Celebrating 30 Years



Celebrating 30 Years

n 1989, a group of parents lobbied the provincial government of Ontario as advocates for their children with deafblindness. They aimed to secure funding for community based supported living programs to commence when their children completed their education. Independent Living Residences for the Deafblind in Ontario (ILRDBO) was born out of this movement, and on April 6, 1989, we were incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. At the end of 2007, ILRDBO changed its name to DeafBlind Ontario Services.

Today, we take a holistic approach to providing Intervenor Services that are customized to each person's unique needs, preferences and goals. Since our beginning, our reach has grown into a wide range of communities across Ontario.

Providing exceptional service inspired our foundation and will continue to guide our growth. Today, we support individuals with deafblindness across the province through Intervenor Services -Residential and Community.

We strive for enriched collaboration at the provincial, national, and international levels through custom-tailored outreach programs, specialized training, and advocacy efforts.

As a leader in the field, DeafBlind Ontario Services is actively coordinating research, ensuring the data collected enhances services for people with deafblindness. We are also leading the development of an accreditation process for intervenors in the field to promote a standard of service excellence.

Thank you to our supporters, donors, and volunteers for joining us in our journey to enrich the lives of people with deafblindness one touch at a time. **Together, we are limitless.**

> Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks Chief Executive Officer

ENRICHING LIVES ONE TOUCH AT A TIME

Special edition of keeping [in touch]

Celebrating 30 Years



Stay up-to-date on social media!



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keeping [in touch] is published twice annually. Help us save printing costs and the environment! If you would like to receive future newsletters electronically or be removed from our mailing list, please contact us at 1-855-340-3267 or by email at **communications@deafblindontario.com**.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

TOGETHER WE THRIVE

We take a holistic approach to providing Intervenor Services that are customized to each person's unique needs, preferences and goals. Since our beginning in 1989, our reach has grown into a wide range of communities across Ontario.



CELEBRATING ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES WITH INTERVENOR SERVICES



INTERVENOR SERVICES: RESIDENTIAL

hirty years ago, a group of parents lobbied the provincial government of Ontario to advocate for their children with deafblindness. Deafblindness combines varying degrees of both hearing and vision loss, making it unique to each individual and requiring specialized support.

In 1989, we had three homes in York Region, with three individuals with deafblindness residing in each. Born with Rubella, also known as the German measles, Peter is one of the individuals supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services from the outset.

According to his Mom, Magda, "when Peter did not reach his developmental milestones, I realized something was not right. At the time, the doctors were not very familiar with deafblindness, so we received incorrect diagnoses. It was a very difficult time... it took a toll on the whole family." When Peter graduated from school at 21, he joined DeafBlind Ontario Services. "It was the first time in years that my family could finally start to relax. Peter has grown in so many ways over the past 30 years, none of which would be possible without DeafBlind Ontario Services' intervenors and holistic approach," said Magda.

Individuals with deafblindness have the capacity to build their life skills, gain independence, and contribute to the greater community with the support of professional intervenors.

According to Julie, an intervenor who supports Peter, "as a team, we work together to ensure our approaches are consistent. He really benefits from being able to anticipate what is next in his day-to-day routine. With the support of his intervenors, Peter has experienced new activities, stays



active and healthy, participates in the Innisfil community, and has built social relationships along the way."

Peter communicates with intervenors using a form of sign language called Adapted Interactive Tactual Sign Language (AITSL). AISTL is hand-over-hand sign language, where the person 'listening' is feeling and reading the signs with their hands. "Over the past few years, Peter has learned a variety of new words, which he uses both expressively and receptively. We want to continue to expand his world by providing him with new opportunities to make choices and teach us his preferences," said Val, another intervenor who supports Peter.

"In the 8 years I have worked with Peter, he has grown immensely. In 2012, Peter moved into his own apartment; it has been amazing watching him learn and realize his full potential. The transition to living on his own was well thought out, planned, and implemented. For nearly a year, Peter visited his apartment each day, trailing the walls and learning the layout, along with helping decorate his own space. As a result, he is able to navigate his place independently," said Julie.

Peter has also flourished thanks to his volunteer job at Pasta Plus in Innisfil, where he has worked since 2014. "He absolutely loves the food at Pasta Plus and always signs that he wants more. The owner, Anthony, has a great relationship with Peter and is very enthusiastic about him volunteering. At work, Peter is able to transfer the skills he has learned in his own kitchen to his job. It is also a great way for him to interact with and be an active member of his community," explained Julie.

Madga notes, "Peter has overcome a lot, but he is happy. None of these changes would have been possible without the strong leadership and support of DeafBlind Ontario Services. Just like Peter has grown, the organization has come a long way in 30 years too."

"It isn't easy to reflect on Peter's early years, but I am so incredibly grateful for DeafBlind Ontario Services. Without them, Peter would not be where he is now or have the same quality of life. He couldn't be in a better place," said Magda.

We are driven to empower the people we support and to celebrate their uniqueness.

Strategic Plan 2019-2022

TOGETHER WE THRIVE

Looking to the future with our Board of Directors, families, guardians, stakeholders, and our employees, we created the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, *Together We Thrive*.

For thirty years, we have evolved together as a team. Our Strategic Plan, *Together We Thrive*, will guide our growth to 2022 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 currently lack support. As leaders, we will steer the development of an accreditation process for intervenors in the field to promote a standard of service excellence.

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.

Sharon - Barrie, Ontario





OUR VISION TO 2022

Emmiel - Kitchener, Ontario



Together We Thrive







Shalom - Ayr, Ontario



Sarah - Peterborough, Ontario



Enriching Lives for 30 Years

For those with deafblindness, DeafBlind Ontario Services not only provides communication support, but a richer, more meaningful life experience.

"Our success is attributed to our team of professional intervenors, who act as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of each individual with deafblindness through the sense of touch. Their passion and resilience continue to show me what being limitless truly means.

The relationship between the individual with deafblindness and their intervenor is truly a partnership, as reflected in DeafBlind Ontario Services' philosophy of 'do with, not for'," said Karen Keyes, Chief Operating Officer.

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

"In my role, I get to positively impact the lives of people with deafblindness everyday. I have learned so much from these individuals and created amazing bonds."

"Every day is different, every individual is unique - the goal is to foster independence through a holistic and personcentered approach that is tailored to each person," said Amanda, one of DeafBlind Ontario Services' Community Engagement Managers.

Lenni started working at DeafBlind Ontario Services shortly after they opened in the Greater Sudbury Area in 2017. "When I learned about the role of the intervenor and the difference they make, I knew I had to apply. What I love most about my job is that I am able to create new avenues of experiences for the people we support; watching the world come to life around them."

Since 1989, DeafBlind Ontario Services' professional intervenors have empowered people with deafblindness to increase their independence and connect with their community, one touch at a time.

Make a difference in the life of someone who is deafblind and discover the difference it can make in you. Apply online at deafblindontario.com.



Research Update

As part of our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, DeafBlind Ontario Services initiated research into deafblindness in 2014-2015. By participating in and facilitating research with universities, colleges, community partners, and other networks on a national and international scale, we aim to improve the quality of life for people with deafblindness with the data collected.

In addition to joining the Deafblind International (DbI) Network of Research and Community of Practice on Deafblindness, we have made considerable progress in the first four years with respect to collaborating with professional organizations such as: Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (Winnipeg), Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging (CCNA), Canadian Gerontology Association, Canadian Helen Keller Centre, CNIB, International Federation on Aging, Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, Seniors Knowledge Health Network, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, along with Universities and Colleges.

Fostering academic collaborations has encouraged prominent and aspiring researchers, faculty members, and students, to research into deafblindness and age-related sensory loss. Most recently, we collaborated with Fanshawe College's Gerontology Interprofessional Program from January - April 2019 on a capstone research project, along with McCormick Home Care (London). The objective of this partnership was to enlist functional communication challenges for seniors with dual sensory loss (vision and hearing combined) in activities of daily living at McCormick Home Care.

We partnered with Georgian College from September 2018 -April 2019 to examine the effects of multi-sensory stimulation in Snoezelen rooms on the overall well-being of individuals with early onset deafblindness.

From 2016-2019, we collaborated with Atul Jaiswal, PhD scholar from Queens University, School of Rehabilitation Science, on his field study research project on 'participation' of individuals with deafblindness.

Between May 2017 and April 2018, we worked with the Center for Applied Research and Innovation at the Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, who funded the project 'Develop Statistical Demographic Data Tool for Individuals with Deafblindness and Age-Related Dual Sensory Loss in Canada'.

In 2016-2017, we worked alongside Jaclyn Felder, Master of Education student with Nipissing University, North Bay, under Principal Investigator Dr. Kurt Clausen, Associate Professor, Schulich School of Education and Lorraine Frost, Faculty Supervisor, along with W. Ross MacDonald School and Centre Jules-Léger Ép Surdicécité, to make recommendations for curriculum development for children with deafblindness while in school.

Moving forward, we will continue to participate as advisory and subject matter experts on research about deafblindness in the future.

We have developed a number of publications to promote discussion and contribute to the development of improved national data collection on deafblindness:

Open Your Eyes and Ears - To Estimates of Canadian Individuals with Deafblindness and Age-Related Dual Sensory Loss, outlines our call for action to uphold the rights of individuals with deafblindness. Read more online at deafblindontario.com/about/publications.

A Canadian Perspective to the World Federation of the Deafblind report, At Risk of Exclusion from CRPD and SDG's implementation: Inequality and Persons with Deafblindness, highlights estimates of prevalence of individuals with deafblindness in Canada and promotes awareness to support and empower people with deafblindness around the world. Read more at deafblindontario.com/about/publications.

DeafBlind Ontario Services additionally obtained customized data on deafblindness and dual sensory loss (based on the reported seeing and hearing disabilities) from the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) 2017 survey, released in November 2018.

Looking to the future, DeafBlind Ontario Services will continue to collaborate on the Community of Practice on Deafblindness (CoPD), a synergistic space to enhance knowledge exchange amongst professionals in the field.

We strive to further work with people who are deafblind, stakeholders, and service providers, to generate public education and awareness. We will position Canadian research to encourage participation in national and international initiatives to make a difference in the quality of life and the quality of services for individuals with deafblindness.

To learn more, visit deafblindontario.com/about/research.



225 Volunteers made a difference over hours in 2018 - 2019 2, 169

We could not do it without you!

At DeafBlind Ontario Services, we are humbled by our volunteers' dedication and compassion. We would like to sincerely thank all of our volunteers for their ongoing commitment to the people we support.

"Volunteering makes me feel connected to something bigger than just myself," explained Tiffany Barker, board member and chair of the Client Services Committee at DeafBlind Ontario Services.

Six years ago, when she was first approached about a board role, Tiffany admits she knew little about the deafblind community and the unique supports DeafBlind Ontario Services provides.

"I started learning more and was very excited to get involved. As a new board member, I had the honour of touring one of DeafBlind Ontario Services' locations... I will never forget that day! I was impressed by the individualized program plans and the breadth of planning that went into the accessible design of the house. As a nurse, I have been in many care facilities, but none has felt or looked like this one. It is truly a home."

"As I learned more about the work of the organization and got to know some of the employees and management team, I saw how committed and driven they are. I have learned a lot about how passion, innovative thinking, and diligence can lead to success."

A year after joining the board, Tiffany made the move out west to British Columbia. "Even though I was moving across the country, I requested to stay on the board of directors. Although I am



geographically far, I haven't felt disconnected... video conferencing for meetings is great; it's nice to see people 'face-to-face'."

Volunteering is often seen as a selfless act; a person gives their time, skills, experience, and passion to help others, without expecting anything in return. And while volunteering is a form of service, many volunteers will tell you that "you get more than you give".

"Giving to others is something that I strive to do and volunteering one's time is such an important way to give. It makes me feel happy and valued at the same time", said Tiffany.

"Being a nurse and working in the area of Public Health and Health Promotion, I care deeply about the work DeafBlind Ontario Services does to advocate, support, and enrich the lives of people with deafblindness. I relate to the values of the organization and recognize the importance of their work. Volunteering with DeafBlind Ontario Services is a good 'fit' for me."

"Our volunteers, like Tiffany, are so important to our entire team, especially to the people we support. Her dedication to the board and community-minded spirit are at the heart of what volunteerism is all about," said DeafBlind Ontario Services' Chief Executive Officer, Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks.

"It is important to contribute in big and small ways; together we can make everyone's lives a little richer," explained Tiffany.

[1] Open Your Eyes and Ears - To Estimates of Canadian Individuals with Deafblindness and Age-Related Dual Sensory Loss, 2018



Innisfil Firefighter volunteering at a fundraising event

We set the standard and promote excellence in our field.



Celebrating Community Partners

Inclusion in the community, through volunteer or paid employment, is a natural goal. John, a young man with deafblindness, strived to work at East Side Mario's after enjoying a meal there.

Soon after, John and his intervenor connected with the Italian-style restaurant to partner and help him achieve this goal through a Supported Volunteer Placement.

For 4 years, John has volunteered weekly at East Side Mario's in Aurora, where he is responsible for setting tables, hanging the salad tongs, and setting up the patio during the summer months. John enjoys working alongside Shannon, an intervenor. She ensures that he receives support and guidance, ensuring smooth transitions from task to task.

John uses a form of communication called Facilitated Typing, where an intervenor physically assists him by holding his hand or

arm to use an augmentative communication system, like an iPad. He then uses one finger to type. When we asked John about his role at East Side Mario's, he wrote, "[it makes me feel] like an adult and happy." John highly recommends the pizza, his favourite meal at the restaurant.

According to Catie Ross, the restaurant's Assistant General Manager, "John is a positive addition to the team and a complete joy to work with; he is always happy to be at work and ensures his tasks are well done. It is important to our team that we embody a community-minded spirit and inclusive environment."

Inclusive hiring practices demonstrate to both staff and members of the community a business's dedication to social inclusion. Through this partnership, everyone benefits. John is a loyal volunteer that the restaurant can depend on. Meanwhile, John participates in the community and increases his independence, helping him to meet a personal goal.



Celebrating **Community Partners**

DeafBlind Ontario Services is grateful to the following organizations who have accepted people we support as volunteers or employees, giving them meaningful work experience and building confidence in their abilities:

- Agilec
- Ayr Branch Library
- County Style, Peterborough
- East Side Mario's, Aurora
- Food Bank of Waterloo Region
- Furry Friends, Barrie
- Goodfellow Public School, Innisfil
- Grandview Baptist Church, Kitchener
- Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School, Waterloo
- Innisfil Fire Department
- Innovation Works, London
- K9 to 5 Doggie Daycare, Newmarket
- Knox United Church, Ayr
- London Food Bank
- Meals on Wheels, Oshawa
- · Pasta Plus, Innisfil
- Pefferlaw 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

Are you interested in making a difference as a Community Partner?

Visit deafblindontario.com or call 1-855-340-3267 ext. 262 to learn more!



INTERVENOR SERVICES:

INTERVENOR SERVICE COMMUNITY

Over the past 30 years, our reach has extended across the province. Motivated by our belief that every person with deafblindness has the right to fulfill their potential, we developed our Community Services in 2010.

PARTNERSHIPS

Community Services - *Partnerships* offers specialized training and mentorship to agencies that support individual(s) with deafblindness. Partnering agencies engage in interactive training that is customized to the communication needs of the individual they support.

After the training is complete, our Community Services team continues to provide guidance, advice, knowledge, and experience, to ensure on-going and continued success.

Currently, Community Services - Partnerships

collaborates with 15 external organizations across Ontario. During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, they provided 1,549 hours of mentorship support.

TREMPLIN

Almost a decade ago, we launched **Community Services** - *Tremplin*. This model of service is a blend of our Residential and **Community Services** - *Partnerships* programs, focussing on community involvement during the day, while allowing each participant to return to their family home at night. Today, we have a program in both the Ottawa and Greater Sudbury areas.

Engaging others makes us better. Each of us has something to learn and something to teach.

BRIDGE

Our expertise in working with people that require alternate approaches to communication led to the development of **Community Services - Bridge**. This program provides participants with customizable training tailored to the individual(s) they support.

Throughout 2018-2019, we hosted several workshops, including 'Introduction to Sensory Loss', 'Communication 101 - Bridging the Gap', and 'Personality Dimensions®' to 216 participants from 57 organizations across the province.

Visit **deafblindontario.com** for more training opportunities near you.



Customized and interactive training enhances knowledge and understanding of sensory loss and communication need.



SEA™

The benefits of artistic expression for individuals who may not have engaged with visual arts before are endless.

We created **Community Services** - **Sensory Exploration Arts (SEA™)** in 2010 to foster artistic expression and creativity for people with sensory loss.

Community Services - SEA[™] artists experience monthly themes through their senses. Themes in 2018-2019 included, an afternoon exploring a farm, a fall themed class inviting attendees to experience textures and scents of leaves, and more. Artists are then encouraged to express their responses to these sensory experiences through art, music, drama, and dance.

In 2018-2019, 439 participants artistically expressed what is in their mind and spirit at **Community Services** - *SEA*[™] classes.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Celebrating 30 Years

Annual General Meeting & Special Meeting

DeafBlind Ontario Services invites you to our Annual General Meeting (AGM) & Special Meeting on June 18th at the Holland Marsh Wineries (18270 Keele Street, Newmarket). The reception is at 6:30pm and the AGM will begin at 7:15pm. Can't make it? Attend online via web conference! RSVP before June 7th at 1-855-340-3267 ext. 267 or online at **deafblindontario.com**. Be sure to wear blue in celebration of our 30th anniversary!



Wine and Whiskey June 6, 2019

This inaugural event is a journey of the senses through wine and whiskey tastings expertly paired with a 3-course dinner and dessert prepared by Chef Jacquie Peter of the Club at Bond Head.

Hosted by wine and whiskey sommeliers, guests will discover the essence of each pairing and will be invited to explore their senses in this unique tasting experience.

Silent and live auctions, raffle and the opportunity to learn from experts in the field of wine and whiskey make this an event that cannot be missed.

Visit deafblindontario.com or call 1-855-340-3267 ext. 233 for your tickets.

Savour the Senses

September 28, 2019

Be inspired by a one-of-a-kind art experience at our first **Savour the Senses** on September 28, 2019 at Russell High School!

Attendees will rely on their senses of taste and aroma as they experience a special tasting of fine wines and whiskey during a gourmet dinner. Then, using the sense of touch, guests will create a unique piece of art while blindfolded. To enhance this sensory experience, guests will also enjoy fabulous live and silent auctions, wine wall, and a raffle.

Savour the Senses is inspired by our **Community Services - SEA**[™] program. More details are coming soon! Be sure to check out **deafblindontario.com**.





Magna Hoedown

September 13 & 14, 2019

We are thrilled to announce that we have been selected as one of the 20 charity, non-profit, and community groups as recipients for the 2019 Magna Hoedown. The annual Magna Hoedown is the largest fundraiser in York Region, with over 4,000 guests attending each year.

Stay tuned for more details about event and raffle tickets on our website deafblindontario.com and social media.

5 Senses Gala Sponsors



Our Donors

October 2018 - March 2019

100 Men Who Give A Damn Alcona, Allergan International Foundation, Association Des Loisirs Communautaires, Ayr Animal Hospital, Ayr Farmers Mutual, BNI Business Elite, BNI Ontario Central North, Bradford Skin Clinic, Business Marketing, Conestoga College, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, Champagne and Shopping, Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough, Despres; Helene, Deutschmann & Associates Professional Corporation, Dryer Moisture Systems Inc., Fransky; Dennis & Janet, Magna for Community, Manulife, National Mah Jongg League Inc., Ontario Power Generation, Ottawa Community Foundation, Peterborough Lioness Club, Plank; Doug & Susan, Priority Mechanical Services Ltd., Production Metal Steel Sales Ltd., Rotary Club of Pickering, Royal Bank of Canada, Shoppers Home Health Care, Sifton Family Foundation, South Simcoe Police Association, St. Joseph's Council No. 6361 Charitable Welfare Trust, The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation, The Charles Norcliffe Baker and Thelma Scott Baker Foundation, The McLean Foundation, The Peterborough K.M. Hunter Charitable Foundation, The Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command Charitable Foundation, The Victor & Rhoda Shields Charitable Foundation, Twin City Harmonizers.

STOP. LOOK. LISTEN.

LUCKY YOU.

June is National Deafblind Awareness Month

Each June, DeafBlind Ontario Services 'Makes a Wave from Coast to Coast' in collaboration with people who are deafblind, service providers, and supporters in celebration of National Deafblind Awareness Month.

To kick off National Deafblind Awareness Month, we are participating in the Town of Aurora's Open House on May 31 during National AccessAbility Week. Stop by our booth between 3:30-6:00pm.

We will also be celebrating:

June 3 - Join us at the base of the CN Tower at 8:30pm to see it lit up in blue. Landmarks across Canada will also be lit up on June 3rd.



MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA SURDICÉCITÉ *Créez une vague d'un océan à l'autre*

June 10 - Visit our photo booth at JuneFest (Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto), from 11:00am-3:00pm.

June 18 - Attend our Annual General Meeting (AGM) & Special Meeting at the Holland Marsh Wineries.

June 22 - Join us at Deaf Awareness Day at Canada's Wonderland. You can purchase your tickets at **canadaswonderland.com/deafawarenessday**.

Throughout June, celebrate with us at events in your community. Visit **deafblindnetworkontario.com** for a full list of celebrations across Canada!



