 Member Survey.
Your ideas, comments, encouragement and honest feedback help EAENA understand where we are today — and where we can go together tomorrow. Because at EAENA, listening to our members isn't just part of what we do. ***IT IS HOW WE GROW.***



Volunteers attended the Edmonton’s Folk Festival and share images with EAENA.



PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Our **Purple Lunch Hours** sessions continued over the summer, with a few short breaks along the way.

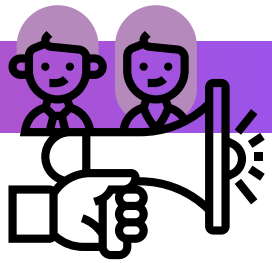
On July 28, we held a smaller online session focused specifically on our Kids Mental Health Project, which is now in full swing with Phase II. During this phase, we are creating and testing proofs of concept — practical examples of the resources we hope to develop — that will help us demonstrate the potential of the project as we pursue more significant funding for its final stage.

The long-term goal is to bring these resources together in an online Learning Management System (LMS), where young people, families and caregivers will be able to access practical, reliable resources focused on the emotional and mental well-being challenges that can accompany living with epilepsy. We took a short break during August and returned on September 1, this time with an evening Purple Lunch Hour led once again by our President, Susan Wilkie. Susan generously shared her own experience and journey as she prepared for the new school year with her son, who lives with epilepsy.

Her personal perspective helped bring to life something we know well: preparing for a new school year can involve much more than buying school supplies and getting back into a routine when a child lives with epilepsy. There can be conversations to have, plans to make, questions to ask and, sometimes, worries to manage — for both the child and the parent.

As we did in our previous issue of *FOCUS*, we are taking the conversations and ideas shared during our Purple Lunch Hours and transforming them into **practical, usable resources** that can benefit everyone who follows EAENA's work. Later in this issue, you will find pages dedicated to examples of the resources we are currently creating through the Kids Mental Health Project, as well as some of the ways **young people themselves can help us move this project forward**. Because this project is not only about creating resources *for* young people. It is also about creating them **with young people**. And that is where their voices, experiences and ideas become so important.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

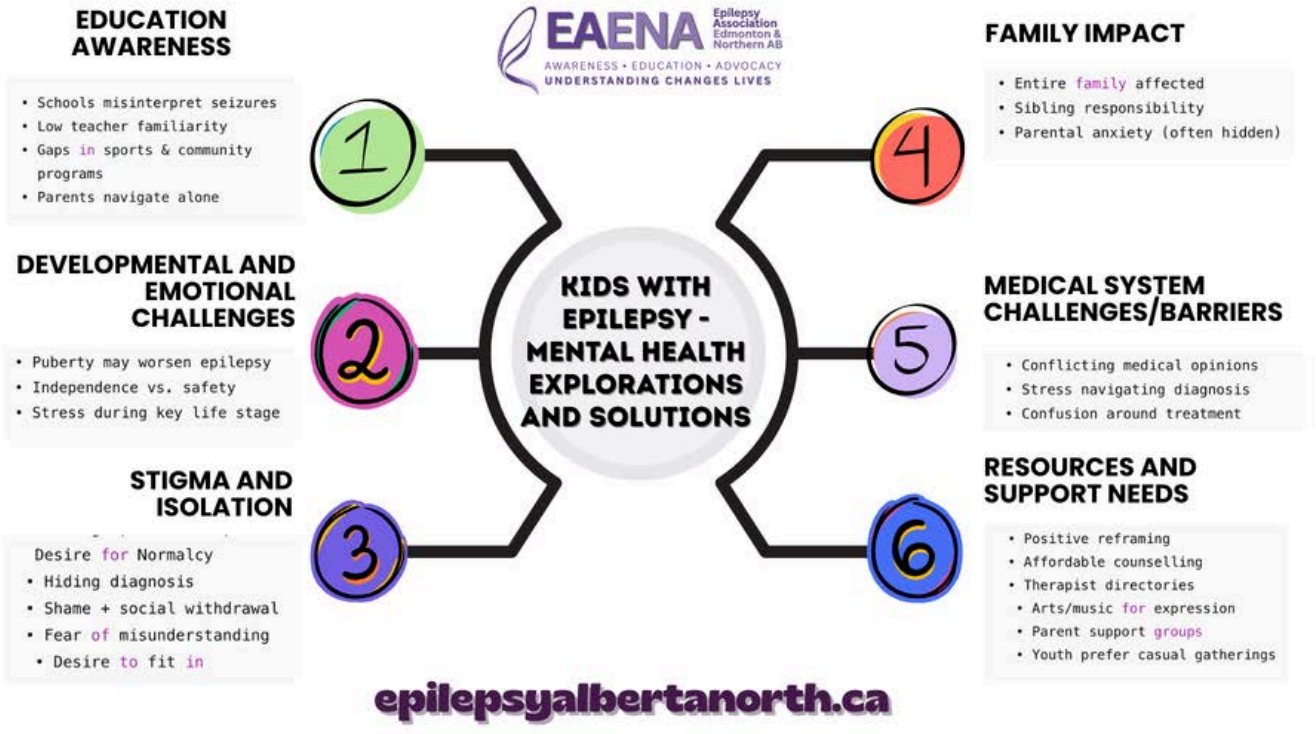
EPILEPSY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

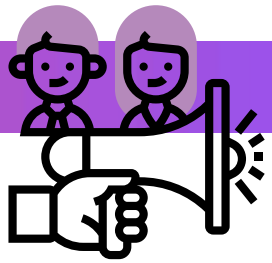
Why does mental well-being matter when a young person has epilepsy? When a child or teenager is diagnosed with epilepsy, much of the immediate attention naturally goes to seizures, medications, safety and medical care. But epilepsy can affect much more than the physical body.

For young people between the ages of 12 and 18, epilepsy can also affect emotions, confidence, friendships, school, independence and family life.
A young person may worry:

"What if I have a seizure at school?"
"What will my friends think?"
"Will I be able to play sports?"
"Can I go places on my own?"
"What if I have a seizure when nobody knows what to do?"
"Why am I different from everyone else?"

These worries can affect mental and emotional well-being. EAENA's project, Kids with Epilepsy, Mental Health Challenges, Exploration and Solutions, was created to better understand these challenges and develop practical resources that can help young people and their families.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

SIX AREAS THAT CAN AFFECT MENTAL WELL-BEING

Research, community engagement and consultation with psychological and counselling professionals helped us identify several important areas.

1. Education and Awareness

Understanding epilepsy can help young people, families, teachers and communities feel more confident. Sometimes people do not understand seizures or may have incorrect ideas about what a person with epilepsy can or cannot do.

For example, a young person may want to participate in a sport or school activity, but adults may be unsure about whether it is safe.

Teaching message: Learning about epilepsy can reduce fear and misunderstanding. Good information should be reliable, easy to understand and appropriate for the young person.

2. Emotional and Developmental Challenges

Growing up already comes with many changes. Puberty, friendships, school pressures and becoming more independent can be challenging. The project also recognizes that changes in seizure frequency or severity can increase worry for both young people and their families. A young person may experience:



- Fear
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Embarrassment
- Sadness
- Stress
- Worry about the future

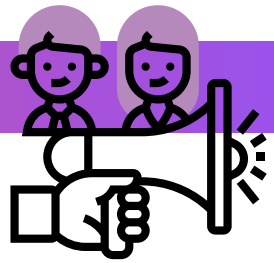
Parents and caregivers may also experience anxiety about their child's safety and development.

Teaching message: Feelings are a normal response to difficult experiences. Talking about them is an important part of taking care of yourself.

3. Independence and Safety

One of the biggest challenges for families can be finding the balance between **protecting a young person and allowing them to become independent**. Parents naturally want to keep their children safe. Young people, however, also need opportunities to make choices, develop confidence and feel that they have some control over their own lives. The goal is not to remove all risk. The goal is to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to participate safely in everyday life.

Think about: What is one thing you would like to be able to do more independently?



PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

SIX AREAS THAT CAN AFFECT MENTAL WELL-BEING (cont.)

4. Stigma and Isolation

Stigma can be one of the most difficult parts of living with epilepsy.
A young person may worry that others will see them differently because they have seizures. They may fear:

- Having a seizure in front of classmates
- Being embarrassed
- Being excluded
- Being misunderstood
- Having people treat them differently
- Not fitting in

Teenagers often have a strong desire to feel “normal” and belong with their peers. These concerns can sometimes lead to social withdrawal or isolation.

Teaching message:
Having epilepsy is one part of who you are. It does not define your abilities, personality, friendships or future.

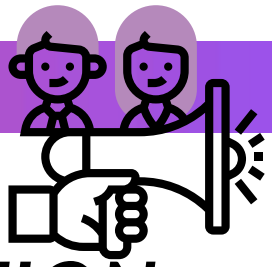
5. Family Impact

Epilepsy affects the whole family, not only the person who has seizures.
Parents and caregivers may experience worry or uncertainty. Siblings may have questions about seizures or may not know how to talk about what is happening. Families may need to learn how to communicate openly about epilepsy and support one another. Resources created through this project may therefore be useful not only for young people with epilepsy, but also for:

- Parents
- Caregivers
- Siblings
- Friends
- Other family members

Teaching message: Everyone in a family may experience epilepsy differently, and everyone deserves a chance to talk about their feelings.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

SIX AREAS THAT CAN AFFECT MENTAL WELL-BEING (cont.)

6. Finding Resources and Support

Sometimes the hardest part is knowing where to go for help.
A young person may know they are anxious or overwhelmed but not know what they can do about it.
Families may also have difficulty finding reliable information. EAENA's project aims to develop resources that are:

- Easy to understand
- Based on reliable research
- Practical
- Short and accessible
- Available in different formats
- Useful for young people and families



The future vision includes an online platform where a young person or parent could search for a topic — such as anxiety, fear or feeling overwhelmed — and find resources that may help them understand what they are experiencing and identify possible next steps.

WHAT CAN HELP?

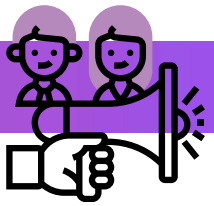
The project is exploring practical strategies that young people can use in everyday situations.
Resources may include:

- Short videos
- Checklists
- Printable handouts
- Activities
- Worksheets
- Conversation starters
- Simple strategies for managing difficult feelings

The project is also drawing on psychotherapy models, including strategies from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), to develop simple and practical resources. The goal is not to make young people become experts in therapy. The goal is to give them small tools they can understand and use.

TRY IT. SHARE IT. HELP US SHAPE IT.

In the next few pages, we're sharing a few examples of activity ideas we're currently testing as a pilot experiment on social media — just one more reason to start following EAENA!
But we don't want to create these resources for young people with epilepsy. We want to create them with you. ***We are actively inviting youth living with epilepsy to help us test, shape and improve these ideas as we move forward with this project.*** *Your experiences, creativity and feedback can help us make these resources more useful, relevant and, hopefully, a little more fun. Want to be part of it? Reach out to our office and ask how you can become an active participant — and a creator of resources that can benefit other young people in our epilepsy community. Your ideas could become someone else's "I needed this today." 💜*





Worry Puzzle

It's okay to worry. You're not alone.

Sometimes our minds can feel like a puzzle...

Let's put the pieces together. Write down your worries, then sort them into the right category.

- Having a seizure in public
- Being alone
- Friends not understanding
- Missing school
- Embarrassment
- Losing independence
- People staring
- Not knowing when the next seizure will happen

Things I can control

These are the things I can do, choose or change.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Small steps make a big difference!

Things I can prepare for

These are things I can plan ahead for.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Plan Build Feel safer

Things I can't control

These are things that might happen, but I can't change.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

It's not my fault. I can still be okay.

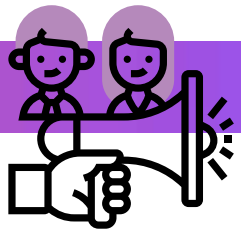
Breathe. You've got this.

I don't have to solve everything today.

One step at a time.

EAENA Epilepsy Association Edmonton & Northern AB
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY
UNDERSTANDING CHANGES LIVES

CC BY NC SA



PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

LEARNING THROUGH CONVERSATION AND PLAY

An important part of the project is asking young people themselves what they need.
EAENA plans to engage young people with epilepsy, their siblings and close friends through activities that make conversation comfortable and natural. Instead of sitting down and asking a young person a long list of serious questions, activities such as games, bowling or a Monopoly afternoon can help break the ice.
For example, during a game, participants may be invited to share something about their epilepsy experience or answer a question.

The game becomes the reason to gather — but the conversation becomes the learning.
This approach recognizes that young people may have valuable ideas about what would actually help them.

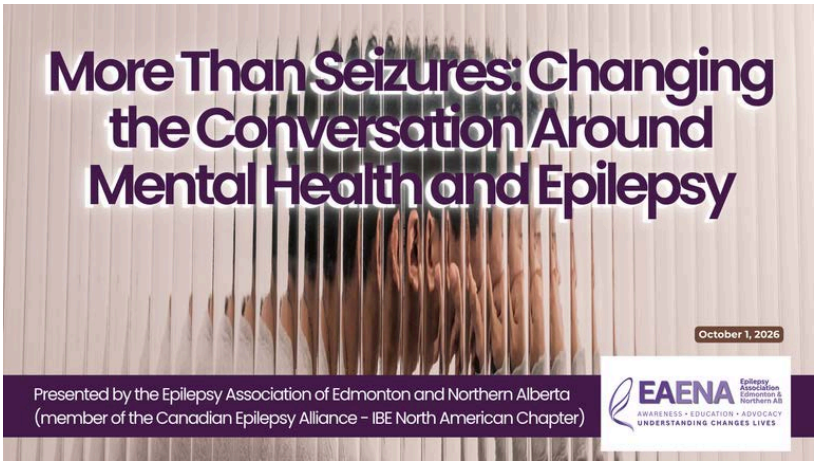
THE BIG MESSAGE

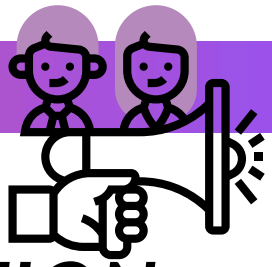
Mental well-being is part of living with epilepsy. A young person is more than their seizures.
They are a student, friend, sibling, child, athlete, artist, gamer, volunteer, musician, dreamer — and much more.
Supporting mental well-being means helping young people:

- Understand their feelings
- Talk about their concerns
- Feel less alone
- Build confidence
- Develop appropriate independence
- Find reliable information
- Know where to seek support
- Stay connected with family, friends and their community



Remember:
Your feelings are valid.
You are not alone.
You can ask for help.
Epilepsy is part of your life —
but it does not have to define your life.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (CONT.)

ABOUT THE EAENA PROJECT



EAENA's mental well-being project began with research, literature reviews, community engagement and consultation with counselling professionals. The project is being developed in stages:

- Phase 1: Research, community engagement and development of the foundation.
- Phase 2: Development and testing of practical resources and proof-of-concept tools.
- Phase 3: The longer-term goal is to establish an accessible online platform containing reliable, practical mental well-being resources for young people with epilepsy and their families.

Young people and families are an important part of this process because the people who live with epilepsy are the people who can tell us what support will be most useful. This version could work particularly well as an EAENA teaching handout for ages 12–18, but it can also be adapted for a parent workshop, school presentation, volunteer training session, or community discussion.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: BACK TO SCHOOL WITH EPILEPSY: YOU ARE NOT ALONE

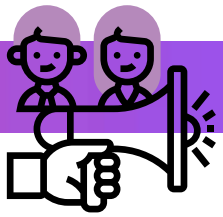
Back to School with Epilepsy: You Are Not Alone

Starting a new school year can bring excitement, new routines and, for families living with epilepsy, a whole list of extra questions. What should the school know? Is the medical action plan up to date? Who needs to know what to do if a seizure happens? What about medications, transportation, extracurricular activities and learning accommodations?

At our recent Purple Lunch Hour, EAENA President Susan Wilkie shared her personal experience of navigating the school system with her son, Owen, who was diagnosed with epilepsy at age four. Now in Grade 11 and seizure-free for many years, Susan has spent more than a decade learning how important communication, preparation and advocacy can be. One of her biggest messages was simple: start with communication.

A current medical action plan should clearly explain what seizures look like for the child, what the school should do, when emergency services should be called, and what medications or rescue medications may be required. It should also be shared with the people who interact with the child—not only classroom teachers, but educational assistants, extracurricular staff, transportation providers and before- and after-school care.
Susan also spoke about the academic side of epilepsy. Learning challenges, medication effects and other needs may mean that a child requires accommodations through an individualized education plan. Her advice? Make sure recommended accommodations are actually reflected in the plan and are being provided. These supports are not about giving a child an advantage—they are about giving them what they need to participate and learn alongside their peers.





PURPLE LUNCH HOURS: BACK TO SCHOOL WITH EPILEPSY: YOU ARE NOT ALONE (CONT.)

"Epilepsy changes some things—but it does not mean life stops. Our children can continue learning, growing, participating, dreaming and pursuing the things that matter to them."

And then there is the human side of it all.

Children may not want to stand out because of epilepsy or learning accommodations. They may feel embarrassed, isolated or reluctant to ask for help. Susan found that education made a significant difference. The more classmates and teachers understood about epilepsy, the easier it became to reduce fear, questions and stigma.

For parents and caregivers who are new to this journey, Susan's advice was reassuring: you do not have to be an expert to advocate for your child. Start with the teacher. Ask questions. Set up a meeting. Take notes. Bring someone with you if a meeting feels overwhelming. And if you are not being heard, it is okay to continue moving through the appropriate channels until your concerns are addressed.

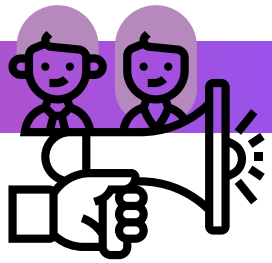
Being an advocate can sometimes feel like being the "red flag parent," but Susan reminded us that this is not necessarily a bad thing. It means making sure the people responsible for your child's care understand what they need to be safe, supported and successful. Perhaps the most important message from the evening was that families do not have to navigate epilepsy alone. EAENA offers resources for children, families, teachers and caregivers, as well as mentorship for parents and caregivers who are just beginning their epilepsy journey.

A new school year may bring new challenges, but with preparation, communication, understanding and the right support around a child, it can also bring new opportunities.

Epilepsy changes some things—but it does not mean life stops. Our children can continue learning, growing, participating, dreaming and pursuing the things that matter to them.

This keeps the key lessons from Susan's story while making it read as a Focus on Epilepsy feature/resource, rather than a meeting recap. The source discussion specifically emphasizes the medical action plan, school accommodations, communication, advocacy, stigma and the importance of not feeling alone.





AWARENESS TABLES AND EVENTS FOR EPILEPSY

The summer months did not stop us from continuing to participate in special events and host awareness tables throughout our community. These opportunities allow us to showcase the work of our charity, but, most importantly, to connect with the public and raise awareness about epilepsy.

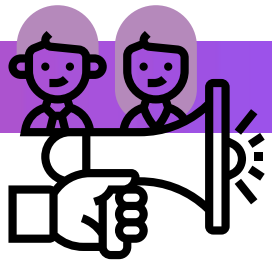
Without fail, every time we host an awareness table, we meet people who approach us to share their own experiences with epilepsy. Some share their stories with hesitation, while others are eager to talk. What never fails to happen is the pleasant surprise people express when they discover that our community exists—and that support is available. These conversations are an important reminder of why community outreach and epilepsy awareness matter. We are here to offer support, education, information, understanding, and connection to people living with epilepsy, their families, caregivers, and the broader community.

Over the past three months, we hosted several awareness tables and events, including:

- TransAlta Awareness Table – August 19
- WEM Booth – September 5
- Stollery Awareness Table – September 8
- Kaye Clinic Awareness Table – September 15

Each event gives us another opportunity to connect with people, answer questions, share resources, and let members of our community know that they are not alone. Check our calendar pages for more opportunities to attend our sessions, participate in upcoming events, or volunteer with us. We guarantee you will find the experience meaningful and rewarding!





BOARD RETREAT

One Day. Big Conversations. Important Decisions.

What happens when a small but mighty organization has big plans, a community that continues to need its support, and limited financial resources? You stop, take a full day, put everything on the table—and work through it together. That is exactly what the EAENA Board of Directors did on September 26, 2026, during our annual strategic retreat.

For the past few years, we have been fortunate to bring our Board together in person, either at our office or in another space where we can step away from the day-to-day work and focus on the bigger picture. There is something very different about having an entire day, face to face, to listen, reflect, question, plan and make decisions together. Often, one full day of focused conversation allows us to accomplish what could take many online meetings. This year, the conversation was especially important.

Our focus was to truly come to terms with EAENA's financial challenges and develop a practical plan that allows us to continue serving our community while operating within our limited resources. These conversations are not always easy. We are seeing smaller donation revenues and greater challenges in securing funding for projects, while our basic operational infrastructure remains critical to our ability to survive, thrive and serve our community. We need to keep the organization functioning while continuing to offer meaningful programs, resources and support—without creating an unsustainable financial burden.

There were difficult questions to consider: What can we realistically afford? What does our community tell us it needs most? Where should we focus our limited resources? What can we continue, what may need to change, and where are there opportunities to strengthen our revenue and fundraising?

We are pleased to share that, with quorum attendance on September 26, the Board reached several important decisions that will shape what we offer and how we deliver our programs in 2027. Those decisions were not made in isolation. They were informed by responses from our recent member survey, the perspectives and ideas of the directors in attendance, our 2027 planning priorities, and access to some investments that will help carry EAENA through the end of 2026 and into the next fiscal year.

And, because Board work is about people as much as plans, there was plenty of laughter along the way. We welcomed two new directors to our team and enjoyed some great food together while tackling some very serious conversations.

Strategic planning is not simply about creating a list of programs for the coming year. It is about making thoughtful choices that balance community need, organizational capacity and financial reality. We are grateful to our directors for giving their time, experience and energy to this work. Their commitment helps ensure that EAENA can continue moving forward—carefully, realistically and with our community at the centre of what we do.

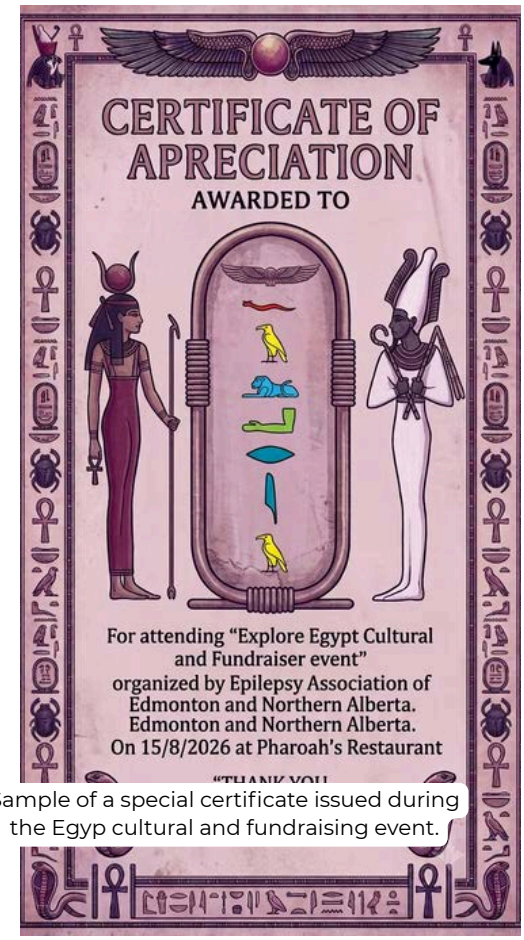
And if you are thinking about joining our Board next year, we would love to hear from you. Reach out to our office and we will be happy to talk with you about what Board service involves and how you might contribute to the future of EAENA.

HOBSCOTCH AND MENTORSHIP SESSIONS — AND THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Two other popular programs we offer through structured volunteer support are our Memory Coaching Program, HOBSCOTCH, and our Mentorship Program. Over the past three months, several EAENA members have taken advantage of these programs, which are fully managed and delivered by our trained volunteers. These programs provide an opportunity for members to receive support, build skills, connect with others, and know that someone is there to walk alongside them.

We have dedicated a special page in this final issue of our 2026 magazine to recognize our core volunteers and highlight their individual contributions to our community. Their time, commitment, compassion, and willingness to support others make these programs possible.

We are incredibly grateful to all of our volunteers for everything they contribute. We are equally grateful to the members who take the step to reach out and ask for support. Sometimes, asking for help can feel difficult or even scary—but there is no need to face things alone. We are here to offer a hand whenever we can.
Read more about these regular programs in the section later in this issue, and contact our office if you would like to learn more about joining HOBSCOTCH or our Mentorship Program.



Sample of a special certificate issued during the Egyp cultural and fundraising event.

CRAFTS DAY - OCTOBER 3

🍂 A Little Art, A Little Community, A Lot of Good Feeling! 🎨

A small group of community members joined us at the EAENA office on October 3 for a wonderful fall art session led by our fabulous volunteer, Dr. Mai Heikal. Dr. Heikal guided everyone in creating beautiful fall scenes on canvas—and, as always, the art became so much more than simply painting. We believe that small opportunities to play with art and discover our own creativity can help all of us, young and old alike, relax, reconnect with ourselves, find our inner strength, and ease feelings of stress and isolation. Add some treats, laughter and good company, and you have the ingredients for a very special community gathering.

We believe these small gatherings offer more than an opportunity to be creative. Art can help us relax, reconnect with ourselves, reduce stress and isolation, and discover strengths we may not always recognize.
We know life is busy, so EAENA will continue offering welcoming community activities at times that work around people's schedules, medication routines and the realities of the Canadian seasons. Thank you to everyone who joined us. We hope you left with a smile, a little more energy, and a renewed appreciation for the power of community.

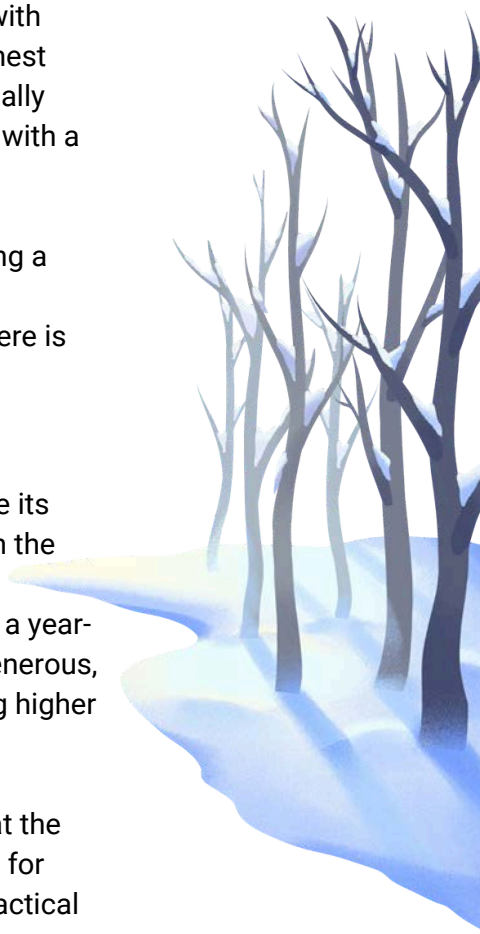


FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Work Behind the Work: Keeping EAENA Financially Strong

Every program, every resource, every phone call answered and every person supported depends on something that is often invisible to the community: a financially stable organization behind the work.

At EAENA, we are proud of what we have continued to accomplish for people living with epilepsy and their families. But as a small community charity, we also need to be honest about one of the greatest challenges we face today: keeping the organization financially stable while continuing to provide the services and resources our community needs, with a keen eye on financial burdens we do NOT wish to impose on those we serve!



This is not a challenge unique to EAENA. Many charitable organizations are navigating a more difficult funding environment. For us, however, the impact can be particularly significant because we operate with limited resources and a small infrastructure. There is very little room for unexpected expenses, reduced revenue or delays in funding.

Donations: An Important Source That Can Change from Year to Year

Individual donations have always played an important role in helping EAENA continue its work. They allow us to respond to community needs, support programs and maintain the flexibility to address emerging issues.
But donations are not predictable. Over the past several years, we have experienced a year-to-year decline in donation revenue. Even when our community remains incredibly generous, donations can fluctuate considerably. Families and individuals are themselves facing higher living costs and financial pressures, and charitable giving can be affected.

For an organization like ours, a decrease in donations does not necessarily mean that the need for our services has decreased. In fact, the opposite can happen. The requests for information, support, education, counselling referrals, community connection and practical resources continue.

Sponsorships Help Us Do More—But They Are Not Guaranteed

Sponsorships can make an enormous difference. A business or organization that chooses to support an EAENA event, youth initiative, educational program or community activity can help us reach people we might otherwise not be able to reach. **We are grateful for every sponsor who has stood beside us.**

At the same time, sponsorships can be difficult to secure consistently. Businesses have their own priorities, budgets and communities to support. Sponsorships are often connected to specific events or projects rather than the ongoing costs of operating a charity. And that creates an important distinction. It can be easier to find support for something people can see—a walk, an event, a youth project or a community activity—than for the less visible work that makes all of those things possible.



FINANCIAL UPDATE (CONT.)

Grants: Valuable, but Often Project-Specific

Grants are another important part of our funding strategy. We have been fortunate to receive support for several meaningful projects, allowing us to develop new resources, explore innovative approaches and respond to specific community needs. **But project grants come with an important limitation: they generally fund the project, not the entire organization.**

A grant may help us create a new resource, deliver a youth initiative or run a specific program. It may pay for materials, activities or project-related staff time. It does not necessarily pay for the technology, insurance, accounting, administration, communications, office costs, planning, governance and other infrastructure required to keep the organization functioning. Those costs remain.

The Difficult Question: How Do We Keep the Lights On?
This is perhaps the hardest conversation for a small charity.
Our community sees the programs. We see the work behind them.

There are computers and technology to maintain. There are insurance and accounting costs. There are communications, administration, governance, office expenses, program planning, volunteer coordination and countless small operational requirements that rarely make it into a program description. None of these things are particularly exciting to fund. But without them, there is no organization to deliver the programs.

This means that EAENA has to constantly balance two responsibilities: responding to the needs of our community today while protecting the organization's ability to continue serving that community tomorrow. Sometimes that means asking difficult questions about what we can realistically take on. Sometimes it means postponing an idea we would love to pursue. Sometimes it means finding another way to deliver a program, looking for a partner, using existing resources creatively or making careful decisions about where our limited dollars will have the greatest impact.

Financial Stability Is About More Than Surviving

Our goal is not simply to keep EAENA operating from one year to the next. We want to build an organization that can continue to grow thoughtfully, respond to changing needs and remain available to people affected by epilepsy across Northern Alberta. That requires us to think differently about sustainability.

We need a healthy mix of donations, sponsorships, grants, fundraising initiatives and other responsible revenue opportunities. We need to continue building relationships with community partners. We need to demonstrate the value of our work while also being realistic about what our resources allow us to deliver. And we need to recognize that operational funding matters.

The infrastructure of a charity is not separate from its mission. It is what allows the mission to happen.



FINANCIAL UPDATE (CONT.)



Charity booths at the Birdies in Calgary.

Small but Mighty—and Looking Ahead

EAENA has been serving our community since 1960. For more than six decades, people have stepped forward to make sure that someone living with epilepsy does not have to navigate the experience alone.
We remain proud of that history.

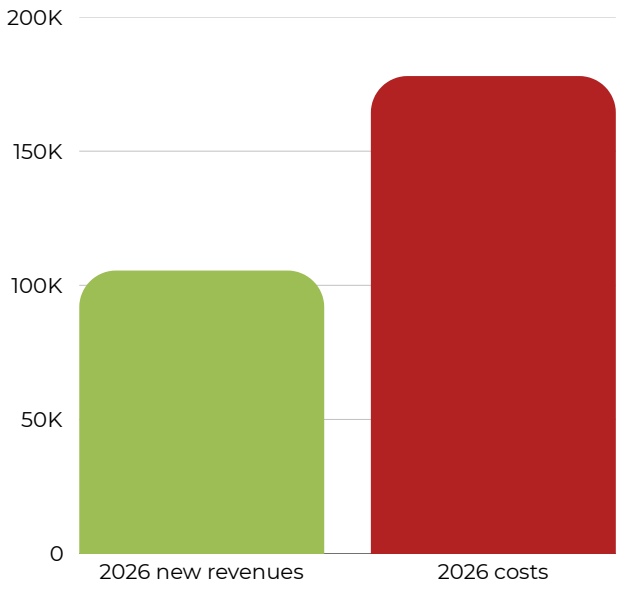
But sustainability cannot be based on history alone. It requires planning, careful financial decisions, community support and a willingness to have honest conversations about what comes next.

Our recent Board strategic retreat was an important part of that work. We spent a full day looking at our financial realities, listening to what our members have told us, reviewing our resources and making decisions about what EAENA can realistically offer in 2027. The conversations were not always easy. But they were necessary.

Because being small but mighty does not mean pretending that resources are unlimited. It means understanding our limitations, making thoughtful choices and finding ways to keep doing meaningful work with the resources we have.

And perhaps most importantly, it means remembering that behind every budget line is a person who may be looking to EAENA for information, understanding, connection or support.

That is why financial stability matters. It is not simply about keeping an organization running. It is about keeping a community resource available when people need it.





TO DONORS AND SPONSORS IN 2026: THANK YOU

Celebrating the people and organizations who help us dream bigger.

At the end of each fiscal year, we like to pause for a moment and acknowledge the incredible support we have received from our community. There are far too many individuals, families, agencies, associations and businesses to name everyone here. Please know that we see you, we appreciate you, and we carry your support with us throughout the year.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

The names below recognize those who contributed more than $1,000 to EAENA during the past fiscal year. Each contribution, large or small, helps make our work possible — and gives us the confidence to dream a little bigger about what we can do next. Your financial support allows us to continue developing programs, creating opportunities, raising awareness, providing education and reaching people and families affected by epilepsy across northern Alberta. Most importantly, it helps us continue doing what we have been doing relentlessly since 1960: building a stronger, more informed and more supportive epilepsy community. We are deeply grateful to every one of you.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 SUPPORTERS

LivaNova
Pendopharm
Pharmascience Inc.
Alberta Blue Cross – Hearts of Blue
Allard Foundation
Edmonton Community Foundation
City of Edmonton
Gloria Baylis Foundation
Ed Stelmach Foundation
United Way
Nore-Aldein Assif (Assif Law)
ATCO EPIC
Suncor Edmonton Refinery
Epilepsy Trust
Dr. Kassiri
Kimberly Angus
Tanny John
Terry Mahon

YOUR SUPPORT BECOMES OUR COMMUNITY'S POSSIBILITIES

Every donation becomes something bigger in the hands of our community — a conversation, a resource, a program, an opportunity, a connection or simply the reassurance that no one has to navigate epilepsy alone. We hope to welcome even more supporters into this circle in the year ahead and for many years to come.

Thank you for believing in what we do.



WAYS
TO SUPPORT US IN 2026!



We strive to provide everyone who wishes to support us financially with the best possible ways to donate. By visiting this page: https://edmontonepilepsy.org/supporters/, you will discover all the ways you can contribute to the EAENA. For potential sponsors, please reach out to us directly—we would be happy to work with you to tailor a sponsorship that offers the best possible exposure and meaningful connection to our community.

- Sign-up for an account with **SkipTheDepot** and donate the profits from your recyclables to the EAENA.
- You can donate to us through **PayPal Giving Fund**. This is an easy way to use your credit card.
- **CanadaHelps** is also a very popular way folks like to donate to us.



- Our preferred option remains **Zeffy** - as this platform gives us 100% of every dollar you donate to us.
- We also accept donations from **DONATE A CAR Canada** - just check the link for details.



- We accept donations for our **QUILT** program to embrace a newly diagnosed person with epilepsy with community warmth.



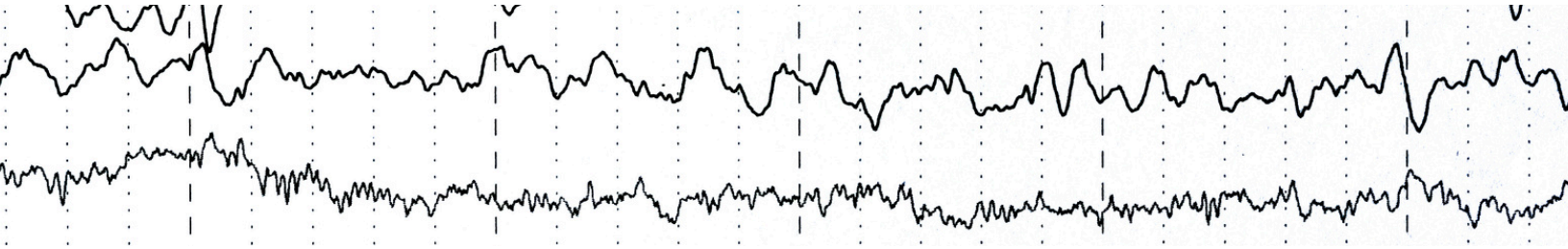
- We always **accept cheques or cash** and ensure you get your tax receipt for your contributions.



- And for those wishing to sponsor any one of our events, activities and programs, check out our **sponsorship page.**

LISTENING ACROSS FREQUENCIES: CAPTURING SEIZURES OF ALL PATIENTS TO ADVANCE ANTISEIZURE MEDICATION DEVELOPMENT

In the past, when researchers performed studies with epilepsy patients they required that participants meet a set of criteria so that statistics can be performed on the results. Usually, this required patients to have at least 4 seizures per month. However, with the advent of new anti-seizure treatments, there have been fewer and fewer patients that meet this threshold which has made it hard for scientists to conduct new studies. Additionally, these parameters also mean that a large proportion of epilepsy patients are not being studied. Thus, changes have recently been proposed to allow for a more broader criteria for patient selection of studies. This would allow a greater variety of patients to be involved in studies while also ensuring the research is well conducted. This provides great hope for new studies to be done which involve a greater variety of epilepsy patients so more variation can be studied.



Seizure frequency has traditionally been the primary measure of treatment effectiveness in epilepsy clinical trials and remains a key requirement for enrollment. Most trials require at least four seizures per month, a threshold chosen to ensure enough seizure events are captured to provide adequate statistical power. However, as antiseizure medications have improved, fewer patients meet this criterion. For example, only 42% of adults with treatment-resistant focal epilepsy and 25% of individuals with Dravet syndrome experience four or more countable seizures within a 4-week period. This suggests that current eligibility criteria may exclude a substantial proportion of patients despite ongoing disease burden.

Some researchers have proposed placing greater emphasis on cognitive and developmental outcomes, particularly in developmental and epileptic encephalopathies (DEEs), where developmental impairment is a core feature of the disease. The growing development of disease-modifying therapies, including gene therapies, has increased interest in these outcomes. However, seizure control remains critically important, as patients who continue to experience generalized tonic–clonic seizures remain at risk of sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP).

Alternative trial designs may help evaluate antiseizure efficacy without relying on the traditional four-seizures-per-month threshold. One increasingly validated approach is the time-to-event design, which uses individualized endpoints based on the occurrence of a predefined number of seizures rather than a fixed maintenance period. This allows patients with lower baseline seizure frequencies to participate while maintaining statistical rigor and reducing prolonged exposure to placebo. Future epilepsy trials should better integrate both seizure and developmental outcomes, supporting continued advances in antiseizure medications while also evaluating therapies that may improve long-term developmental trajectories.

(retrieved at https://www.cureepilepsy.org/news/listening-across-frequencies-capturing-seizures-of-all-patients-to-advance-antiseizure-medication-development/ on September 29, 2026)

TREATMENTS IN MORE ADVANCED CLINICAL DEVELOPMENT

The 18th EILAT Conference on New Antiepileptic Drugs and Devices just happened, which is an event where researchers come together to discuss new treatments being made for epilepsy. From this conference, new treatments are currently being developed for Developmental and Epileptic Encephalopathies which is a genetic form of epilepsy. Most of these treatments focus not on suppressing the seizures but on the biology behind why the seizures occur. This is promising as it allows for treatments to be made which may be longer lasting.



Researchers discussed the development of a new generation of epilepsy treatments, reviewing 13 experimental treatments presented at this year's EILAT XVII. Eight of the 13 treatments target developmental and epileptic encephalopathies (DEEs), many of which are tied to specific genetic causes where current medications often don't work well enough. Several approaches target the underlying biology rather than simply suppressing seizures. Several others use newer approaches, including gene therapy and antisense medicines, which are intended to change how the body's cells produce particular proteins. Some drugs discussed were completely new, while others are existing medicines being repurposed for epilepsy.

For the genetic therapies and antisense drugs, an especially important unanswered question is whether changing the underlying molecular flaw will produce long-lasting improvements in seizures and cognition/development, rather than merely reducing seizure frequency. The EILAT progress report covered 21 investigational treatments in 2026, compared with 14 in 2024, 12 in 2022, and 13 in 2020. This increase is meaningful not only because there are more drugs, but also because the development strategy itself is changing.

In the past, the paradigm was focused on finding a drug that suppresses neuronal excitability to reduce seizures; however, the emerging paradigm is to identify the molecular cause/mechanism and intervene selectively to potentially improve seizures and other manifestations of the disease.

That is particularly significant for severe DEEs, where conventional antiseizure medications can reduce seizures without adequately addressing developmental, cognitive, behavioral, or other neurological consequences. The hope is that newer, more targeted treatments could do more than simply reduce seizure frequency—they might also improve other problems associated with severe genetic epilepsies.

(*Retrieved at https://www.cureepilepsy.org/news/progress-report-on-new-epilepsy-treatments-a-summary-of-the-eighteenth-eilat-conference-on-new-antiepileptic-drugs-and-devices-eilat-xviii-ii-treatments-in-more-advanced-clinical-development/ on September 29, 2026)*

CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT AND EPILEPSY

Child development is the sequence of physical, speech and language, cognitive and social, behavioral and emotional changes that occur from birth to adulthood. Its assessment is an integral part of a pediatric consultation in general and is particularly important in children and youth with epilepsy.

The relation between Epilepsy and development is not identical in all children with epilepsy. A significant number grow and develop typically as expected for age, especially if epilepsy is well controlled and there are no underlying factors contributing to an impact. Despite this, children with epilepsy should have ongoing assessment of: developmental milestones, school performance and learning, speech and language, behavior and attention, motor skills, social functioning, sleep, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Any delay or regression, at any stage during the case management journey, should prompt a more comprehensive assessment or reassessment to look for an underlying cause, association or a broader diagnosis. Recognizing these problems is important because educational and developmental support can improve functioning even when seizure control is already adequate. Also, a broader diagnosis may require management remodeling and have prognostic implications.

The developmental impact of epilepsy depends on :

1. **Development before epilepsy presentation and diagnosis:**
Some children have developmental delay or intellectual disability before seizures begin, suggesting an underlying genetic, structural, metabolic, or developmental disorder. In these cases, epilepsy may be one manifestation of the underlying condition.

2. Developmental effects of seizures
Frequent seizures can interfere with normal development as they repeatedly interrupt normal brain activity. Recovery after seizures can temporarily affect attention, alertness, and learning. Frequent absences or other subtle seizures may cause repeated interruptions during school or daily activities.
Prolonged seizures, particularly status epilepticus, are more concerning because prolonged abnormal electrical activity can potentially cause neurological injury, depending on the circumstances.
Epileptic encephalopathy / developmental and epileptic encephalopathy (DEE) emphasizes two possible components: Developmental impairment related to the underlying disorder and Epileptic activity that may further contribute to developmental difficulties.

3. Type and location of seizures — focal vs. generalized
Focal seizures' developmental effect may depend on which brain region is involved. For example: Seizures involving language-related networks may interfere with language and communication. Frontal involvement may affect attention, planning, impulse control, and executive functions. Generalized seizures involve widespread bilateral brain networks from the beginning. Depending on the epilepsy syndrome, they may have broader effects on attention, processing speed, learning, and cognition. Some generalized epilepsies have relatively little developmental impact, whereas severe early-onset epileptic encephalopathies can have substantial effects.



CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT AND EPILEPSY (CONT.)

4. Age at onset

The brain undergoes very rapid development during infancy and childhood. When epilepsy begins very early in life, persistent epileptic activity can interfere with developing neural networks during critical periods of development. Early-onset epilepsy may therefore be associated with difficulties in: Language acquisition, Cognitive development, Motor development, Social communication and Learning.
Early-onset epileptic encephalopathies can interfere with cognitive and developmental progress.

5. Underlying brain abnormalities or injuries

Epilepsy may result from an underlying condition such as: Brain malformation, Previous brain injury, Perinatal stroke, or hypoxic injury, Genetic disorder, Brain tumor, Central nervous system infection, Metabolic disorder, The underlying condition itself may both delay or regress development and cause epilepsy.

6. Side effects of anti-seizure medications

some can affect: Alertness, Attention, Processing speed, Memory, Behavior and Energy level participation in school. This does not mean that anti-seizure medication generally harms development. Effective seizure control can actually protect learning and development by reducing seizure-related disruption. If cognitive or behavioral changes appear after starting or increasing a medication, the treating clinician may consider whether they could be medication-related. so treatment decisions require balancing seizure control with adverse effects.

7. Associated neurodevelopmental and behavioral difficulties:

ADHD, Specific learning disorders, Language difficulties, Intellectual disability , Autism spectrum disorder ,Anxiety and mood difficulties. These conditions can co- occur with epilepsy can affect school performance even when seizures are well controlled.

It is important to note that, developmental difficulties should not automatically be attributed to epilepsy itself or a single underlying factor alone. It is not simply whether seizures are "focal" or "generalized"; early onset does not automatically mean poor development. The specific epilepsy syndrome and underlying cause are often more important. Seizure frequency alone does not determine developmental outcome. A child with frequent but well-controlled seizures may develop normally, while a child with relatively few seizures may have significant developmental difficulties because of an underlying neurological disorder
when developmental delay is present in an epilepsy patient, clinicians ask: Is the developmental problem caused by the seizures, the underlying brain disorder, the treatment, or a combination of these?

Putting it together. A useful way to think about developmental outcome is:

Underlying cause + epilepsy syndrome + seizure burden + age at onset + treatment effects + coexisting developmental conditions → overall developmental impact

A careful developmental assessment helps identify the specific factors affecting the child and determine what interventions or educational supports are needed.

By Dr. Mai Heikal, Pediatrician with special interest of Pediatric Neurology from Egypt And EAENA Volunteer

LIVING WITH EPILEPSY: FILLING THE GAPS AROUND MEDICAL CARE

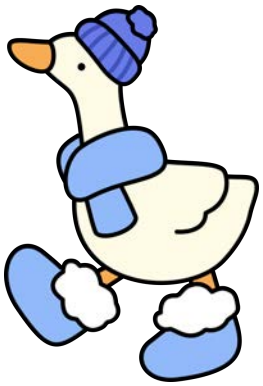
EAENA's Valeria Palladino discusses the everyday questions that follow an epilepsy diagnosis, from school and independence to stigma and community support.
September 28, 2026
By Soumya Shashikumar, MBiotech, Senior Life Sciences Journalist

Receiving an epilepsy diagnosis can come as a "tremendous shock," leaving patients and families with questions about what caused it, what happens next and how it could affect everyday life.

Simply getting to the diagnosis takes time for some patients. A first seizure may be mistaken for fainting, stress or something else, and even after epilepsy is diagnosed, its exact cause may not be clear.

This opens up a well of questions: how will epilepsy affect school, work, driving, relationships or independence? What happens when a child with epilepsy becomes a teenager and eventually moves into adult care? And how can researchers build stronger relationships with the communities they hope to involve in research?

In an exclusive interview, Xtalks spoke with Valeria Palladino, Chief Operating Officer of the Epilepsy Association of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (EAENA), about the gaps surrounding medical care, the role of community connection and why trust with patients and families needs to be built long before a clinical study begins.



Filling the Space Around Medical Care

While a diagnosis and subsequent medication can address important parts of epilepsy care, they may leave other nuances about living with the condition unanswered. People may need guidance around school, employment, driving, relationships, mental health, safety, sleep and physical activity. The wait for specialist care is often long. When an appointment finally arrives, patients and families may have limited time to ask questions. "When you're frightened and you're overwhelmed, you don't necessarily know what questions you should be asking," Valeria said.

EAENA sees a functional role for community organizations.

"We don't replace medical care, absolutely not, but we help fill the space around it," Valeria emphasized. "We provide education, practical support, connections with others who understand and reassurance that a diagnosis of epilepsy doesn't really mean you have to give up on having a full and meaningful life." This support allows people to work through the parts of epilepsy that happen outside a medical appointment and gives families somewhere to turn as their questions change.

Navigating Growth, School and Peer Connection

Parents may initially wonder how seizures will affect development, learning or memory, whether medications will cause side effects and whether teachers know what to do during a seizure. Valeria shared a question that comes up often: will my child eventually grow out of seizures? As children become teenagers, they start thinking about independence and fitting in with friends, and eventually about moving from pediatric into adult healthcare.

"Children don't want to be singled out at school. They don't want friends to be afraid of them. They don't want epilepsy to be the very first thing that anybody gets to know about them," Valeria said. Many fear being defined by epilepsy, and this is why EAENA places such an emphasis on community connection. A family newly dealing with epilepsy can speak with another family that has already faced some of the same questions. "Sometimes a young person simply needs to meet someone else who has epilepsy and to realize, 'Oh, I'm not the only one. This isn't just happening to me,'" Valeria said.

LIVING WITH EPILEPSY: FILLING THE GAPS AROUND MEDICAL CARE (CONT.)

Epilepsy Is Not "Just Seizures"

One of the most persistent misconceptions Valeria encounters is that epilepsy is only about seizures.
"What we hear the most and what I personally believe is the biggest misconception is that epilepsy is just about having seizures. It really isn't. It affects every part of a person's life," she said.

It can be an invisible disability. Valeria shared that some people worry about being judged, treated differently or viewed as less capable. This may lead them to hide their condition or withdraw from social situations. Epilepsy management also involves medication side effects, memory or concentration difficulties and practical planning at school. Children may need staff who understand seizure first aid, access to prescribed rescue medication and educational accommodations that allow them to participate alongside their classmates.

Then there is the unpredictability. "Even when somebody is doing everything right, there is still that question in the back of their mind: When will the next seizure happen?" Valeria said.

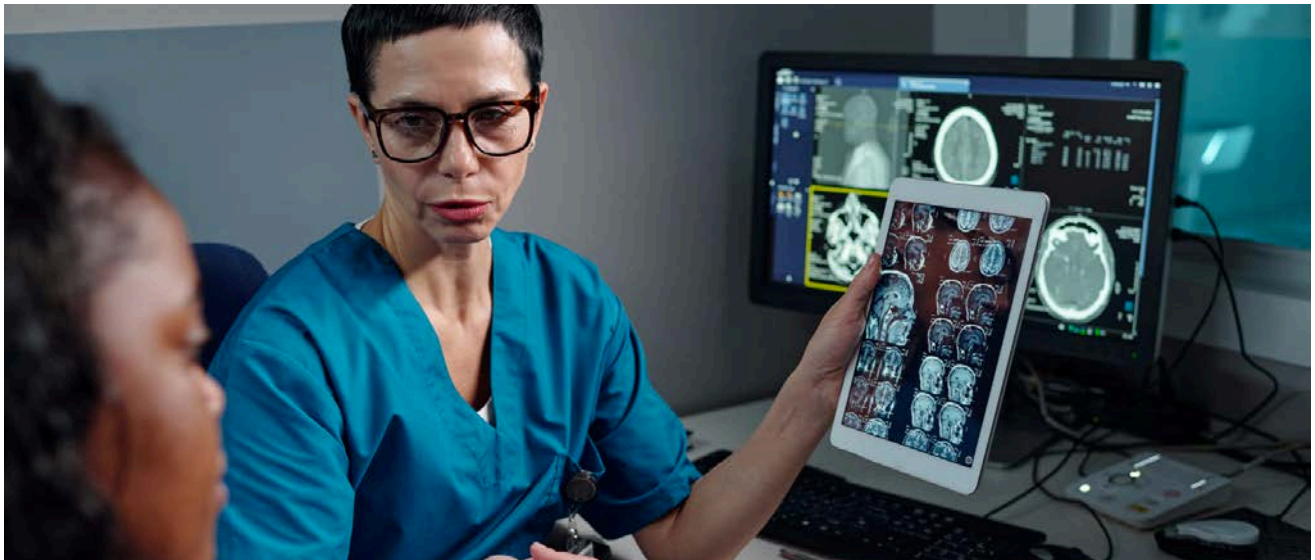
Building Research Relationships Before Recruitment Begins

Valeria wants researchers and life sciences companies to connect with epilepsy communities before a study begins.
Early engagement can help researchers understand patients' everyday experiences and ask more relevant research questions.
"I think one of the most important things researchers, life science companies can understand is that meaningful research starts with meaningful long-term relationships with the epilepsy community," she said.
"You cannot buy trust," Valeria said. "You can have all the facts in the world to convince somebody. If they don't trust you, they're not going to engage with you."

There is a difference between one person raising a concern about access to lamotrigine and hundreds or thousands of people raising the same issue through a community organization. These organizations carry weight, as they bring individual concerns together.

"If you walk along those communities, you learn where they come from, and then your research questions become more meaningful," Valeria said.

(retrieved at https://lifesciencesunited.xtalks.com/living-with-epilepsy-filling-the-gaps-around-medical-care/ on September 29, 2026)



TWO PATHS, ONE COMMUNITY

In this final issue of 2026, we are delighted to celebrate the recipients of two EAENA awards: Val Gabert, Volunteer of the Year, and Jack McGowan, Achiever of the Year. We sat down with Val and Jack to hear their stories, learn what inspires them to volunteer, and talk about what it means to make a difference in someone's life — even if it is only for a little while, but hopefully for the better. Want to learn more about the EAENA Awards and how we recognize the incredible people who contribute to our community? Visit our awards page: EAENA Awards

Val and Jack share what it means to keep moving forward, find your community, and help others along the way

This article celebrates two very special members of our community through two awards that EAENA is proud to present each year: the Volunteer of the Year Award and the Achiever of the Year Award.

This year, we would also like to recognize and sincerely thank Dr. J. Kassiri, whose generous donation allowed us to attach a symbolic monetary value to these awards. We know that our volunteers do not give their time, share their stories, or support others because of financial recognition. They do it because they understand the power of community. They know what it is like to live with epilepsy, to face challenges along the way, and to discover how meaningful it can be to offer hope, encouragement, knowledge, and understanding to someone who may be newer to their own epilepsy journey.

A WORD FROM EAENA

Every year, we have the privilege of recognizing people in our community who give their time, share their experiences, and, in their own unique ways, make a difference in the lives of others.

The Volunteer of the Year and Achiever of the Year awards are not simply about accomplishments. They are about the people behind those accomplishments—their experiences, their challenges, their determination to keep moving forward, and their willingness to help others along the way. This year, we are proud to recognize Val as our Volunteer of the Year and Jack as our Achiever of the Year. Their stories are different. Their experiences with epilepsy are different. Their paths have taken them in different directions. Yet, when we spoke with both of them about their journeys, one message kept coming through:

Having the right people around you can make a tremendous difference.
Sometimes, we need someone to tell us, "You can try."
Sometimes, we need someone to say, "Try again."
And sometimes, we simply need to know that we are not alone.
Val and Jack both know what that feels like.

TWO PATHS, ONE COMMUNITY (CONT.)

Their stories remind us that moving forward does not always mean moving quickly or following a straight path. Sometimes, it means taking one small step, finding someone who understands, and then discovering that we have something valuable to offer others, too.

NOW, LET'S HEAR FROM VAL AND JACK

Behind every award is a story—and these two stories are worth sharing.
Val and Jack have each travelled their own path with epilepsy. Along the way, they have faced challenges, discovered strengths, found people who believed in them, and learned the importance of giving back. What follows are their stories, in their own words: two different journeys, two different ways of making a difference, and two powerful examples of what can happen when people keep moving forward and become part of a community that supports them. Meet Val and Jack.

JACK: KEEP GOING

If there is one word that seems to describe Jack's journey, it is persistence.

Living with epilepsy brought uncertainty. Like many people, he had questions about what his future would look like and whether he would still be able to follow the path he had imagined for himself. There were roadblocks. There were times when things did not go the way he had hoped. And there were moments when he was not sure what came next. But Jack kept going.

Sometimes, that meant getting back up and trying again. Sometimes, it meant accepting help. And sometimes, it meant taking a different route than the one he originally had in mind. Looking back, Jack recognizes how important the people around him have been. His involvement with EAENA has given him an opportunity to receive support, but just as importantly, to give back. He talks about the importance of having a team around you and being part of a community where people understand at least some of what you are going through.

"It was only from getting back up and trying it again and getting support from the people around me that I was able to continue." Today, Jack is studying psychology at MacEwan University. His goal is to continue into graduate school and eventually work as a counselling psychologist, with a particular interest in anxiety.
He is already gaining experience through his work with the Canada Mental Health Distress Line and as a volunteer with EAENA's HOBSCOTCH memory program.
For Jack, these experiences are about more than building a résumé. They are helping him grow personally, academically and professionally—and giving him opportunities to support other people along the way.



MEET JACK
EAENA Achiever of the Year
Studying: Psychology at MacEwan University
Career goal: Counselling psychology
Area of interest: Anxiety
Community involvement: Canada Mental Health Distress Line and EAENA's HOBSCOTCH program
Jack's message: Find the people who understand what you are trying to accomplish. And don't be afraid to step a little outside your comfort zone.

TWO PATHS, ONE COMMUNITY (CONT.)

VAL: "IF I CAN HELP ONE PERSON..."

Val's connection with EAENA goes back a long way.
She was introduced to the association by Dr. Starreveld in 1992, and that introduction became an important turning point in her life. Through EAENA, Val began to see possibilities that she had not always been encouraged to see before. Instead of being told what she could not do, she found people who encouraged her to discover what she could do. That stayed with her. And today, Val is often the person doing the encouraging.

You may see her at an EAENA event, at a trade show, sharing her experience, talking with someone who has questions about epilepsy or leading the Seniors Epilepsy Workshop. She is willing to speak openly about her own experiences because she knows that sometimes, hearing another person's story can make all the difference.
Her reason for doing it is beautifully simple:

> ***"If I can help one person avoid all the heartache and feelings of not being able to do something... it makes a difference."***

Val knows what it feels like to have someone believe in you. She also knows that people living with epilepsy are sometimes faced with assumptions about what they can and cannot do. So, she talks about it. Sometimes people are surprised by what she tells them. Sometimes they tell her they had no idea that people living with epilepsy could do the things she has done. And sometimes, she meets people who still question what someone with epilepsy should be allowed to do. Val doesn't let that stop her. She keeps talking. Because she believes our stories matter. And maybe, by sharing hers, someone else will feel comfortable enough to share theirs.

MEET VAL

EAENA Volunteer of the Year
Passion: Helping others by sharing her experiences
Community involvement: EAENA events, outreach and the Seniors Epilepsy Workshop
What motivates her: Knowing that she may help even one person feel more capable and less alone
Val's message: Get involved. Share your story. Help where you can. You never know whose life you may touch.



TWO PATHS, ONE COMMUNITY (CONT.)

WHEN THE PATH CHANGES, KEEP GOING

One of the things we appreciate most about Jack's story is his understanding that life does not always follow the timeline we originally imagined. Sometimes graduation takes longer. Sometimes the opportunity we wanted doesn't happen. Sometimes the path changes completely. That can be hard to accept. But a different path does not mean the end of the journey.

Jack has learned to be patient with himself and to recognize that taking longer—or taking a different route—does not mean he has failed. "It doesn't mean that I can't continue down the path that I want to go." Val's journey has taught her something similar. With encouragement from her doctor, she gradually began to understand that there were many things she could do. She could learn. She could teach. She could share. And she could use what she had experienced to help somebody else. "I can do everything that everyone else can do. I can teach people what I have learned. I can share with them my experiences and outcomes."

That kind of confidence does not necessarily appear overnight. Sometimes it comes one small step at a time. And sometimes, it comes because someone else believed in us before we were ready to believe in ourselves.

MORE THAN A TROPHY

Neither Val nor Jack expected to receive their awards. When Val first heard the news, her reaction was very much Val: "Really? Me?" She wondered if perhaps someone else was more deserving. Then she thought about it. Why not her? For Val, the award is not really about the trophy or the monetary gift. It is about being seen. It is about knowing that someone noticed the time she has given, the stories she has shared and the people she has tried to help. And being able to tell her family made it even more special.

Jack was also surprised and grateful. When he first became involved with EAENA several years ago, he certainly did not imagine that one day he would be receiving an award from the organization. Looking back, he sees the recognition as a reminder of just how much can change in a few years. "It's both a demonstration of how significant things can change in just a couple of years, but also the significance that the acknowledgement of others' actions can have on an individual." Sometimes, being recognized at the right time can remind us that what we are doing matters.



TWO PATHS, ONE COMMUNITY (CONT.)

YOUR STORY MATTERS

When we asked Val and Jack what they would say to other people in the EAENA community, neither talked about being perfect nor having all the answers. Val believes anyone can become a role model. You don't need a special title. You don't need to have everything figured out. You simply need to be willing to participate, share what you have learned and help where you can. There are many ways to become involved with EAENA. Some people volunteer. Some attend events. Some share their experiences. Some simply show up and support someone else. Every contribution matters. Jack's advice is a little different, but it comes back to the same idea: find your community.

There are people out there who can provide support, understanding and opportunities. Sometimes, however, you have to look for them. And sometimes, finding your people means taking a small step outside your comfort zone.
“It just takes a little bit of looking and it takes the willingness to put yourself in a little bit and maybe a little outside your comfort zone.” That first step can be difficult. But it can also open a door.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Val and Jack remind us that there is no single definition of achievement. Achievement can be pursuing an education. It can be working toward a career. It can be volunteering your time. It can be telling your story for the first time. It can be encouraging another person. And sometimes, achievement is simply getting back up and trying again. That is why these awards matter. They recognize what Val and Jack have already contributed to our community, but their stories also remind the rest of us of something just as important: There is always room to grow. There is always room to contribute. And there is always a possibility that our own experience can help someone else.

When one person steps forward, another person may feel brave enough to do the same. And that is how a community grows.

Congratulations, Val and Jack.
And, most importantly, thank you for sharing your stories with all of us.

FINDING COMMUNITY, BUILDING HOPE: MY JOURNEY WITH THE EAENA

BY PATRINA MOORE PIERRE

Sometimes the organizations that become most meaningful to us are the ones we never expected to need. My journey with the Epilepsy Association of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (EAENA) began because of someone very close to my heart my daughter, who lives with epilepsy here in Edmonton.

When someone you love has epilepsy, you quickly realize that the diagnosis is only one part of the journey. As a mother, there are the medical appointments and questions, but there are also the everyday concerns that come with wanting your child to be safe, independent, confident and able to experience life without being defined by epilepsy. You also become very aware of how much misunderstanding still exists around the condition. That is what made finding a community like EAENA important to me.

I initially became involved as a member and as a parent looking to connect with an organization that understood the realities families like mine experience. Over time, however, my relationship with EAENA became more than membership. I became a supporter and someone who genuinely wanted to contribute to the organization's growth and its ability to reach more people. What I have come to appreciate most is that support does not always have to be complicated. Sometimes it is having someone who understands what you are going through. Sometimes it is receiving the right information when you need it. Other times, it is meeting another parent, caregiver or individual living with epilepsy and realizing you do not have to explain everything because they simply understand. That sense of community matters.

My involvement with EAENA has also given me opportunities to contribute through fundraising, community initiatives and exploring partnerships and resources that can help strengthen the Association's work. It has allowed me to take my personal experience as a mother and use it to help support something bigger than my own family. And I believe there is so much more ahead.

When I think about the future of EAENA, I see an organization that can become an even stronger voice for individuals and families throughout Edmonton and Northern Alberta. I would love to see continued growth in programs for children, youth and families. As our children grow, their needs change. A young child with epilepsy eventually becomes a teenager thinking about friendships, school and independence, and later a young adult considering post-secondary education, employment, relationships and life on their own. Families need support throughout those transitions.

I also believe education will continue to be incredibly important. The more teachers, employers, coaches, community organizations and everyday people understand epilepsy and seizure first aid, the more inclusive and supportive our communities can become.

But beyond programs and education, **my greatest hope is that EAENA continues to be a place where people feel that they belong.** I want the parent whose child has just been diagnosed to know there is somewhere to turn. I want young people with epilepsy to see possibilities for their future rather than limitations. I want adults living with epilepsy to feel understood and supported in their workplaces and communities. And I want caregivers and families to know that their experiences matter too.

My journey with EAENA started because of my daughter, but today my reason for supporting the Association extends to every family walking a similar path. Epilepsy may be part of our family's story, but it does not define my daughter or the future I see for her. And that is the future I want for every person living with epilepsy a future filled not only with support and understanding, but with opportunity, independence, community and hope.

Kind regards,
Patrina



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATES

One of the strengths of EAENA is the opportunity to connect and collaborate with organizations working across Alberta, Canada, and internationally. Sharing knowledge, challenges, ideas and resources with others in the epilepsy and disability communities helps all of us become stronger. These connections also give us opportunities to learn more about important issues—from stigma and access to new anti-seizure medications to the everyday challenges faced by people living with disabilities.

At the same time, we value the opportunity to share what we are doing here in northern Alberta. Our local successes, projects and experiences can contribute to broader conversations and help raise the profile of the epilepsy community.

Connecting Across Alberta

The Alberta Abilities Network, a provincial umbrella network led by Cerebral Palsy Alberta, is one of the organizations we are pleased to collaborate with. The Network brings together agencies and individuals from across the province who work directly in the disability community. Regular Zoom meetings provide a valuable space to share updates, frustrations, questions and, importantly, ideas for addressing concrete challenges in our communities.

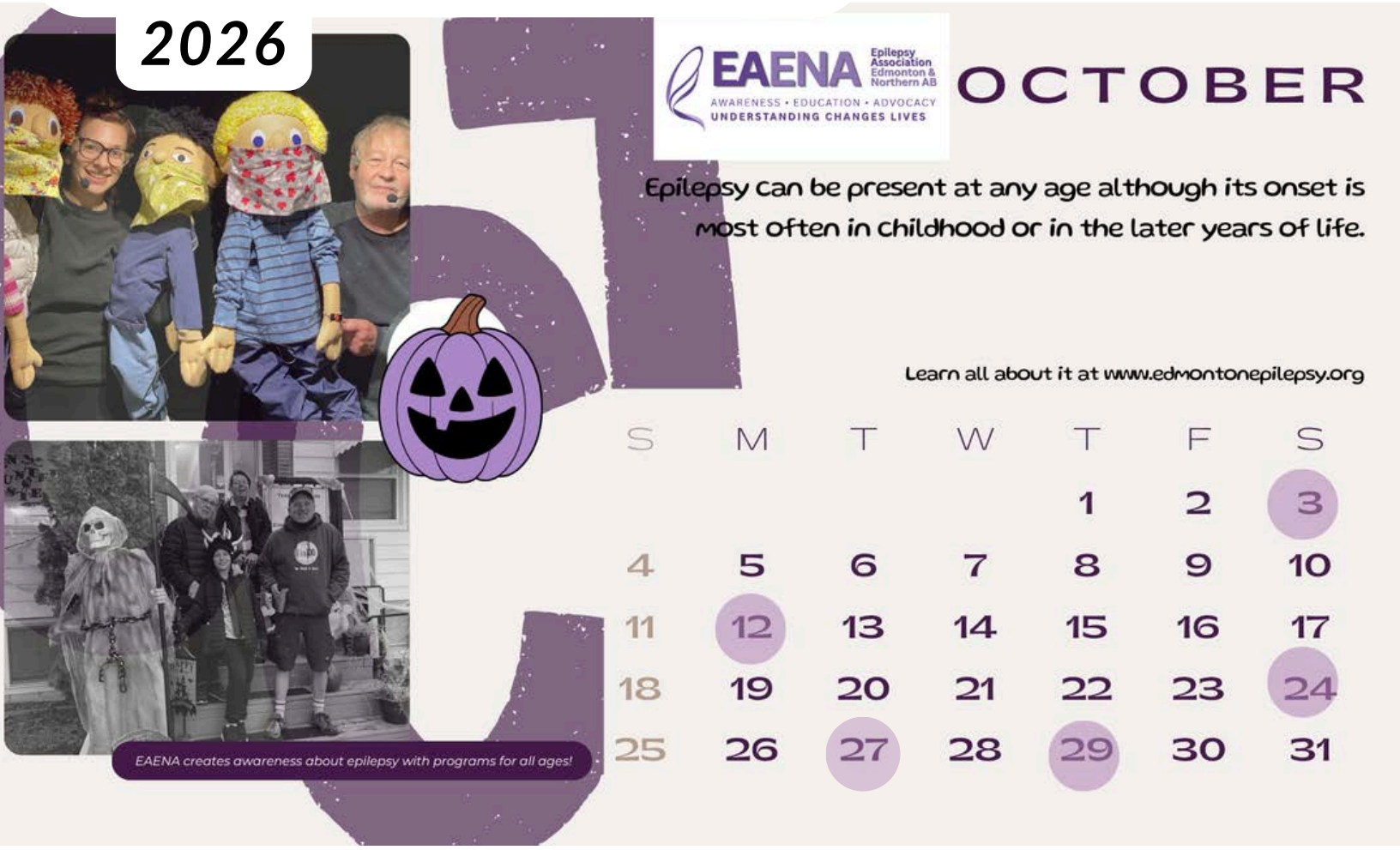
The Network's Facebook presence also gives organizations like EAENA an opportunity to amplify important messages and community information. We are happy to participate in advocacy campaigns when issues arise that affect the people and families we serve. One of the key conversations over the past few months has been the transition from AISH to ADAP and how organizations are supporting individuals as they navigate these new pathways to independence and access to provincial financial supports. These discussions have highlighted the importance of helping people understand changes, access the information they need and feel supported as they navigate new systems.

Looking Beyond Our Local Community

EAENA's connections also extend well beyond Alberta. Our Executive Director, Valeria Palladino, serves as the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA) representative to the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE). Through this role, Valeria has been involved in committee work reviewing new and updated membership requests to the international organization, as well as participating in the North American Chapter, of which Canada is a part. Most recently, Valeria contributed a short presentation focused on epilepsy and mental health, highlighting some of the work EAENA has been developing through both our adult and children's mental health projects. The presentation provided an opportunity to share our local experience with an international audience and to demonstrate how community organizations can contribute to a broader understanding of the mental health needs of people living with epilepsy.

These international connections can lead to unexpected and exciting opportunities. It was through this network that our partners in South Korea reached out to EAENA to explore collaboration on a Korean-language translation of our Epilepsy Book series. For a small organization like EAENA, these connections are incredibly valuable. They remind us that while our work begins in northern Alberta, the challenges faced by people living with epilepsy are shared across communities and borders—and that by working together, we can share solutions, strengthen our voices and create opportunities that would not be possible on our own.

OCTOBER



KEY ACTIVITIES THIS MONTH:

- October 3, 2026 - Crafts Day at EAENA Office
- October 12, 2026 - Office closed for Thanks Giving Day
- October 24, 2026 - Purple Pumpkin Day and Talent Show at EAENA Office
- October 27, 2026 - Purple Lunch Hour Session
- October 29, 2026 - Bingo at EAENA office



NOVEMBER

2026



KEY ACTIVITIES THIS MONTH:

- November 11, 2026 - Office closed for Remembrance Day
- November 18, 2026 - EAENA Parents and Teens Epilepsy Presentation at the office
- November 24, 2026 - Purple Lunch Hour Session



DECEMBER

2026



KEY ACTIVITIES THIS MONTH:

- December 5, 2026 - Members Holiday Party at EAENA Office
- December 17, 2026 - BINGO at EAENA office
- December 25 2026 - through January 3, 2027 - Office closed.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

UPCOMING EVENTS

- UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS
- PURPLE PUMPKIN AND TALENT SHOW
- PURPLE LUNCH HOURS
- PIZZA, PRIZES AND HOLIDAY CHEER!
- EPILEPSY BOOK CORNER
- NEW! DISCOVER OUR BOOKS SESSION
- VIBRANT SPACE FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES
- EAENA REGULAR PROGRAMS
- FROM OUR ARCHIVES
- VOLUNTEER WITH US
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EAENA Epilepsy Association Edmonton & Northern AB

AWARENESS • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY

UNDERSTANDING CHANGES LIVES

UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Stay connected, get involved, and join us this fall and winter!

The coming months are filled with opportunities to connect, learn, celebrate, and raise awareness about epilepsy. Whether you are looking for a chance to meet other EAENA members, learn from a specialist, show off your talents, or simply enjoy some time together, there is something for everyone.

We encourage our members and families to watch our calendar, watch for announcements, and join us whenever you can. Our programs are about more than activities—they are about building connections and reminding our community that no one has to navigate epilepsy alone. We continue to offer these opportunities either free of charge or through minimal monetary commitments to ensure everyone can find something to engage with.

🎉 BINGOS

Our EAENA Bingo events continue. These informal gatherings are a great way to spend time with friends, meet other members, enjoy some snacks, and, of course, try your luck at winning a prize. Whether you are a regular bingo player or have never played with us before, come join the fun. We will hsot two more such bingos at our office, on October 29, 2026 and December 17, 2026 at the EAENA office, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Connect with our office to confirm your attendance. Free snacks, refreshments and prizes are always on the table!

🏥 AWARENESS TABLES — STOLLERY HOSPITAL & KAYE CLINIC

EAENA will also be out in the community hosting epilepsy awareness tables at the Stollery Children's Hospital and the Kaye Edmonton Clinic.

As shared in our updates, these tables give us an important opportunity to talk with patients, families, healthcare professionals, and members of the public about epilepsy and the services EAENA provides.

Every conversation matters. Sometimes, a simple conversation at an awareness table is the first step for someone to discover that support, information, and community are available.

We are always grateful to our volunteers who help make these awareness opportunities possible. We will be at the Stollery on November 10 and at the Kaye clinic on November 17.

💜 PURPLE LUNCH HOUR WITH DR. HEIKAL

October 27, 2026

Join us for a special Purple Lunch Hour Session with Dr. Heikal on October 27, at 12:00 **noon on zoom (LINK HERE).**

This session will focus on ways to engage with your pediatrician looking after your child who lives with epilepsy. What questions can you bring to the next visit? How can you work together to ensure your child ‘s medical needs are addressed holistically and you feel you are being heard.



PURPLE PUMPKIN AND TALENT SHOW

Our **Purple Pumpkin & Talent Show** is all about having fun, being ourselves, celebrating what makes each of us unique, and cheering one another on. Whether you love creating, performing, making things, or simply supporting your fellow members, **there is a place for you!** Please read the posters on the following pages for full registration details.

🎃 Purple Pumpkin Decoration Workshop

During the morning and early afternoon, we will host our **Purple Pumpkin Decoration Workshop**.
Participants will receive their own pumpkin, provided by EAENA, and can let their creativity shine while decorating it. We will also have other Halloween-inspired crafts to enjoy, along with refreshments and plenty of opportunities to socialize. Come create, laugh, and enjoy some purple-themed fun with fellow EAENA members!
Registration is required. Please see the poster on the following pages for registration information.





🌟 A New Addition: Our EAENA Talent Show!

This year, we are excited to introduce something new — an **EAENA Talent Show!**
We know our community is full of creativity and amazing talents, and we want to create a welcoming space where members can share what they love. Your talent might be in **music, dance, poetry, storytelling, art, crafts, or another special skill** you would like to showcase.



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Your talent might be in **music, dance, poetry, storytelling, art, crafts, or another special skill** you would like to showcase. There will be two ways to participate:

🛍️ Showcase Your Creations

If you make products, artwork, crafts, or other items that you are proud of, you can register to have a table in our foyer to display your creations. If you would like, you can also sell your products to interested visitors.

🎤 Share Your Talent on Stage

If your talent is something you would like to perform or present — such as singing, dancing, playing an instrument, reading a poem, telling a story, or another performance — you can register for the Talent Show.
Each participant will have up to five minutes to take the stage and share their talent with us.

And there is one very important thing to know: ❤️ **This is NOT a competition!**
There will be no winners or losers and no judging. Instead, we want to create a supportive space where everyone's contribution is respected, celebrated, and appreciated.

The goal is to give people living with epilepsy an opportunity to express themselves, discover and celebrate their strengths, and build a greater sense of confidence, empowerment, connection, and hope. You don't have to be a professional performer. You simply have to be willing to share something that is meaningful to you.

🎶 And We're Ending the Day with a Song!

To make the event even more special, we will invite everyone to learn and rehearse a special song together. At the end of the event, we will come together as one EAENA community choir and perform the song as a group. It will be a wonderful way to celebrate our community, our individual strengths, and the power of coming together.



PURPLE PUMPKIN AND TALENT SHOW (CONT.)

💜 Come Join the Celebration!

Whether you are decorating a pumpkin, displaying something you have created, performing on stage, singing with the choir, or simply sitting in the audience and cheering on your fellow members — you are an important part of this celebration. Bring your creativity. Bring your enthusiasm. Bring your purple spirit! Most importantly, come as you are and celebrate what makes you unique. We can't wait to share this exciting day with you!



EAENA Epilepsy Association Edmonton & Northern AB
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY
UNDERSTANDING CHANGES LIVES

Empowering People Who Live With Epilepsy

SHOWCASE YOUR Creativity, Share Your Talent, and Sing Together!

All are welcome!

A day to celebrate our community, our strengths, and the power of coming together!
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2026 FROM 4:30 TO 8:00 P.M. - 9915 148 STREET EDMONTON AB

Showcase Your Creations

If you make products, artwork, crafts, or other items that you are proud of, you can register to have a table in our foyer to display your creations.

If you would like, you can also sell your products to interested visitors. All we ask for is a donation to EAENA.



Share Your Talent on Stage

If your talent is something you would like to perform or present — such as singing, dancing, playing an instrument, reading a poem, telling a story, or another performance — you can register for the **Talent Show**.

Each participant will have up to five minutes to take the stage and share their talent with us.



There will be no winners or losers and no judging. Instead, we want to create a supportive space where everyone's contribution is respected, celebrated and appreciated.

The goal is to give people living with epilepsy an opportunity to express themselves, discover and celebrate their strengths, and build a greater sense of confidence, empowerment, connection and hope. You don't have to be a professional performer. You simply have to be willing to share something that is meaningful to you.

And We're Ending the Day with a Song!

To make the event even more special, we will invite everyone to learn and rehearse a **special song together**. At the end of the event, we will come together as one EAENA community choir and perform the song as a group. It will be a wonderful way to celebrate our community, our individual strengths, and the power of coming together.



We are inviting everyone who feels courageous enough to join us for a final choir act. We plan to perform together as a community, through the song by Coldplay: **Something Just Like This**.

Show up as you are!

All details on the level of participation you wish to engage are avaible on the special page we dedicate to this community event.

epilepsyalbertanorth.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS

PIZZA, PRIZES & HOLIDAY CHEER!

Our favourite community tradition is back — with a new twist! It is that time of year again! Somehow, another year has flown by, and with this final issue of Focus on Epilepsy for 2026, we are already looking ahead to one of our most cherished community traditions: the EAENA Holiday Party! This year brings a new setting and a new idea for our celebration.

With our new location at Saint Andrew's United Church in Crestwood, we have access to a wonderful, spacious auditorium in the basement of the building — with room for up to 200 participants. That means more space to gather, connect, play and celebrate together!

🍕 **THIS YEAR, WE'RE SERVING UP A SLICE OF FUN!**
Over the years, we have tried a variety of holiday party formats. We have booked meals at restaurants and hotels, and last year we enjoyed a good old-fashioned potluck. This year, we thought: why not pizza?
When you register, you will have the opportunity to choose your favourite pizza slices. We will round things out with vegetables and salad, a light soft drink and, naturally, some special holiday desserts. Because a holiday party is about much more than food, we are also making sure there is plenty of time to play games, meet other community members, reconnect with friends and enjoy the afternoon with family.
We will take a little walk down nostalgia road, too, sharing highlights from EAENA events, programs and activities throughout 2026. We will celebrate our award recipients, look back at some of the year's memorable moments and share a few other surprises along the way. And yes — there will be door prizes!

🎄 ***SAVE THE DATE!***
EAENA HOLIDAY PARTY 2026
📅 ***Saturday, December 5, 2026***
🕐 ***1:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.***
📍 ***Saint Andrew's United Church, Crestwood***
Members in good standing: $20/person
Non-members: $35/person
Another good reason to be an EAENA member — our members save on many of our events!
Come dressed in your holiday cheer and ready to celebrate!

LET'S CELEBRATE TOGETHER!
We hope you will place the date on your calendar and register as soon as you can. Whether you have been part of EAENA for decades or are joining us for the first time, this celebration is about bringing our community together.

So, start thinking about your favourite pizza, find your holiday sweater and get ready for an afternoon of food, laughter, games, memories and — most importantly — community. We look forward to seeing you on December 5!

EAENA Epilepsy Association Edmonton & Northern AB
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY
UNDERSTANDING CHANGES LIVES

Together We're Stronger

Holiday Party

Saturday, December 5, 2026
1:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Saint Andrew's United Church, Crestwood

Members in good standing: $20/person

Non-members: $35/person

Another great reason to be an EAENA member — members save on many of our events!

Come dressed in your holiday cheer

and get ready for an afternoon of food, fun, family and community!

PARTY HIGHLIGHTS

Pizza Party

Choose your favourite pizza slices when you register. Veggies, salad, drinks and desserts included!

Games & Family Fun

Bring your family and friends and enjoy games, laughter and plenty of time to connect with the EAENA community.

Celebrating Our Community

We'll recognize our award recipients and celebrate the people who helped make 2026 such a special year for EAENA.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

Take a look back at some of the highlights and special memories from EAENA's events, programs and activities throughout the year.

Door Prizes & Surprises

Because every good holiday party needs a few surprises!

Accessible & Welcoming

The space will be fully accessible, with controlled lighting and sound kept at a comfortable level so everyone can enjoy the celebration.

Come celebrate the holidays with your EAENA family!
We can't wait to celebrate with you!

EPILEPSY BOOK CORNER

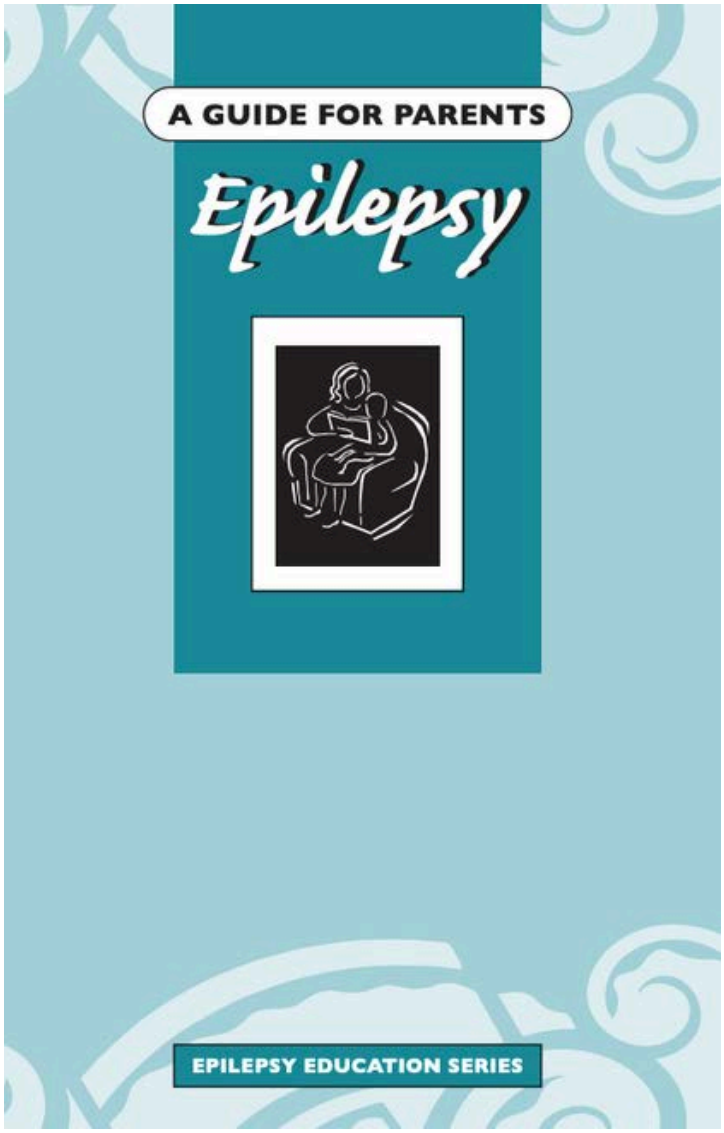
EPILEPSY: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

In light of the upcoming information session we are inviting families with younger children living with epilepsy to attend (see next page), we wanted to highlight a special book from our Epilepsy Book Series: Epilepsy: A Guide for Parents.

This book is filled with practical information, helpful guidance and tips for parents and caregivers whose younger children live with epilepsy. It is especially useful for those involved in the day-to-day care and support of children and youth living with seizures.

Register for the upcoming information session and see the information in the book come to life! We will take the conversation beyond the pages, creating an opportunity to learn, ask questions and connect with others who understand the journey.

Or, visit our Books page today to learn more about this and the other resources available through EAENA.



If your child has been diagnosed with epilepsy, you may have questions regarding the condition. What causes epilepsy? How is it diagnosed? What are the available treatments? How can I help my child? It is not unusual for a parent to experience feelings of helplessness, fear, grief, or anger after a child has been diagnosed with epilepsy.

Local epilepsy associations can provide you with valuable information regarding your concerns. Many associations have helpful resource materials on epilepsy and a staff committed to answering questions and providing information. Often associations offer in-service training to schools which educate others about the condition.

Associations may also be able to provide you with support groups, trained professionals, or other families who are facing similar challenges. In some cases, a diagnosis of epilepsy may require little change in lifestyle. In other cases, there may be significant change for the child and the family. In either situation, learning about epilepsy can empower you and help you make informed decisions regarding medical treatment, care, or safety. Learning about epilepsy may also help to alleviate your own anxiety and allow you to focus on the needs of your child.

NEW! DISCOVER OUR BOOKS SESSION!

Living with Epilepsy: An Evening for Parents and Teens

Following a very successful in-person session introducing epilepsy, based on our popular Living with Epilepsy and Epilepsy: An Introduction books, we are pleased to offer another evening session on November 18, 2026, from 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the EAENA office.

This session is designed especially for parents and caregivers of children and teens living with epilepsy. If you have not yet attended one of our information sessions, we strongly encourage you to register.

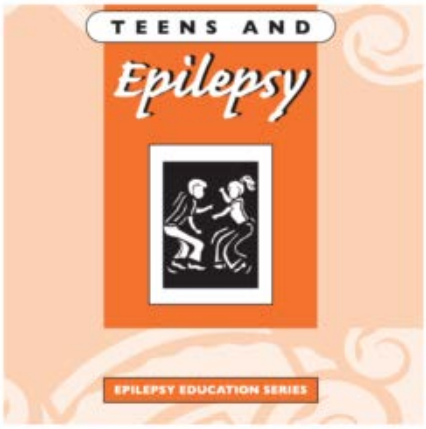
We will provide a foundation for understanding epilepsy, including what seizures can mean for a developing brain and how better understanding of the condition can support effective epilepsy management.

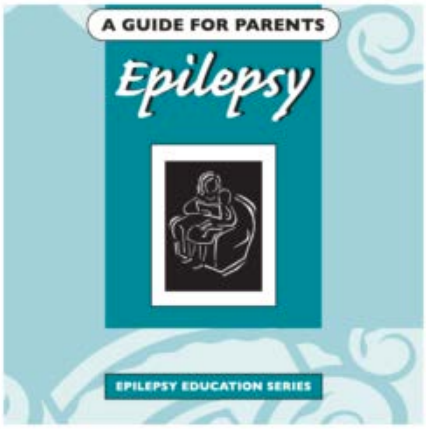
But, as always, the most valuable resource in the room may be the people sitting around you.

Our sessions are about sharing information, but they are also about sharing experiences. We can almost guarantee that you will meet someone who understands a little of what your family is going through — perhaps even a new friend or another family you can stay connected with after the evening is over.

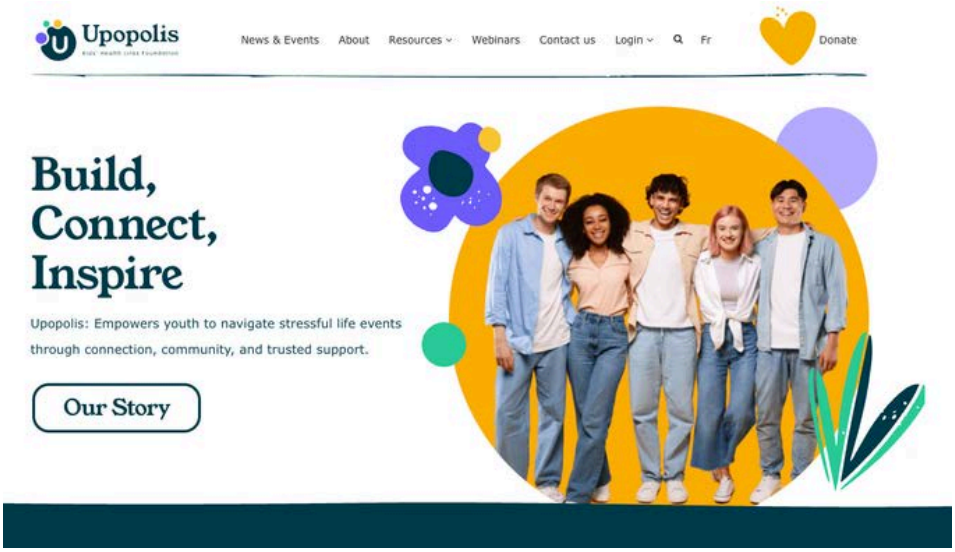
You will leave with resources, information and practical knowledge — but hopefully also feeling a little less alone and a little less burdened by the challenges that epilepsy can bring to a family.
Seats are limited, so register today!

📅 November 18, 2026
🕕 6:00–8:00 p.m.
📍 EAENA Office
REGISTER HERE OR CALL OUR OFFICE TO SAVE YOUR SPOT
Resources and refreshments will be provided.





A VIBRANT ONLINE COMMUNITY SPACE FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES



Something We Discovered This Summer: Upopolis

One of the joys of working with our community is discovering new resources that make us stop and say, “Hey — our youth should know about this!”

This summer, we discovered Upopolis, an online community created for young people navigating a wide range of experiences, including chronic health conditions, disabilities, grief and mental health challenges.
What caught our attention was the combination of connection, safety and participation. Upopolis provides young people with a professionally moderated online space where they can meet others, share experiences, discover resources and take part in activities and programs.

We especially connected with their vision of helping young people build, connect and inspire.
That philosophy feels very familiar to us at EAENA. We know that living with epilepsy is about much more than seizures. Young people also need opportunities to talk, connect with others who understand, build confidence and discover that they are not alone. And yes — there is an epilepsy community on Upopolis!

As our own youth mental-health project continues to grow, we will keep looking for trusted resources that complement the work we are doing.

Sometimes we create the resource ourselves. And sometimes, we are delighted to discover that someone else has already built something pretty wonderful.

We think Upopolis is worth a look!



EAENA PROGRAMS
ONGOING

While we continue to develop and deliver a variety of special projects throughout the year, our core programs remain the foundation of everything we do. They allow us to achieve our strategic goals while advancing the vision that inspires our work every day: Empowering People Who Live With Epilepsy.

Within these pages, you'll also discover the many benefits of becoming part of the EAENA community. While our education, awareness, and many support resources will always remain freely available to everyone—locally, across the region, and beyond—membership offers opportunities for deeper connection, greater engagement, and additional support.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our programs or membership, we encourage you to contact our office. We would be pleased to hear from you.



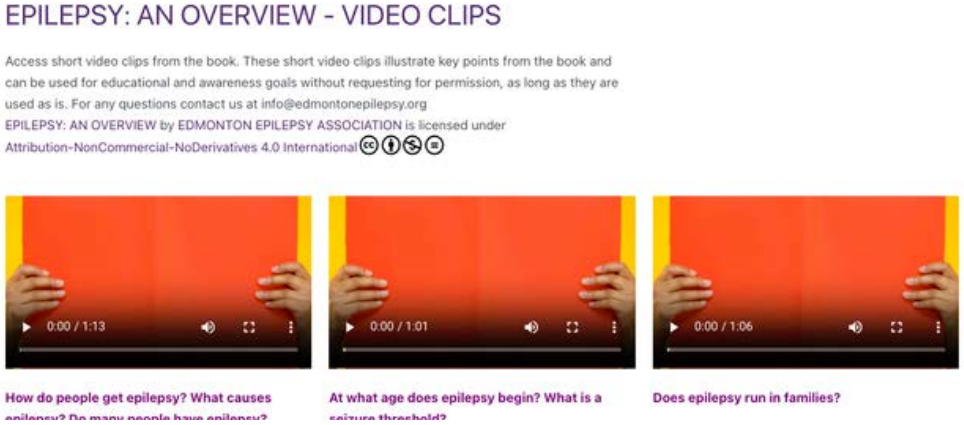


EEA EPILEPSY INFORMATION BOOKS

EPILEPSY BOOKS

We run a comprehensive 11-titles epilepsy information books. **Learn more at this link.** The books are in English and in French. All English copies are always available as audio books and audio files, and can be ordered online for free (large orders will require postage payment). We also have several titles with short video clips that can be used for learning purposes. We are happy to report that we received partial sponsorhip for our English titles from Pendopharm.









EAENA PROGRAMS
ONGOING



KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Book your elementary-grades live puppet show today. More info at this link. The program is offered free of charge to schools, community centres, daycares and any other spaces that can benefit from an engaging live show, teaching younger kids the basics about epilepsy, seizures and hoe tow to be a good friend.

HOBSCOTCH MEMORY PROGRAM

Free memory-coaching program for people with epilepsy. Click here for more info. The HOme Based Self-COgnitive Training Changes lives is a cognitive program and memory coaching training program for people with Epilepsy. The EEA is pleased to launch the offering of this new service for all its members living with epilepsy. Members who apply will be screened to ensure they qualify for the 8-week program.



MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Inquire with us about connecting with a trained EEA mentor, to get individualized support about life with epilepsy. More info here. We are accepting applications for this program from any EEA member in good standing. We also always look forward to recruiting new Mentors. To learn more about either role, connect with our office at info@edmontonepilepsy.org





EAENA PROGRAMS
ONGOING



SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications for these scholarships close March 31 every year. Learn more at this link. Scholarships are an essential part of our work, reflecting our commitment to recognizing and celebrating the achievements of people living with epilepsy across all ages. We offer three scholarships: two are open for applications from January to March each year, and one is available year-round.



AWARDS

We recognize special contributions by EAENA members living with epilepsy. More info here. In 2026, the EAENA will honour two outstanding members — the recipients of the Cam Reid Volunteer of the Year and the EEA Achiever of the Year awards. Each recipient will receive a prize valued at $250, and their names will be added to our commemorative trophies in recognition of their contributions.



FAMILY PROGRAMS

We offer education sessions tailored to families with kids diagnosed with epilepsy. Throughout the year we organize and deliver sessions specifically towards families iwth kids diagnosed with epilepsy.

KIDS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

We run regular outings and kids-focused programs. These range from crafts and games sessions and events, to conversations about specific challenges, such as mental health. **Visit our page for updates on events and resources.**



EAENA PROGRAMS
ONGOING



SOCIAL GATHERINGS

We organize regular social gatherings for children, families, and adults living with epilepsy. These events provide a safe, welcoming space to connect, share experiences, and build supportive relationships within the community. Activities are designed to be inclusive and enjoyable for all ages. Please check our calendar for upcoming dates, times, and locations.



EPILEPSY 101 ON-DEMAND SESSIONS

We offer engaging online and in-person, on-demand educational sessions designed to build understanding and awareness of epilepsy. These sessions are suitable for individuals living with epilepsy, families, caregivers, educators, workplaces, and community groups.

Our Epilepsy 101 sessions cover essential topics such as:

- What epilepsy is and how it affects people
- Common seizure types and first aid
- Reducing stigma and supporting inclusion
- Practical tips for everyday life, school, and work

Sessions can be tailored to meet the needs of your group and scheduled at a time that works for you.

To learn more or to request a session, please contact us at info@edmontonepilepsy.org



INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Every person affected by epilepsy has unique experiences, challenges, and needs. That's why our support is personalized, compassionate, and flexible. Whether you are living with epilepsy, supporting a loved one, or seeking information, we are here to listen and help. Reach out to connect with our team and learn how we can provide guidance, resources, and support tailored specifically to you.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

LOOKING BACK: EPILEPSY ADVOCACY AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS IN ALBERTA



CALGARY HERALD | Thurs., March 7, 1974

Being an epileptic in Alberta is like being black in Alabama

File

RONALD MacLACHLAN
. . . faces discrimination

By Peter Walls
(Herald Staff Writer)

Ronald MacLachlan has a problem that Reg Newkirk can't really do much about.

Mr. MacLachlan is an epileptic who says he faces job discrimination for that reason.

Mr. Newkirk is head of the Calgary office of the Human Rights Commission. But physical handicaps aren't included in the Individual Rights Protection Act that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, color, sex, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin.

So about all Mr. Newkirk can do for Mr. MacLachlan is to confront the former employer with some moral suasion — assuming discrimination exists in the case. There exists no legal recourse to fight dismissal for handicap reasons distinct from the ability to do the job.

"When you're an epileptic in Alberta," Mr. MacLachlan says with some anger, "you may as well be a black in Alabama."

The legal difference, of course, is that epileptics in Alberta don't have recourse to the courts.

"I think the Human Rights Commission should be able to call an employer into court and force him to present evidence the employee was not capable of doing his job," Mr. MacLachlan says.

His neural problem is controlled by daily drugs, and he hasn't suffered a seizure since the mid-1960s, only a short time after his first seizure in 1964 when he was 17.

He feels that more than one employer has dismissed him after having second thoughts about an epileptic joining the organization — an irrational fear resulting in irrational dismissal.

Such a dismissal is often difficult to prove in fact, and impossible to prove in law since the law is not involved.

"We can make an informal inquiry," Mr. Newkirk says, "but only that. I have no authority to ask to see anything. I can only try to reason with the employer, to find out why the person was released from work. If I sense some sort of discrimination I try suasion to get the employer to reconsider him."

Such informal contacts relate to the commission's "educative" role.

And contacts aren't connected solely to epilepsy. Problems related to severe acne, obesity, the wearing of artificial limbs and use of a heart pacemaker all present job crises for people.

Handicapped people simply have no legal clout in cases where the facts indicate dismissal for grounds related to their physical problem.

"This is a serious hole," Mr. Newkirk says.

But legislators are becoming more sensitive to all forms of discrimination. The age and sex items in the law are relatively recent additions.

Homosexuals have been lobbying for protection against discrimination, and the executive director of the Calgary Paraplegic Association sees no reason why handicapped persons shouldn't lobby, too.

Marvin Foulkes admits proving such discrimination is difficult. Employers can easily mask their real reasons for dismissal or for refusing to hire handicapped persons.

"It's a matter of their not being willing to change their system to accommodate you," Mr. Foulkes says. "The problem always is that you are an unknown factor they think might cause future problems. So they choose to hire those who are not handicapped."

The paraplegic organization meets several times a year with several MLAs, including Neil Crawford, the health and social development minister. Among the future topics of discussion will be the inclusion of "handicapped" in the Individual Rights Protection Act.

"I think we ought to have the courts decide whether you are handicapped vis-a-vis the job," Mr. Foulkes says. "We must keep the word handicapped undefined because each situation is unique."

The Epilepsy Association of Calgary is enjoying considerable success with its job counsellor service which landed Mr. MacLachlan a part-time job in a department store.

But for Mr. MacLachlan, who holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Saskatchewan, that is a stop-gap measure. He wants to be recognized as able to do a good job in his field.

In the meantime, neither he nor any other handicapped person can charge any employer with unjust dismissal, and have the merits debated in court or before any other adjudicating body.

"Being an epileptic in Alberta is like being black in Alabama" read the headline of a Calgary Herald article published on March 7, 1974. The story, written by Peter Walls, highlighted the experience of Ronald MacLachlan, an Albertan with epilepsy who believed he had been dismissed from employment because of his condition.

At the time, Alberta's human-rights legislation did not specifically include epilepsy among the grounds protected from discrimination. MacLachlan had experienced only one seizure since 1964, yet he described epilepsy as a barrier to employment. His experience illustrated how difficult it could be for a person with epilepsy to challenge discrimination when the law did not clearly recognize epilepsy as a protected ground. The article quotes Reg Newkirk, then head of the Calgary office of the Human Rights Commission, who acknowledged the difficulty of proving that an employee had been dismissed because of epilepsy. Employers could provide other reasons for dismissal, making discrimination particularly difficult to establish. Newkirk described this lack of protection for people with disabilities as a "serious hole" in the legislation.

Importantly, the story also highlighted the practical role of epilepsy organizations. The Epilepsy Association of Calgary was providing employment counselling and had helped MacLachlan find part-time work. Although he held a chemistry degree from the University of Saskatchewan, his epilepsy had become a significant obstacle to finding employment in his field. The article offers a remarkable glimpse into the challenges faced by Albertans with epilepsy more than 50 years ago. It also reminds us that epilepsy advocacy has always been about more than seizures and medical care. It has included employment, discrimination, dignity, opportunity and the right to participate fully in society. For today's epilepsy community, this historical account is a reminder of how far advocacy has come—and why continued awareness and support remain important. The work of epilepsy organizations, including the advocacy and practical support provided by organizations in Alberta, has helped bring these issues into greater public awareness.

Source: Calgary Herald, March 7, 1974, "Being an epileptic in Alberta is like being black in Alabama," by Peter Walls.



VOLUNTEER WITH US

There has never been a better time to volunteer with EAENA!

We have more new and varied volunteer opportunities than ever before, and we are excited to invite our members, families, friends and supporters to find a role that works for them.
Our recent member survey confirmed something we already sensed: there is a strong interest in volunteering, especially when people have flexibility and a choice of different ways to contribute. Not everyone has the same amount of time, the same skills or the same availability—and that is exactly why we are working to create more options.

For those interested in ongoing involvement and more formal volunteer positions, we invite you to visit our volunteer page, where we explain how opportunities are identified, reviewed and supported.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

In the following pages, we recognize many of the wonderful volunteers who have contributed their time, skills and energy to EAENA throughout 2026. And, as always, we apologize in advance if we have missed a name or two! It is actually a wonderful challenge to have—so many names to add to our lists because so many people have stepped forward to help.

You have already had a chance to meet Val Gabert and Jack McGowan through our Volunteer Awards feature earlier in this issue. Their stories are just two examples of the many different ways people can become involved. We also want to recognize all of our EAENA directors, who generously serve on our Board. Many of our directors contribute far beyond their formal responsibilities as board members, helping with programs, events, outreach, advocacy, fundraising and the everyday work that keeps EAENA moving forward.

Find an Opportunity That Works for You

Below are some of the specific opportunities coming up. Take a look and see what matches your interests, your availability and the kind of contribution you would enjoy making. Simply email or call us. We will work with you to find the volunteer opportunity that feels like the right fit.

Remember: more than 85% of what EAENA does—and the impact we are able to make in the epilepsy community—is supported by the generosity of people who donate their time, skills and personal energy. Every hour matters. Every skill can make a difference. A**nd every volunteer helps us move closer to our vision of empowering people who live with epilepsy.**



VOLUNTEER WITH US (CONT.)

💜 OCTOBER 24 — PURPLE PUMPKIN EVENT

9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. | EAENA Office | In person
Help us welcome and support participants during our Purple Pumpkin activities. We will need friendly volunteers to help with activities, crafts, participants and general event support.
Perfect for: Anyone who enjoys working with children, youth and adults and likes a fun, hands-on activity.

🎤 OCTOBER 24 — TALENT SHOW

2:30 – 8:30 p.m. | EAENA Office | In person
We are excited to introduce this first-time EAENA community event!
Volunteers will help with setting up tables and chairs, preparing the space, assisting with the stage and helping things run smoothly throughout the event.
Perfect for: People who enjoy events, teamwork and being part of something new.

🎄 DECEMBER 5 — EAENA HOLIDAY PARTY

12:00 – 7:00 p.m. | EAENA Office | In person
Help us create a fun and welcoming holiday celebration for our community.
Volunteers can help with setting up the space, preparing activities and games, welcoming participants and helping throughout the afternoon.
Perfect for: Anyone who loves the holiday season and enjoys bringing people together.



📝 MAGAZINE REMOTE EDITOR

Would you enjoy reading, editing and sharing ideas—but prefer to volunteer from home? Our quarterly magazine offers an opportunity to become part of the editorial team. This role involves reading draft copy online and adding comments, suggestions and corrections.
Time commitment: Up to 2 hours, approximately four times a year.
Perfect for: People who enjoy reading, writing, editing and paying attention to detail.

💻 EAENA BOARD COMMITTEES

Did you know that **any EAENA member in good standing can participate in our Board committees?**
Committees generally meet on Zoom approximately four times a year, usually between **7:00 and 8:00 p.m.**
This is a wonderful way to learn more about how EAENA works, contribute your ideas and see whether you might eventually be interested in serving as a member of our Board of Directors.
Perfect for: Members who would like to become more involved in EAENA's planning, development and governance.

VOLUNTEER WITH US (CONT.)

📦 OCCASIONAL OFFICE & PREPARATION SUPPORT

Throughout the year, there are times when an extra pair of hands—or several!—can make a big difference. Depending on what we have planned, volunteers may help with:

- Preparing presentation packages
- Organizing activities and crafts
- Getting materials ready for events
- Sorting and organizing resources
- Preparing program materials
- Helping with occasional office projects

These opportunities are very flexible and are offered when we have specific projects that need additional support.

Perfect for: People who want to volunteer occasionally without committing to a regular schedule.

🎰 2027 CASINO VOLUNTEERS

Our official volunteer call will begin in January 2027, but we are already starting an informal list of people who may be interested in helping with our confirmed casino dates:
March 28–29, 2027
West Edmonton Mall
Casino volunteering is one of the important ways we raise funds to support EAENA programs and services. If you think you might be available, simply email or call our office and let us know you are interested. We will follow up with everyone on the list in early January with more information and the official volunteer sign-up.

YOUR TIME. YOUR SKILLS. YOUR CHOICE.

You do not have to commit to volunteering every week. You do not need a special title. And you do not have to know exactly where you fit. Start with one event. Share one skill. Give us a few hours. We will help you find a way to make your contribution meaningful.

Join us. Volunteer with EAENA.
Together, we can do more for everyone impacted by epilepsy.

Our next



will be held at Starlight Casino (WEM) on March 28-29, 2027
Plan to volunteer with us and help us raise funds. Call or email us today to reserve your spot!



VOLUNTEER WITH US (CONT.)

Celebrating the Volunteers Behind EAENA

It is our tradition in the final issue of our magazine each year to recognize, by name, the core volunteers who are the backbone of our association.

This year, we are also highlighting the key projects and programs where these incredible volunteers contribute their time, skills and energy. From programs and events to outreach, advocacy and behind-the-scenes support, their contributions help EAENA continue to do what we do. We know that a list like this can never fully capture everything our volunteers contribute throughout the year — and we certainly hope we have not missed anyone! If we have overlooked your contribution or missed your name in our 2026 recognition, please reach out to our office. We will be happy to correct the record and make sure you are properly recognized in early 2027.
To every volunteer who has given their time, shared their skills, answered a question, helped at an event, supported a program, made a connection or simply showed up when we needed you: thank you.

EAENA would not be EAENA without you. 💜

2026 EAENA VOLUNTEERS

ADITHYA S.	KIDS PROJECT		
ANGELA W.	DIRECTOR	TABLES AWARENESS	MENTORSHIP
ANGIE C.	MAGAZINE SUPPORT		
ANNA P.	DIRECTOR		
ASHLEY G.	EVENT SUPPORT		
CELINE H.	AUDIOBOOKS		
DR. KASSIRI	DIRECTOR	PRESENTATIONS	
DR. LIU	PRESENTATIONS		
DR. STARREVELD	ADVISOR		
HELLIA M.	AUDIOBOOKS		
JACK M.	DIRECTOR	HOBSCOTCH	MENTORSHIP
JAKE D.	EVENT SUPPORT		
JAMIE L.	EVENT SUPPORT		
JOHN M.	EVENT SUPPORT		
JOHN P.	OFFICE SUPPORT		
JUSTINE B.	MAGAZINE SUPPORT		

2026 EAENA VOLUNTEERS

ADITHYA S.	KIDS PROJECT		
KYM B.	EVENT SUPPORT		
MAI HEIKAL	EVENT SUPPORT	ART PROJECTS	MAGAZINE SUPPORT
MICHELE Z	FRENCH BOOKS		
NICHOLAS R.	DIRECTOR	MENTORSHIP	
NOELLA D.	DIRECTOR	FUNDRAISING	TABLES AWARENESS
RAMNEEK P.	KIDS PROJECT	MAGAZINE SUPPORT	
SAM H.	MAGAZINE SUPPORT		
SASHA M.	EVENT SUPPORT	TABLES AWARENESS	
SHANDEA P.	DIRECTOR	TABLES AWARENESS	
SHERRI-LEE E.	DIRECTOR		
SUSAN W.	DIRECTOR	PRESENTATIONS	
TAMMY H.	DIRECTOR	MENTORSHIP	SENIORS
TAMMY T.	DIRECTOR	MENTORSHIP	EVENT SUPPORT
TENISHA B.	EVENT SUPPORT		
TERRY M.	ADVISOR		
VIRGINA N.	BINGO		





EAENA Epilepsy Association Edmonton & Northern Alberta
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www.epilepsyalbertanorth.ca

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The People Behind the Mission: Our EAENA Board of Directors

Every milestone we celebrate as a registered charity serving northern Alberta since 1960 stands on the shoulders of an extraordinary group of volunteers: the Board of Directors of the Epilepsy Association of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (EAENA). Their dedication, wisdom and unwavering commitment help shape the future of our organization and ensure that we continue to fulfill our mission of empowering people who live with epilepsy.

Our Board members generously contribute their time, professional expertise and passion for our community. Meeting monthly online and gathering annually for an in-person strategic retreat, they work collaboratively to uphold the vision, mission and values that define EAENA. Their thoughtful leadership, careful stewardship and willingness to ask the difficult questions provide the guidance and accountability that allow our association to grow, innovate and serve our community with confidence.

Welcoming New Directors

At our annual Board retreat on September 26, 2026, we welcomed two new directors to the EAENA Board: **Val Gabert and Jack McGowan.** Their three-year terms have now begun following their selection by the current Board, with their appointments to be formally confirmed at the February 2027 Annual General Meeting. We are excited to have Val and Jack bring their experience, energy and perspectives to the Board. Both have already demonstrated a strong commitment to EAENA and to the people and families we serve, and we look forward to seeing how their contributions help shape our next chapter.

We also want to extend our sincere **thanks to Nicholas Rheubottom,** who recently resigned from the Board because of new work-related commitments. Although his time as a director was shorter than we would have liked, we are grateful for the contribution he made during his tenure. Thankfully, this is not a complete goodbye! Nicholas remains a trained EAENA volunteer, and we are sure we will see more of him at upcoming events and activities. We wish him every success in his new roles and look forward to keeping him connected to our community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (CONT.)



Looking Ahead — And Looking for New Directors

February 2027 will bring another important transition, as five of our current directors will complete their Board terms. That means our search is already open for EAENA members who may be interested in joining the Board and helping guide the organization into its next chapter.

Yes, there are commitments that come with being a director. There are meetings, governance responsibilities, discussions about finances and strategy, and — every once in a while — a difficult question that needs to be asked!

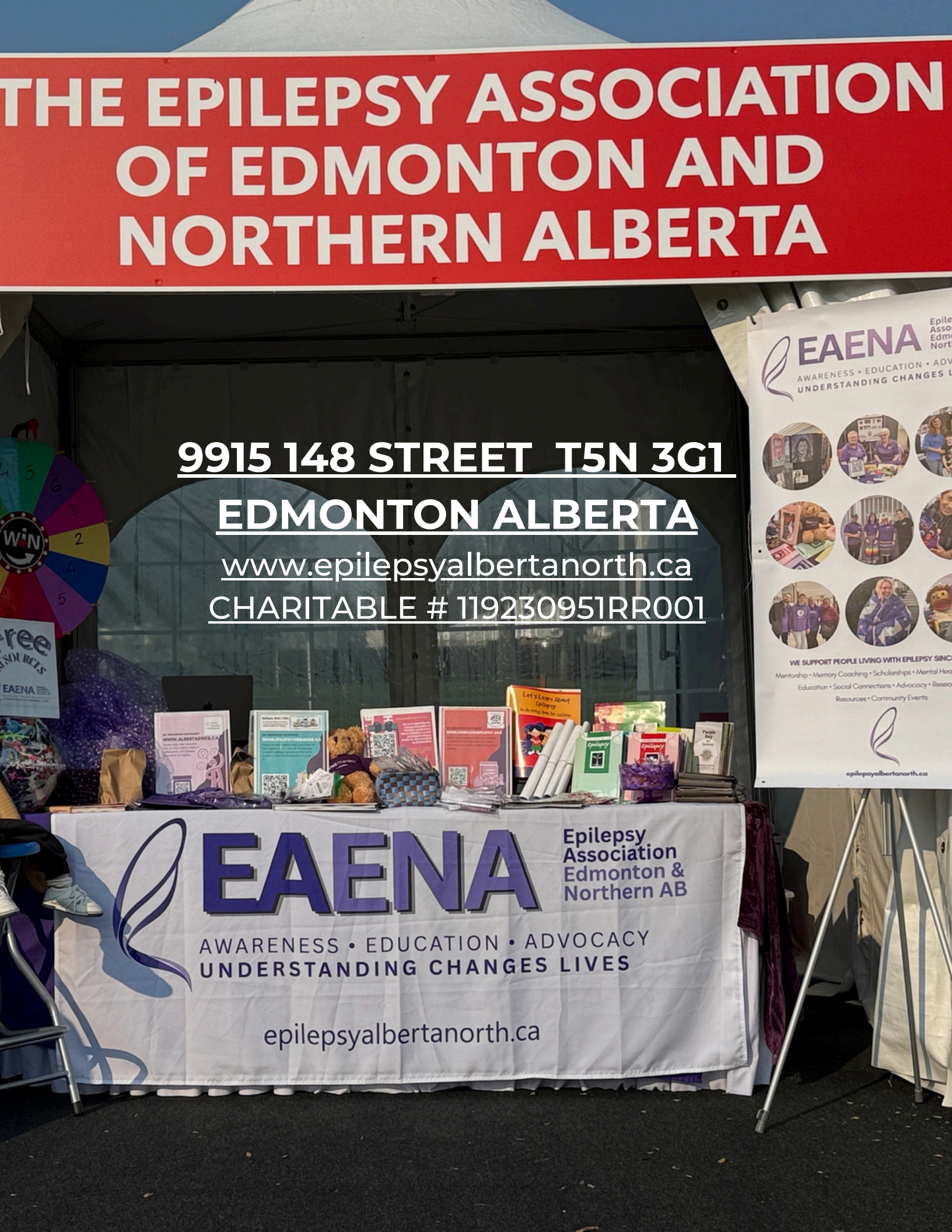
But we also know that there are members of our community with skills, experience, ideas and a willingness to contribute who could bring something very valuable to the table.

You do not need to arrive knowing everything about governance. If you are curious about what being a director involves, we are happy to walk you through the process, answer your questions and help you determine whether the role is a good fit for your interests, skills and availability.

Building the Next Chapter

Our September 26 retreat was not simply about welcoming new directors. It was also an opportunity for the Board to step back from the day-to-day work of EAENA and look ahead. The Board will be working together to develop a new strategic plan that will help guide the association through the coming years. It is an important conversation about where we are, where we want to go and how we can continue to make the greatest possible difference for people living with epilepsy across northern Alberta.

If you are interested in learning more about serving as an EAENA director, we encourage you to visit our Board webpage or contact Valeria at the EAENA office. Your skills, experience, ideas and passion could help shape the next chapter of our story — and make a lasting difference in the lives of people living with epilepsy.


THE EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION
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