



**DeafBlind**  
ONTARIO SERVICES

**STRATEGIC  
PLAN  
2019 - 2022**

# keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Fall 2018

# TOGETHER WE THRIVE

Exceptional Service • Engaged Employees • Enriched Collaboration

## EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

As we continue to evolve, we strive to be the Intervenor Services provider of choice in Ontario and ensure people living with deafblindness receive **Exceptional Service**.

## ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

Our employees are our strength! We strive to build a culture of **Engaged Employees** and empower all levels of our dynamic team.

## ENRICHED COLLABORATION

We will maintain our current partnerships and build new relationships at the provincial, national, and international level to foster **Enriched Collaboration**.

Learn more at [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com)

## In [This Issue]

### News & Events

Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022 .....	2
Access Intervenor Services .....	2
National Deafblind Awareness Month .....	8
Upcoming Events .....	9
Fundraising Events .....	10
Special Thanks .....	11

### Specialized Services

Holly's Career as an Intervenor .....	3
Viola .....	4
Participation in Research Update .....	6
Community Services - <i>Bridge</i> .....	6
Community Services - <i>SEA</i> ™ .....	7
Supported Volunteer Placements .....	12

## Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022 | Together We Thrive

Together with our Board of Directors, we reached out to families, guardians, stakeholders, and our employees to look to the future and create the Strategic Plan that will guide our growth to 2022.

currently lack support. As leaders, we will steer the development of an accreditation process for agencies in the field to promote a standard of service excellence.

Since our beginning in 1989, we have evolved together as a team. **Together We Thrive**

as we continue to provide **Exceptional Service**, encourage **Engaged Employees**, and foster **Enriched Collaboration**.

At DeafBlind Ontario Services, providing **Exceptional Service** inspired our foundation and will continue to guide our growth. As the needs of people living with deafblindness change, we must proactively adapt to evolve. We will explore providing services to populations of Ontarians living with deafblindness that

### Our Vision to 2022

Throughout all levels of the organization, our employees are undoubtedly our strength! We

strive to encourage a culture of **Engaged Employees** through the implementation of a Communication and Engagement Strategy and empower our dynamic team.

Engaging others makes us better. As an organization, we value collaborations and recognize that external partnerships and meaningful exchange help us to learn and grow. Fostering **Enriched Collaboration** will ensure we continue to provide the best support possible.

## Deafblind Network of Ontario | Access Intervenor Services

The Deafblind Network of Ontario (DBNO), formerly known as the Deafblind Coalition of Ontario, is a passionate group made up of individuals, organizations, and service providers, including DeafBlind Ontario Services, who work together for the improvement of services for Ontarians who are deafblind. The DBNO is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians who are deafblind have equal access to high quality Intervenor Services.

The Deafblind Network of Ontario has been working on developing a single point of access for Intervenor Services that will launch on their new website ([deafblindnetworkontario.com](http://deafblindnetworkontario.com)) in late fall or early winter 2018. This single point of access, called Access Intervenor Services, will provide a more cohesive approach to directing interested individuals and their families to services within the Intervenor Services sector.

## “Welcome to the best job you will ever have”, said Holly Pflanzner, when asked what she would tell those considering a career as an intervenor.

Holly has worked as an intervenor at DeafBlind Ontario Services ever since graduating from the Developmental Services Worker (DSW) program at Loyalist College four years ago.

“I am so honoured to support people who are deafblind. I feel a strong bond with each of the individuals I support; it is important to me to emphasize their strengths, abilities, and ultimately help them to achieve as much independence as possible.”

Holly was inspired to work in the developmental services field when a friend with Cerebral Palsy commended her in high school. As their friendship grew, so did Holly's caregiving skills. “My friend really appreciated all of my support and suggested I work with individuals with disabilities as a career. If it wasn't for this friend, I don't know where I would be right now,” said Holly.

Even the most rewarding of careers have their challenges. For Holly, this challenge was with communication. Since every individual who is deafblind has a varying degree of sensory loss, they will have their own unique and individual way of communicating. “There are many different methods of communication, the intervenor acts as the bridge

between the person who is deafblind and the world by using as many methods of communication needed to facilitate the exchange of information.”

“I did not know Signing Exact English (SEE) when I first started my career. However, specialized training is a priority at DeafBlind Ontario Services. I utilized many of the organization's resources and worksheets about sign language and also asked my colleagues to quiz me too. After a few months on the job, I was extremely excited to take DeafBlind Ontario Services' TOUCH™ training program. This ongoing and comprehensive training was an awesome opportunity for professional development and really strengthened my signing skills. Building on this training,

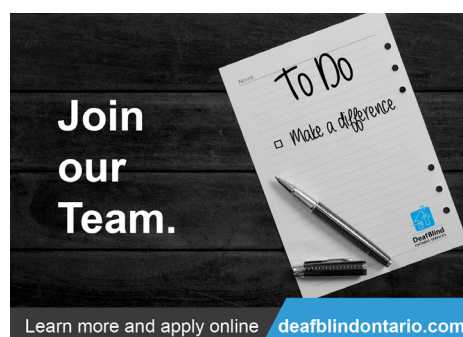
intervenors at DeafBlind Ontario Services can work towards becoming designated as Certified Congenital DeafBlind Specialists (CCDBS). I am designated in both levels.”

Now, Holly says that she has the confidence to help new employees with their signing and communication skills to act as the ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’ of the individuals they support.

“In my role, I get to positively impact the lives of people who are deafblind everyday. I have learned so much from these individuals and created amazing bonds.”



Holly's Career as an Intervenor



## Like Holly, you can make a difference in the lives of individuals who are deafblind.

Intervenors are specially trained professionals who act as the “eyes” and “ears” of the individual who is deafblind through the sense of touch.

We are hiring in many of our service regions across Ontario. Apply online: [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com)

A black and white portrait of an elderly woman, Viola, looking slightly to the left. She is wearing a dark, textured cap with a small circular brooch on the side and thick-rimmed glasses. Her face shows signs of age with visible wrinkles. She is wearing a horizontally striped shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a bright indoor space.

# Meet Viola

A woman who is described as being young at heart with a love for music and playing the guitar.

Aging can be a challenging time for anyone. For 70-year old Viola, aging with deafblindness means an increased need for support as her field of vision narrows and range of hearing decreases over time.

Vision and hearing loss are often part of the aging process. Deafblindness is a combined loss of both senses to such an extent that neither the hearing nor vision can be used as a means of accessing information. This can impact communication, mobility, and a sense of inclusion in one's community.

For Viola, and many others living with deafblindness, DeafBlind Ontario Services not only provides communication support, but a richer, more meaningful life experience.

In 2016, Viola moved into one of DeafBlind Ontario Services' residential locations in London, after living independently for 18 years in a barrier-free apartment. As her needs changed, Viola began to require assistance with day-to-day tasks beyond community-based outings, like grocery shopping and medical appointments.

"DeafBlind Ontario Services offers a holistic approach, to empower each individual who is deafblind to achieve as much independence as possible," says Sarah, one of Viola's intervenors.

Intervenors are specially trained professionals who act as the "eyes" and "ears" of the individual who is deafblind through the sense of touch. Intervenors work with individuals living with deafblindness to increase their independence and improve their quality of life through specialized services. Viola now has more access to supports and services, allowing her to meaningfully connect with the world around her.

An individual who is deafblind may use as many methods of communication as needed to facilitate the exchange of information. Viola's preferred method of communication is American Sign Language (ASL), along with picture cues. "It could be a photo of her at Tim Horton's or standing outside of McDonalds – so she understands what it is, and where we are going. She goes out for coffee daily, and rotates between McDonalds, Tim Hortons, and Starbucks," Sarah notes.

"McDonald's is Viola's favourite because she can get a refill... she loves to go there and people watch." Viola has Usher's Syndrome, and although she has no peripheral vision, she has some tunnel vision.

Although some of her abilities have inevitably changed, DeafBlind Ontario Services has helped Viola regain skills like cooking. "On her own, the only way she could cook was with the microwave to prevent burning herself. Now, Viola cooks with the assistance of her intervenors. She's also doing tasks like laundry independently again," explains Sarah.

She adds that although Viola could handle these everyday tasks decades ago, with her field of vision narrowing and limited access to services, she increasingly became less able to perform them. "With us being there to assist, we've given her that confidence again."

***The relationship between the individual who is deafblind and their intervenor is a partnership, as reflected in DeafBlind Ontario Services' philosophy of 'do with, not for'.***

**GIVINGTUESDAY™**

Save the date! GivingTuesday is on **November 27, 2018** and is a movement for giving and volunteering, taking place each year after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Watch for details on our website and social media for more information on how you can participate in this year's GivingTuesday.

## Participation in Research | Update

DeafBlind Ontario Services confirmed that an estimated 1% of the population are deafblind across all age groups. These findings captured in *Open your Eyes and Ears – To Estimates of Canadian Individuals with Deafblindness and Age-Related Dual Sensory Loss*, used information from the Census 2016, Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) and Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). It revealed that 147,736 individuals in Ontario and 368,412 individuals in Canada are deafblind.

This estimates report was initiated to promote discussion and contribute to the development of national data collection on deafblindness as a single disability in Canada. It was also intended to provide a basis for epidemiological research and to help establish national registries, as well as update and refine further analysis of health conditions underlying deafblindness.

DeafBlind Ontario Services worked on the study using a statistical demographic data tool developed through a collaboration with the Center for Applied Research and Innovation at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advance Learning.

The information was also supported through use of the Royal National Institute of Blind People's (RNIB) Sight Loss Data tool template.

### The report recommends the following:

1. Official legal recognition of deafblindness
2. Establish a national registry
3. Develop funding for equitable access to Intervenor Services across Canada
4. Develop recognized and accredited training courses for professionals working with the aging population who experience dual sensory loss
5. Statistics Canada to develop analysis of Canadian Survey on Disability data focusing on this unique disability
6. Employ evidence-based research in service delivery
7. Focus on preventative measures
8. Collective action to support data collection
9. Enhance current data collection methods
10. Develop quality of service indicators in data collection

## Community Services - Bridge

**Community Services - Bridge** is a program offered by DeafBlind Ontario Services to provide community organizations with customized training to meet the needs of the individuals they support with sensory loss.

In 2017, the Community Services team along with the support of the Training Department developed a workshop, *Communication 101: Bridging the Gap*, which we have since offered in Huntsville, Kingston, London, and Newmarket. To date, we have conducted 5 workshops with a total of 84 attendees from 34 organizations.

Attend our upcoming *Communication 101: Bridging the Gap* workshop in Newmarket on December 11th, or join us in Huntsville and Kingston in Spring 2019.

Our new workshop, Introduction to Sensory Loss, is coming in 2019!

For more information about training and upcoming workshops, please contact our Manager of Community Services at [mcs@deafblindontario.com](mailto:mcs@deafblindontario.com) or call 1-855-340-3267 ext. 273.

**Registration details at [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com)**



Fall 2018 keeping [in touch] | 6



# Community Services - Sensory Exploration Arts (SEA™)



**Community Services - Sensory Exploration Arts (SEA™)** was created in 2010 to foster artistic expression among individuals with sensory impairments.

Participants include individuals supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services, as well as other community agencies supporting individuals with physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments.

September marks our first month offering **Community Services - SEA™** at the Cambridge Centre for the Arts! September is also the one year anniversary of our partnership with the Art Gallery of Peterborough. Our artists now have the opportunity to participate in monthly classes at six different venues across Ontario, including: Barrie, Cambridge, Newmarket, Ottawa, Peterborough, and Woodstock.

**Community Services - SEA™** classes in Cambridge are made possible by a grant from the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation and the J.D. Walden Family Fund.



This program is a powerful vehicle for communication, a way to artistically express what is inside the mind and spirit for those who have limited means of communication.

**Community Services - SEA™** exists as a fee-for-service program to interested community organizations.



Cambridge & North Dumfries  
**Community Foundation**

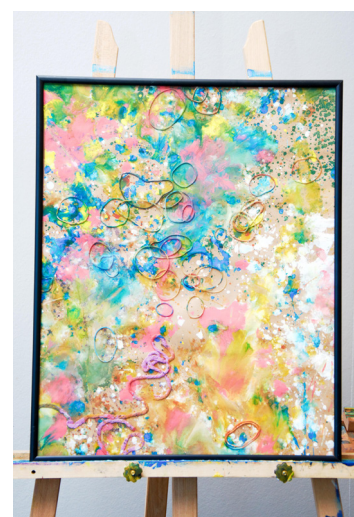
**"A powerful vehicle  
for communication"**

## Shop Community Services - SEA™ Art

Select from a variety of one-of-a-kind framed and canvas paintings on our Etsy store. Proceeds go back to the artist and support the **Community Services - SEA™** program. Shop online at [etsy.com/ca/shop/DBOSart](https://etsy.com/ca/shop/DBOSart)

We have created beautiful notecards that feature work by our **Community Services - SEA™** artists. Each pack of notecards contains 12 blank cards featuring 6 different art work designs and 12 blank envelopes. Available for purchase on Etsy or at [deafblindontario.com](https://deafblindontario.com)

**Artwork and notecards make a unique holiday gift!**



# National Deafblind Awareness Month

## *Make a Wave from Coast to Coast*

In 2018, DeafBlind Ontario Services once again joined with partners across the country to promote and celebrate the contributions of individuals who are deafblind during June's National Deafblind Awareness month.

With our partners, we distributed a media release to raise awareness about the first ever bill of rights for individuals who deafblind by the Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind (CNSDB). This release also promoted awareness activities across the country through a calendar of celebratory events and led to an interview with AMI Audio – Live with Kelly and Company on June 5, 2018.

Throughout 2018, DeafBlind Ontario Services was hard at work preparing for the 7th Intervenor Symposium, "The Spirit of Intervenor: Making a Wave from Coast to Coast", presented by the Deafblind Network of Ontario. Many of DeafBlind Ontario Services' employees were part of the planning process, while others presented and attended the two-day event in June.

Senators Yona Martin and Jim

Munson hosted a Senate reception on Parliament Hill in commemoration of National Deafblind Awareness Month on June 14, 2018.

DeafBlind Ontario Services additionally built awareness in communities across Ontario through proclamations in Barrie, Georgina, Innisfil, Newmarket, and Oshawa. Further, we hosted an Accessibility Forum with David Lepofsky, Chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance. This forum in Barrie captured social media attention from elected officials Doug Downey, Jill Dunlop, and Andrea Khanjin.

Later in June, we hosted an Open House at our location in Barrie; Lions Graydon House. Stories in the Barrie Advance and Barrie Today outlined the day.

We look forward to coming together once again to *make a wave* during National Deafblind Awareness Month in June of 2019!

Visit [deafblindnetworkontario.com](http://deafblindnetworkontario.com) for details.



**Intervenor Symposium**  
June 6-7, 2018



**Lions Graydon Open House**  
June 21, 2018

## *Third Party Event*

### **Champagne & Shopping 10.26.18**



A big thank you to our friends and supporters for organizing the second annual **Champagne & Shopping**, an exclusive discount shopping event at Meadow Acres Garden Centre in Petersburg on October 26th!

In preparation for the holiday season, guests enjoyed a complimentary glass of champagne, entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, silent and live auctions, as well as a gift bag! The evening was a huge success in support of DeafBlind Ontario Services!

## Charitable Gaming at Bingo World Richmond Hill

Did you know that DeafBlind Ontario Services benefits from charitable gaming at Bingo World in Richmond Hill?

In 2015, the Richmond Hill Bingo World was revitalized to introduce new, electronic bingo games. This entertainment experience offers customers the choice of electronic bingo-themed games or the traditional paper-based games that they have played at bingo centres for years. Stop by Bingo World in Richmond Hill for entertainment in support of great causes in your community, including DeafBlind Ontario Services!

Fall 2018 keeping [in touch] | 8



## News & Events | Upcoming Events

### 5 Senses Gala - 02.22.2019

Save the date! On Friday, February 22nd, DeafBlind Ontario Services is excited to host our first **5 Senses Gala** at the Galt Country Club (750 Coronation Boulevard, Cambridge).

Guests will experience all of their senses through a feast of food and a range of sensory delights, paired with entertainment, live and silent auctions, a mystery wine wall, and exciting raffle.

Those attending will also have the opportunity to create their own unique and individual piece of art while blindfolded. Details and tickets at [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com)



### 17th Deafblind International World Conference - 08.2019

The Deafblind International World Conference is held every four years. The 17th Conference will be hosted by Able Australia, and will take place on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia from August 12-16, 2019.

SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE TO

# ACT

ACCESSIBILITY . COMMUNICATION . TECHNOLOGY

"Now is Your Time to ACT"



Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks, DeafBlind Ontario Services' CEO, is Chair of the Conference's Scientific Committee. In this role, Roxanna has guided the development of the scientific conference program, including the selection of speakers, presentations, and workshops over the past year.

With over 500 delegates from over 35 different countries expected to attend, the conference will give attendees the opportunity to discuss issues, research, and personal insights relating to deafblindness. Learn more: [dbiaustralia2019.com.au](http://dbiaustralia2019.com.au)

### 'Connecting Deafblind Services Internationally' - 10.17.2018

On October 17th, DeafBlind Ontario Services hosted 'Connecting Deafblind Services Internationally'; an opportunity for guests to learn more from members of the Deafblind International Scientific Committee in person and via webinar.



Speakers Meredith Prain, PhD CPSP Speech Pathologist, Australia, Carla Anderson, National Manager, Deafblind Services at Able Australia, and Henriette Hermann Olesen, Department Head, Region Nordjylland, Centre for Deafblindness and Hearing Loss, Denmark, provided guests with more insight about a variety of topics on deafblindness.



## We're getting a makeover!

Our website, [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com), is currently undergoing a makeover! These exciting changes will ensure our online content is clear, visual, and accessible for all viewers. Stay tuned for our newly redesigned website, coming soon!

## News & Events | Fundraising Events



### Indulge Your Senses

09.20.18

On Thursday, September 20th, we hosted our 13th Annual **Indulge Your Senses** fundraising event at the beautiful Club at Bond Head.

At this upscale, indulgent affair for women, guests enjoyed a Dinner-in-the-Dark experience and pampering spa services. Local firefighters were also on hand to lend their support. Fabulous live and silent auctions, raffle, wine wall, and an incredible swag bag completed this ultimate girls' night out.

**Indulge Your Senses** raises funds to support the specialized services provided by DeafBlind Ontario Services to individuals living with deafblindness.

Thank you to our guests, volunteers, and generous sponsors for making this event such a success and helping us raise over **\$34,000!**

### Art in the Dark

10.20.18

On Saturday, October 20th, we hosted our second annual **Art in the Dark** event, presented by the Lions Club of Russell, at Russell High School.

At this unforgettable evening, guests were inspired by this one-of-a-kind art experience. Attendees learned more about the artistic process while undergoing a simulation exercise wearing earplugs and an eye mask. Through their sense of touch, they created a work of art using wooden canvases and a rainbow of woodchips, providing them with a better understanding of deafblindness.

To enhance this unique sensory experience, guests also enjoyed a delicious dinner, fabulous live and silent auctions, wine wall, and trip raffle.

A warm thank you to all of the guests, volunteers, and sponsors for helping make **Art in the Dark** a memorable evening, raising over **\$13,000!**



### Third Party Event

**Magna Hoedown 09.14.18 - 09.15.18**

DeafBlind Ontario Services was proud to be one of the 20 recipient charities of the 2018 Magna Hoedown! **This year's event raised \$538,105!**

We are pleased to announce that we received \$38,080. Funds raised will be used towards the purchase of a new, wheelchair accessible van in our York Region!

**A BIG thank you to Magna, as well as everyone who sold or purchased event and raffle tickets!**

# Special Thanks | Donors & Sponsors

## Indulge Your Senses and Art in the Dark Sponsors

**107.5KOOlFM**  
BARRIE'S BEST MIX



boom  99.7  
70s 80s 90s



**LeReflet**  
THE NEWS



**ROCK 95**  
CLASSIC ROCK. NEW ROCK. GET IT ALL.



## Donors

417 Bus Line Ltd., Adessa Ottawa, Andrew Van Pelt Electric, Bertrand Plumbing & Heating, BlueSky Communications Inc., BMO Employee Giving, Bradford Wellness Centre, Desjardins Caisse Populaire Nouvel-Horizon, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, Comprehensive Home Inspections, Crate Designs Furniture, Dorchester and District Lions Club, Dr. Marvin & Marilyn Lean, Dreamwinds Equine Assisted Learning Centre, Heather Jones Lifestyle Realty Associates, Home Hardware Russell, Hyde Park & District Lions Club, Invesco, JMS Law, John & Josie Watson, JSM Designs, Lambeth Lions Club, Lions Homes for Deaf People, London Central Lions Club, London East Lions Club, MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy, Made in Mexico, Mary Lou & Milne Oakes, Manulife Investments, MKW Services, PACE Credit Union, Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust, Quota International of Peterborough, Raymond James, Re/Max Chay Realty Inc., Rotary Club of Barrie-Kempfenfelt, Royal Bank of Canada, Sifton Family Foundation, Simon Construction & Landscape, Snyder Construction, Stittsville District Lions Club Inc., The Peterborough Foundation, The Printing House Charitable Office, The Write Approach, Thorndale Lions Club, Valley East Lions Club, Werner E. Faiht Ltd. Landscape Contractors, WestJet, Weston Consulting, Wever Financial, Xpertek Restoration, YouGotta Love World Class Photo & Video.

## Join our Monthly Giving Program!

*Friends with Vision* is a monthly giving program that offers donors an easy, consistent way to support programs and services of their choice.

Donors receive annual tax receipts and are kept up-to-date on the latest news and events in the organization.

For more information, contact us by phone at 1-855-340-3267 ext. 324 or by email at [j.coughlan@deafblindontario.com](mailto:j.coughlan@deafblindontario.com).

keeping [in touch] is published twice annually.

Help us save printing costs and the environment! If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically or be removed from our mailing list, please contact us at 1-855-340-3267 or by email at [communications@deafblindontario.com](mailto:communications@deafblindontario.com).

Stay up-to-date  
on social media!



# Supported Volunteer Placements

Inclusion in the community is a natural goal for everyone, including individuals living with deafblindness.

Every Wednesday, Sharon teaches grade 2 students at Goodfellow Public School in Innisfil about her preferred method of communication, American Sign Language (ASL). She enjoys selecting which signs she will teach and sharing her interests with the class.

The students are always excited to see Sharon and learn more ASL signs. Each week, they show Sharon their favourite sign they learned that day.

Social inclusion through volunteer or paid employment opens new doors of opportunity for individuals with disabilities and positively impacts the participating business too.

Visit [deafblindontario.com](http://deafblindontario.com) or call 1-855-340-3267 ext. 262 to learn more about becoming a Community Partner.

## Community Partners

- East Side Mario's, Aurora
- Goodfellow Public School, Innisfil
- Grandview Baptist Church, Kitchener
- Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, Waterloo
- Innisfil Fire Department
- K9 to 5 Doggie Daycare, Newmarket
- London Food Bank
- Meals on Wheels, Oshawa

- Pasta Plus, Innisfil
- Pepperlaw Library
- Peterborough Fire Services
- Salvation Army, Georgina
- St. Peter's Catholic School, Barrie
- St. Thomas Aquinas School, Keswick
- The Peggy Hill Team - Keller Williams Experience Realty, Brokerage, Barrie
- Tim Hortons, Kitchener
- Wal-Mart, London

- Westhill Retirement Residence, Waterloo
- Windreach Farm, Ashburn
- YMCA Of London - Centre Branch
- Zubick's, London

***Thank you to our Community Partners for providing meaningful Supported Volunteer Placements and work experience for our clients.***