



My name is Toni Kaastra and I was born and raised on a farm in Huron County. I am the oldest of four and my siblings and I are all born within four and a half years. I currently live in Hanover and am a busy mom of 3 teenagers ages 18, 18 and 12. My current role at the Hanover Public Library is Adult Programmer and Community Outreach Coordinator. This role isn't just a job - it's a calling. My mission is to connect people, to build bridges, and to create spaces where everyone feels welcome. I began at the library working the front desk almost two years ago, but quickly advanced to my current position in March of this year. The thing I love most about my position is being able to further connect a community. Being raised in a small town, instilled in me that community is very important.

Growing up, my family was often an advocate for the misunderstood and forgotten. My parents helped open a no questions asked food bank in town where you did not have to fill out forms or prove income. My mother was involved in helping provide transitional housing for youth just out of juvenile detention. My childhood was filled with looking beyond what you saw on the outside, learning about empathy and advocacy, providing an understanding that anyone could need a little help sometimes. My background has helped me in my role at the Library and made me into the passionate community representative that I am.

At 14, I joined multiple youth boards helping plan large events for upwards of 1000 youth and during university I volunteered at a youth drop in centre. I attended Carleton University studying Criminal Psychology and Linguistics but did not complete my degree as I realized that was not the path I wanted to go. My schooling provided me with insights that have shaped both my personal and professional life. I've always been driven by a desire to understand and support others. After leaving university I had my youngest son and moved to Walkerton where I met my now husband and stepdaughter. We moved to Hanover in 2014. We took in our other son in 2021 and our family became complete.

I really enjoy being a part of my community and I currently sit on the JDSS parent council and the chamber of commerce executive team. My youngest son is a part of the Hanover Swim Club, won the fair Junior Farmer award and was police Deputy Chief of the Day this past year. My older son is currently the Senior Fair Ambassador and my daughter presented for the GSA (Gay straight alliance) at the Toronto Conference. I am very passionate about what I do. It's about creating connections, understanding diverse perspectives, and ensuring that no one feels forgotten. Thank you and I hope to see you all at various events around town!

