

March 13, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tillsonburg's Matthew MacNeil to speak at the United Nations on World Down Syndrome Day

LONDON – Southern Ontario's Matthew MacNeil is usually not a nervous public speaker. Having done speeches and presentations for most of his life, raising awareness for people with Down syndrome comes easily to Matthew. But soon he is about to face his biggest audience.

On March 21st, World Down Syndrome Day, Matthew will be in New York City with the Canadian Down Syndrome Society's National Executive Director Kirk Crowther, presenting at the United Nations's World Down Syndrome Day (WDS) Conference.

"I'm excited to speak at the United Nations. It's a big opportunity for me. But I am a bit nervous, but it's a good thing because being nervous means that I'm ready for this," Matthew said.

This year's WDS Conference theme, #MyVoiceMyCommunity, is about enabling people with Down syndrome to speak up, be heard and influence government policy and action, to be fully included in the community. As a member of CDSS's self-advocate committee VATA for the last five years, and Chair of the committee for three, Matthew is an expert at speaking up for the rights of people with Down syndrome. VATA stands for Voices At The Table for Advocacy, and Matthew is excited to bring Canada's voice to the attendees from around the globe.

"It's important for self-advocates to speak out," Matthew said. "Everyone should be proud of who they are. I'd like to show more people that they should treat us just the same as everyone else."

"There are 45,000 Canadians with Down syndrome, all of whom are positively contributing to their communities in their own way. I'm excited to join Matthew at the United Nations, to share their stories on the world stage," Kirk Crowther said.

The World Down Syndrome Day Conference is sponsored by the Permanent Missions

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to the United Nations of Canada, Australia, Brazil, India, Israel, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Poland and United Kingdom. Matthew and Kirk will also be meeting with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.

World Down Syndrome Day will allow people around the globe to create a single voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of people with Down syndrome. It occurs annually on March 21 and is officially ratified by the United Nations. More information about World Down Syndrome Day is available at www.cdss.ca.

About Canadian Down Syndrome Society:

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) is a vital resource linking individuals, parents and professionals through advocacy, education, and providing information. CDSS is proud to be the voice of Canadians with Down syndrome and their families. CDSS wants all Canadians to 'See the Ability'. Visit www.cdss.ca for more information.

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