

NEIGHBOURS OF

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Give Where You Live:

KAYLEE NORWOOD CARES FOR THE COMMUNITY



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Give Where You Live:

KAYLEE NORWOOD CARES FOR THE COMMUNITY



Born and raised in Ancaster, Kaylee Norwood takes great pride in engaging with her hometown and everything it has to offer residents and the community at large through her work with ACS (Ancaster Community Services).

Kaylee grew up with parents Joanne, a retired palliative and home care registered nurse, and retired Mississauga Fire Captain Steve Norwood, and brother Daniel in the Meadowlands neighbourhood in one of the first homes built on their street.

“I remember growing up running through the empty lots with all the neighbourhood kids,” Kaylee says. “So much has changed over the past 30 years as our community continues to expand and develop.”

Kaylee’s mother’s family, the Brennans, moved to Ancaster in 1965 and lived on Enmore Avenue for decades, she adds.

“My grandparents were engaged in our Ancaster community, with my Poppa Jack Brennan involved with the Knights of Columbus at St. Ann’s Parish serving as one of the group’s first Grand Knights, and my Grandma Ann Brennan taught Grades 1 and 2 at St. Ann’s Elementary School for many years,” she says. “I am so deeply honoured to carry on their legacy of supporting and engaging with our local Ancaster community.”

A life-long Ancaster resident, Kaylee attended Holy Name of Mary (CES) and Bishop Tonnos (CSS), and was first drawn to community engagement and helping others through the Catholic Leadership Interdisciplinary Program (CLIP) offered at Bishop Tonnos in 2011.

“The program offered students the opportunity to take part in a collaborative, community-minded experience centered on leadership, community engagement and creating an equitable world,” says Kaylee. “As a part of the program, we spent two weeks in the Dominican Republic building homes for income-challenged communities, as well as a week-long exchange with students from an Indigenous community in Kyuquot, B.C.”

The program also included hosted the students in Ancaster for a week showing them local trails, waterfalls, and historical buildings.

“The program opened my eyes to the different lived experiences of our neighbours and enabled me to develop my leadership skills and a greater sense of empathy,” Kaylee says. “I am forever grateful for the rich lifelong friendships I made with my classmates.”

Following high school, Kaylee attended Mohawk College for a Social Service Work program. As part of her diploma, she completed her practicum placement with Ancaster Community Services (ACS) before beginning her career supporting local seniors and older adults in.

“The opportunity arose for me to return to my Ancaster roots, and work in my community in November of 2019 and I rejoined the ACS team as the Program Manager,” she says, adding she has since been promoted to her current role of Executive Director, beginning in August of 2022.



"I am so proud to represent ACS in our community and appreciate the great work being done by our team of staff and volunteers," Kaylee says. "We're able to fulfill our mission through the generosity of community members. I'm grateful to collaborate with such a passionate group of caring and concerned citizens to ensure our community is supported. I think I have the best job in the world!"

Ancaster Community Services (ACS) is a community-based, volunteer supported, registered charity offering a variety of services and programs serving the residents of the community of Ancaster since September 1969. Housed in the Ancaster Square building, below the Ancaster Library, since 2001, fall 2024 marks the organization's 55th anniversary supporting the local community.

The agency offers a variety of programs and services for income-challenged families, a Food Assistance Program for individuals and seniors which includes accessing the Ancaster Food Bank and annual Holiday Assistance Program. ACS also offers senior programs such as Meals on Wheels, Frozen Meals, Assisted Volunteer Driving, Shopping 4 Seniors and Santa to a Senior. The agency also supports local youth in Ancaster through its Youth Engagement Program (The Net) and offers an annual Babysitting Course.

"Our focus is on continuing to expand our impact and stay in touch with the ever-changing needs of our diverse and growing community to enhance the quality of life for all," adds Kaylee.

As the community continues to change and grow, so does the need for its services, she says. The Assisted Volunteer Driving Program saw a 44 percent increase compared to previous years, making this year the busiest in the program's recorded history.

"We would not be able to accomplish our important work in the community without the

generous donation of time by our outstanding volunteers," Kaylee says. "I'm truly humbled by their selfless dedication to the organization and the clients and community we serve."

ACS is currently looking for more volunteer drivers. If interested, call the office for more information and a team member will be happy to chat with you! Volunteers are the embodiment of the ACS slogan "Give Where You Live," working, playing and volunteering right in Ancaster.

"We are so lucky to have each and every one of them!"

ACS is also responsible for hosting and managing the Ancaster Food Bank. ACS is a proud member of the Emergency Food Network which represents the 16 organizations and 23 programs combating food insecurity in the City of Hamilton. As a network, it continues to see first-hand the impact of the skyrocketing costs of living on the community's most vulnerable members and the network is reaching its capacity. ACS remains firm in its commitment to supporting income-challenged families and individuals in the community and has made significant efforts to ensure all those who require assistance receive it.

"We believe access to food is a human right," Kaylee says. "ACS endeavors to provide a dignified and helpful approach to individuals who may require food assistance. We've seen progressive demand for assistance year after year, resulting in a record-breaking number of individuals supported a 68 percent increase in 2024 alone."

The Ancaster Food Bank is always accepting food donations at its office, or locations in the community (Food Basics, Longos, and Giant Tiger have bins supporting ACS).



When not involved with all the amazing work done through ACS, Kaylee enjoys spending time with family and friends, and is an avid reader.

"One of my favourite things to do locally is attend 'Books & Brews' at Grain & Grit brewery once a month to review novels," she says. "Romance and Fantasy are my favourite genres. It's so fun to get lost in a good book and almost feels like you're entering another world. I'm always looking for a good book recommendation!"

Kaylee and family also enjoy spending summers with their entire extended families at their cottage at Woodland Beach, Ontario on the shores of beautiful Georgian Bay.

"Growing up surrounded by family and swimming in the crystal-clear water are some of my favourite childhood memories," she says. "And if conditions are just right, you may even find me on a paddle board out on the water."

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Kaylee also keeps occupied volunteering with Big Brother Big Sisters of Grand Erie, Halton, & Hamilton supporting “GLOW” — Girls Linking Our Worlds — a group mentoring program for elementary school students who identify as female. The program focuses on empowerment, leadership development and helping participants feel confident in all aspects of their identity.

“I truly enjoy connecting and empowering young women in our community,” Kaylee says. “It’s a great group of youth. I find it so exciting to think of where they’ll all be in the future. Their futures are so bright you could even say they glow!”

Through her work with ACS, Kaylee is also connected to many local Ancaster community events, mainly the annual Heritage Days Parade. In addition to walking in the parade to highlight the great work of the ACS team of volunteers, she also sits on the planning committee for the event with local community leaders.

“Being involved with the Parade as an adult is a full-circle moment for me,” Kaylee says. “I always loved the Shriners floats and bikes as a kid and I have loved walking in the parade the past few years. It’s a true com-

munity event and my favourite time of year here in Ancaster. I remember my grandma taking all us grandkids to the strawberry social at the old town hall every year, one of my favourite memories. Ancaster was such a magical place to grow up.”

ACS is also the beneficiary of the annual Ancaster Mill Race where Team ACS is on hand to accept donations from runners and their supporters as well as walk and run in the event themselves.

“One of the things I so enjoy about my role is being out in the community and connecting with so many of our neighbours. It’s truly a joy and an honour to be supported by our generous and caring community.”

If you happen to see Kaylee out enjoying one of Ancaster’s many amazing trails and parks or the local Rail Trail during her lunch hour, please feel free to say hi.

“Ancaster is such a great place to live,” says Kaylee. “I love the small-town feel within a larger community. From the local restaurants, businesses and community groups and events, we are so fortunate to be Ancasterites!” ■



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