

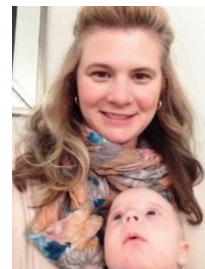
# PWS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

“Empowered By Hope, United for the Future”

## Family Conference – Presenter Bios

### Holly Sine, OPWSA Co-Chair

Holly has over 20 years of professional experience in the Health Care field. She specializes in generic pharmaceutical commercial operations for both the veterinary and human industry with previous experience working at Teva Canada Ltd. and Vetrex Group Inc. Most recently, Holly lead patient support programs helping patients access medications for rare diseases with McKesson Canada Ltd. Holly graduated with a double major in Human Biology and Economics from the University of Toronto. While at U of T, Holly was a varsity athlete for the women's basketball team. Holly received an OUA All-star designation, OUA championship title and competed in the CIS championship tournament in her senior year. In 2024 Holly and her team were inducted into the U of T Sports Hall of Fame. In January 2014 Holly and her husband Michael welcomed their twins Jack and Kyrie (now 11 years old) to join their family with sons Grant (25) and Quinn (23). Jack was diagnosed with PWS at 2 months of age. The Sine family resides in Burlington Ontario. The Sine's love to travel, play sports, spend time with family and visit their cottage during the summer.



### Mark Joseph, President & Chair, Foundation for Prader-Willi Research Canada

Mark Joseph currently lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba with his beautiful wife, Jenn, and their two children: Darwin (12, PWS) and Edison (9). Before moving to Winnipeg, they have also called Toronto, Markham, and Blue Mountains, Ontario home over the years.

Mark's educational background is in science and technology, which lead him to careers in the environmental consulting and aviation fields. He is currently a Captain for WestJet Airlines.

Mark first connected with the PWS community within weeks of Darwin's diagnosis. He's been learning, sharing, fundraising and supporting families in our community ever since. He finds that hope for a better future coupled with networking within the community have been his personal recipe for managing PWS in their lives. This motivated him to get more involved with the Foundation for Prader-Willi Research Canada. He has been on the board of directors for one year and assumed the President & Chair role in April 2024. He hopes to bring a collaborative tone to FPWR Canada. To better engage families and work closely with other stakeholders in the PWS community.

In his personal time, you'll find him outside in all climates & geographies enjoying the wonders of nature & our planet. His favourites are paddling & hiking ... it's his catharsis.



### Theresa Strong, Ph.D., Director of Research Programs, FPWR

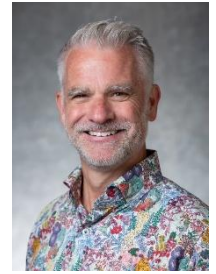
Theresa Strong, PhD, is a co-founder and Director of Research Programs at FPWR. Theresa has a PhD in genetics and led a gene therapy research lab as a Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), prior to transitioning to a full-time position at FPWR. She remains a Volunteer Adjunct Professor at UAB. At FPWR, she directs the grant program, leads the PWS Clinical Trials Consortium and is principal investigator for the Global PWS Registry. She is active in the broader patient advocacy community as well, serving on the steering committee of the Clinical Trials Transformation Initiative (CTTI), acting as a mentor in the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative "Rare as One" Project and having served as a member of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Patient Engagement Collaborative. Theresa and her husband Jim live in Birmingham, AL and have four young adult children, including Daniel, who is living with PWS.



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### **Karl Weddige, PhD, Senior Director - Field Based Medical Affairs, Aardvark Therapeutics**

Karl Weddige is a seasoned scientific and clinical professional with more than 2 decades of pharmaceutical industry experience. Having a strong foundation in both behavioural science and biology, Karl brings a unique, multidisciplinary perspective to translational research, drug development and Medical Affairs. With a Master's degree in Psychology, Karl had clinical experience treating individuals with Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS) from a behavioural modification standpoint, as well as individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He later earned a PhD in Biology, with research that included preclinical investigations into the neurobiological effects of microinjections of cholecystokinin (CCK) on dopamine cell firing rates as well as novel approaches to treating various neurodevelopmental disorders. Karl now serves as the Senior Director of Field Based Medical Affairs at Aardvark Therapeutics. Importantly, Karl combines vast professional experience with a deep care for patients in need.



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### **Rob Pividor, OPWSA Co-Chair**

Rob is an Honor Graduate of Brock University in the field of Recreation and Leisure Studies, in addition to having received his Occupational Therapy Assistant certification from Humber College. Rob has worked in the field of rehabilitation, health care and support for individuals with Prader-Willi Syndrome and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) since 1991 within the public and private sector.

Since 1996 Rob has volunteered at the annual OPWSA conference and coordinated the OPWSA Youth Program portion of the conference. Rob has also presented at the OPWSA conference with respect to innovative fitness programming for people with PWS.



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### **Kate MacKinnon, Sibling**

Kate is little sister to Jon MacKinnon (55) of Niagara Falls. Their mother, Joan, was a founding member of OPWSA. Kate is a teacher and has recently moved back to Ontario, after 30 years in Nova Scotia, to be closer to Jon and their Dad.



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### **Noah Cordeiro, Sibling**

Noah is older brother to Julia (20) of Richmond Hill. Noah is a Mortgage Funder and a recent graduate from Toronto Metropolitan University. He is an active advocate and supporter of the Prader-Willi syndrome community through his sister's journey.



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### **Catherine Rinaldi, Sibling**

Catherine is older sister to Melissa (22) of Mississauga. Catherine is a pediatric occupational therapist in her second year of practice, specializing in supporting kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



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### **Cathy Rulli, CPA, CGA, Specialist in Disability and Family Financial Planning**

Cathy being both a CPA and sibling to a person with a disability brings the unique combination of personal and professional experience to this session. Realizing the lack of reliable sources in the disability community for financial information, Cathy is founder of Disability Dollars, a company that strives to provide education and confidence to disability families when navigating programs like DTC, RDSP and Henson Trusts. You can find details about Cathy and her services at [www.rullicpa.com](http://www.rullicpa.com) and [www.disabilitydollars.ca](http://www.disabilitydollars.ca)



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### **Patrice Carroll, LICSW, Ph.D., Director of PWS Services, Latham Centers Inc., USA**

Patrice Carroll, DSW, LICSW, is the director of PWS services at Latham Centers in Massachusetts, USA. Patrice received her MSW from Simmons College, Boston, MA, in 2008. Patrice is a Board of Trustees and member of the Professional Providers Caregivers Board through IPSWO and Caregiver's Advisory Board through PWSAUSA and has over 25 years of experience working with children and adults diagnosed with PWS. In addition to her experience with developing person-centered programming for people with PWS, she has specialized in the multi-modal management of skin and rectal picking using intensive, non-contingent, sensory stimulation.



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## **Jennifer Merkle, Vice Principal & Educational Consultant**

Jennifer Merkle is a passionate educator, social justice advocate, and dedicated champion for inclusive education. With almost two decades of experience in Ontario's education system, she brings a unique dual perspective as both a professional and a parent to three children with diverse learning needs.

Jennifer is currently employed as a Vice Principal with the York Region District School Board and previously served in the Peel District School Board. She has held various roles in the public education system and social services sector which include: K–12 Instructional Coach, Curricular Head, high school classroom teacher, and personal support worker.

Jennifer is a lifelong learner and has recently completed her Master of Education at OISE (Educational Leadership and Policy). She has additional qualifications in Special Education and is also a certified Guidance Counsellor.

Jennifer is deeply committed to inclusive education and has extensive expertise supporting students with complex special needs. Her leadership is shaped by both professional insight and personal advocacy, making her a trusted voice in equity-focused education.

As the founder of a private educational consulting practice, Jennifer offers personalized support to students, families, and educators. Her work focuses on Individual Education Plans (IEPs), inclusive programming, and transition planning, ensuring that every learner receives the time, attention, and advocacy they deserve to thrive.



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## **Laura Merkle, Special Education Consultant**

Laura Seckington is a dedicated special education teacher and advocate with a strong commitment to creating inclusive learning environments for all students. After earning her degree in elementary education, she was drawn to the field of special education and began her career teaching in alternative care and treatment settings within the York Region District School Board.

Her passion for supporting students with ASD led her to explore Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) as a teaching tool while teaching in a partially contained classroom for over a decade. Building on this experience, she transitioned into a leadership role on the board's Interdisciplinary Team, where she focused on behaviour, transitional supports, accommodations, and guiding educators in designing modified programming.

Currently, she serves as a Special Education Consultant with a focus on Assistive Technology, where she supports both students and teachers in using technology to enhance learning, accessibility, and independence. Throughout her career, she has remained committed to transforming classrooms into Universally Designed spaces that foster learner agency, innovation, and empowerment for all students to thrive.



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## **Kelly Casey, Developmental Services Consultant**

Kelly Casey, Developmental Services Consultant Kelly Casey has been working in the Developmental Services Sector for over 30 years. Over the past 12 years, Kelly has been a Developmental Services Consultant for people, families, and organizations, spending much of her time focusing on supporting people to plan and create housing models (Homes of their Own) in their chosen community and with their chosen supports. Over the years, Kelly has actively engaged with several private and public sector partners who are dedicated to the transformation of our communities into places where everyone belongs. Kelly is on the Board of Directors for Microboards Ontario and believes in community partnerships to support full inclusion.



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## **Cathy Mallove, Chair, OPWSA Residential Options Family Support Network**

Cathy is a proud PWS parent (Rebecca, 30) who has been involved with OPWSA for many years, including as a board member and co-chair and currently as the chair of OPWSA's Residential Family Support Network. She is also a member of the International Prader-Willi Syndrome Organization's FAMCARE Board. She is a communications and change management professional with over 25 years of experience in the public, non-profit and private sectors.



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## Lynn Garrick, Medical/Research Coordinator, PWSA | USA

Lynn and her family live in Cottage Grove, MN. She is the mother of 5 children, including her youngest son, who has Prader-Willi syndrome. She has been the Nurse and Program Director with AME Community Services, Inc., a residential provider serving adults and children with Prader-Willi syndrome since 2007. She is a board member of IPWSO, their professional providers and caregivers board, and the Minnesota PWS chapter. PWSA | USA has been a significant resource since the birth of her son, and she is honored to help the community through her personal and professional knowledge. In her personal life, Lynn enjoys spending time outdoors with her family, reading, and gardening.

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