

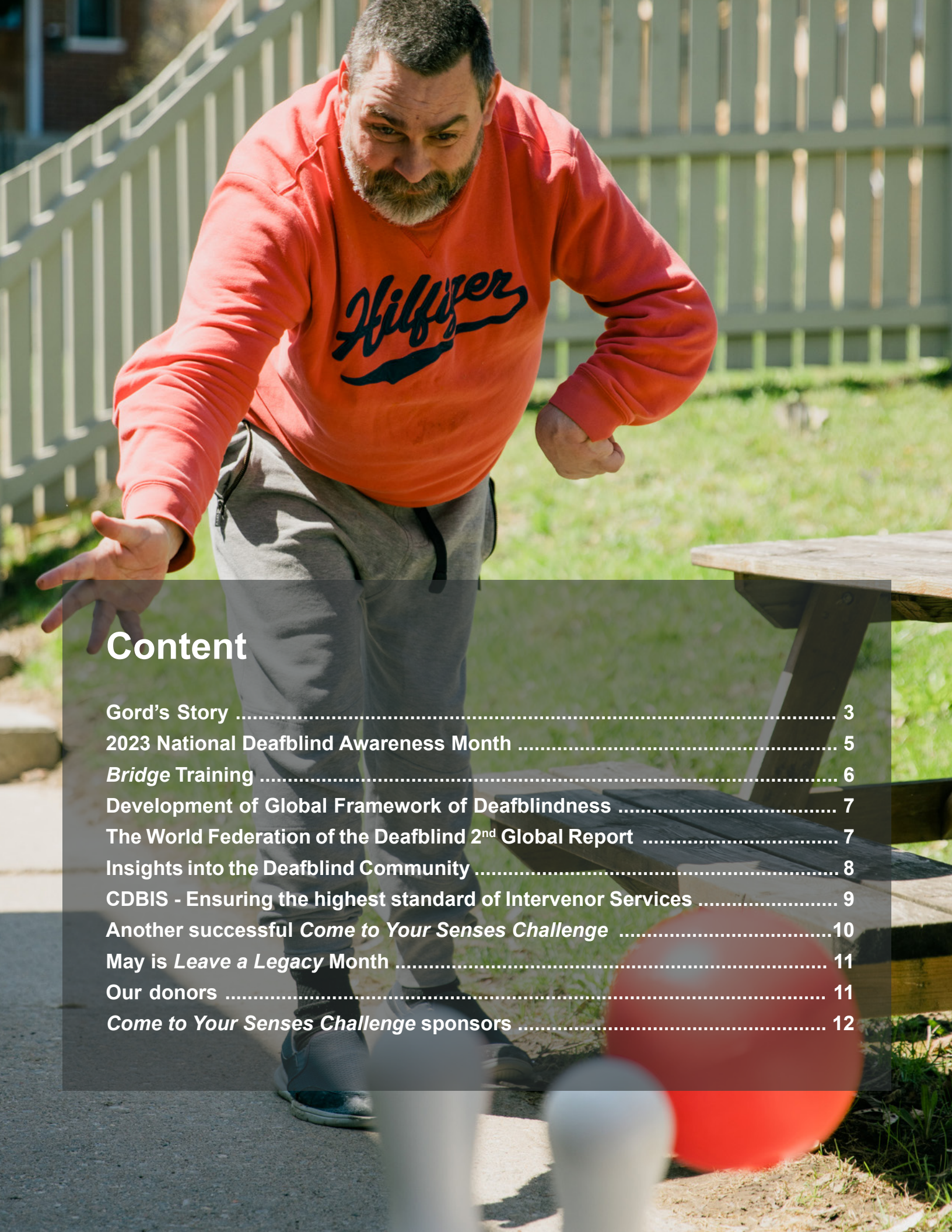


keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Spring 2023



DeafBlind
ONTARIO FOUNDATION



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GORD'S Supported Living STORY

Have you ever wondered how you could make your passion into a fulfilling career? For Racquel, her love of music led to her creating a special bond with Gord, who receives support from DeafBlind Ontario Services.

As a Communication Support Professional, Racquel describes her role as an opportunity to help break down communication barriers for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing and non-verbal with a developmental disability so that they can interact with people in the community – whether that means going to the store to buy groceries, visiting a restaurant to enjoy a meal, or heading to local theatres and events to participate in cultural activities.

Racquel notes that while she

needs to be adaptable in the face of the unexpected, a role like this also gives her many opportunities to learn and enjoy shared activities with the person supported. For example, Racquel enthusiastically describes how she shares a love of music with Gord. He enjoys the music using his residual hearing and can “feel” the music through vibrations. Together, they attend concerts, and Gord doesn’t mind Racquel’s cheerfully singing along to the radio in the car while travelling to different activities!

“Every person you support is unique, so it’s important to understand how you might help empower and encourage them to achieve their goals so that they can live their best lives,” Racquel explains.

Through our new service model, “Living My Best Life”, Racquel assists Gord in expanding his awareness and understanding of life experiences.

For Gord, this may include going to the Lakeview Bowl to join his league on a Wednesday night while Racquel cheers him on. It might also include taking a walk through downtown Peterborough or along a Beavermead Park trail for exercise, then sitting on a bench to watch boats travel through the canal.

“Being a Communication Support Professional offers a rewarding career if you’d like to positively impact another person’s life. And like me, you could also create a special bond with the person supported through shared interests,” Racquel adds.



Join our team:
<https://deafblindontario.com/careers/>





2023 National Deafblind Awareness Month

Join us to raise awareness for deafblindness this June

Learn more about yarn bombing:

deafblindinternational.org/yarn-bombing/



June is National Deafblind Awareness Month, the month we come together to celebrate and create a better understanding of deafblindness. Since 2021, DeafBlind Ontario Services has been joining our colleagues worldwide to raise awareness for deafblindness every June by engaging in “yarn bombing” – a tactile art display with knitted or crocheted yarn squares wrapped around objects in public spaces.

For the third year, DeafBlind Ontario Services and our international partner, Deafblind International (DbI), encourage everyone to join this global initiative by making or gathering knitted or crocheted yarn squares. Coming together through these colourful tactile art displays is a great way to unite our community and together, raise awareness for deafblindness, one stitch at a time.

This year, we will be yarn bombing in the following locations:

- Town of Georgina, Jackson’s Point Parkette;
- Town of Newmarket, Fairy Lake Bridge;
- Ottawa Public Library, Main Branch;
- Peterborough Public Library;
- Innisfil ideaLab & Library;
- London Public Library, Landon Branch;
- Waterloo Public Library, Ayr Branch; and
- Greater Sudbury Public Library, Valley East Public Library and Citizen Service Centre.

You can help us spread the word by sharing our yarn bombing social media posts and using the hashtag **#DbIYarnBombing2023** in June.

We will also be featuring yarn bombing at the DbI World Conference in July 2023 in Ottawa, Canada. Please stay tuned!



Bridge provides customized training opportunities for organizations that support individuals with a sensory loss and/or communication challenges. We take a flexible and adaptive approach to learning, which will augment and strengthen your organization's services while focusing on the unique needs of the individuals you support.

In addition to hearing and vision loss, there are many factors that can impact traditional communication and wellbeing. Our expertise in working with individuals that require alternative approaches to communication led to the development of this program.

Upcoming Workshops

Introduction to Sensory Loss

June 19, 2023 | 12–4 p.m.

Register by 11:30 p.m. on June 18, 2023

“Sensory loss” is a term used to describe loss of the distance senses, which include vision, hearing, and smell. This workshop is for organizations and individuals looking to gain knowledge and understanding of vision and hearing losses. The intent of the workshop is to:

- Improve your understanding and raise awareness of factors that impact an individual with sensory loss, and
- Help you understand the differing needs of individuals with sensory loss and how you can improve your work practices to support and empower them.

Sensory Integration: Making Sensory Engagement Meaningful

Aug. 21, 2023 | 12–4 p.m.

Register by 11:30 p.m. on Aug. 6, 2023.

This workshop is for organizations, support staff and family members who are interested in learning about the senses and how the brain processes and organizes information from the body and environment. The focus of this presentation is to deepen your understanding of sensory integration, sensory integration disorder and the impact of someone with sensory loss.

Learn more at <https://deafblindontario.com/foundation/events/> or call 1-855-340-3267 ext. 237.

Development of Global Framework of Deafblindness

DeafBlind Ontario Services is honoured to participate in developing the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Sets for deafblindness. This global framework, initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO), will provide universal terminology that facilitates communication among stakeholders involved in service provision of individuals with deafblindness. It takes a scientific approach to assess functional status, goal setting, treatment planning and monitoring, as well as outcome(s) measurement.

Phase 1 of this framework development, Systemic Literature Review, was completed in July 2022, with the support of 50 trained clinicians and researchers.

Phase 2, Qualitative Study, will explore the functioning and health of individuals with deafblindness from their lived experience. In the next three months, DeafBlind Ontario Services and the Principal Investigator, Dr. Walter Wittich, will facilitate the participants' interviews to gather the lived experiences of people who are deafblind. These interviews will help researchers better understand their unique needs and create standardized descriptions of deafblindness.

We are also excited to share that Dr. Wittich received the Canadian Hearing Services Global Partnerships for Research & Innovation inaugural Research Grant!



Professor Walter Wittich

Read Global Framework of Deafblindness:
<https://bit.ly/3LeH9hb>



The World Federation of the Deafblind 2nd Global Report

The World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB) released their 2nd Global Report in March 2023. By exploring and consolidating evidence from a variety of regions, groups, professionals and people who are deafblind while using research from upper-income, middle-income and lower-income countries, this report captures best practices and recommendations on how to improve social inclusion for people who are deafblind:

1. Recognizing deafblindness as a distinct disability with its challenges, barriers, support and inclusion requirements;
2. Establishing a system for information resources and continuous training on

deafblindness for essential direct service workers;

3. Creating publicly funded live assistance as an essential service and providing specific training for teaching assistants in educational institutions and Intervenor Services; and

4. Providing funding for research that complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and actively engages people who are deafblind and their service providers.

As a significant contributor to the report, DeafBlind Ontario Services:

- Participated in information interviews with lead researchers;

• Identified the importance of best practices in behavioural and technical competencies and its correlation to professionalizing Intervenor Services (through the Intervenor Services Human Resources Strategy);

• Offered insight on accessible design (through our Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss); and

• Shared information from our Stakeholder Consultation Report.

Read full report:
<https://bit.ly/3NIHp0Q>



In honour of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, DeafBlind Ontario Services was thrilled to work in collaboration with Statistics Canada and CNIB Deafblind Community Services on a virtual panel about deafblindness held on December 5, 2022.

The panel brought together the perspective of people who are deafblind and service providers to build a better understanding of the distinct disability of deafblindness for employees of Statistics Canada.

Facilitated by Tony Labillois, Director General of the Justice, Diversity and Population branch at Statistics Canada, the panel included remarks from Anil Arora, Chief Statistician and Kathleen Mitchell, Acting Assistant Chief Statistician. It also included ASL and LSQ interpreters, as well as captioning in French and English to help break communication barriers for people who are deafblind.

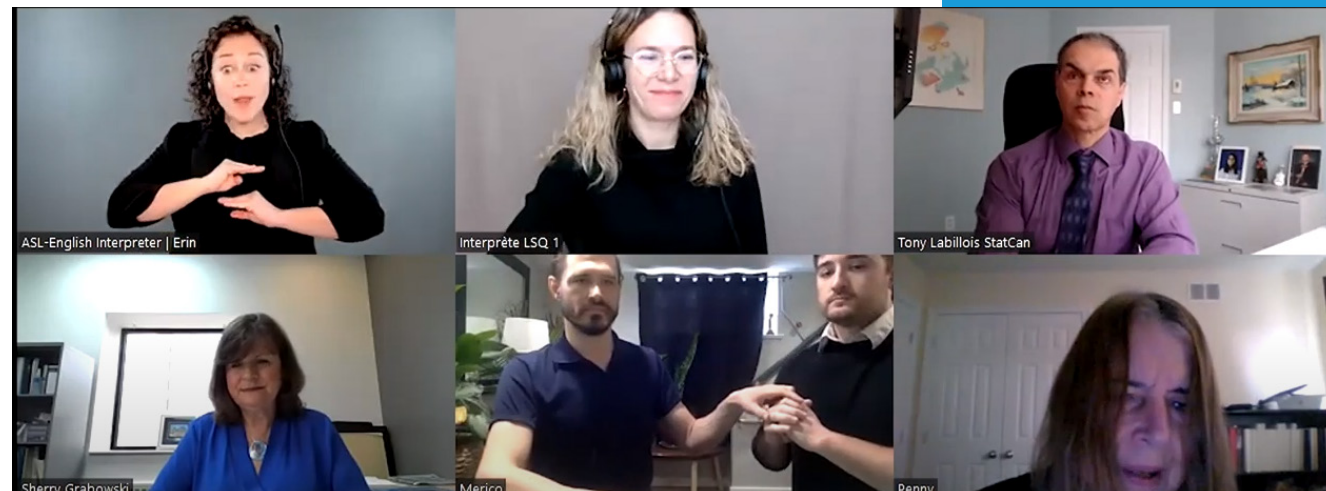
Two panelists, Penny Bennet and Merico Tesolin, shared their lived experiences with deafblindness. Vice President at Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Deafblind Community Services, Sherry Grabowski, also presented some of the realities that people who are deafblind face as they overcome challenges in the workplace and daily activities.

To wrap up the panel, Mr. Arora noted that events like this not only provide us with the opportunity to learn about the lived experience, valuable expertise and unique perspectives of people with disabilities, they also help us better understand and meet the needs of Canadians who are deafblind.

Insights into the Deafblind Community

A virtual panel in collaboration with Statistics Canada and CNIB Deafblind Community Services

Watch the panel video:
<https://bit.ly/3ABvnc6>



CDBIS – Ensuring the highest standard of Intervenor Services

DeafBlind Ontario Services and Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Deafblind Community Services are thrilled to share that between July and September 2022, 100 Canadian intervenors took the beta exam to qualify for the “Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist” (CDBIS) certification through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). Congratulations to the newly certified intervenors!

Why is professionalizing Intervenor Services important?

CDBIS certification is a significant step towards professionalizing Intervenor Services. Not only does it offer a clear and broadly accepted set of expectations for the role of an intervenor, but it also ensures individuals with deafblindness receive the highest quality of

services and supports possible. In addition, getting certified means that intervenors receive specialized training so that they are well equipped with the highest standards of professional integrity, competence and ethics. A sincere “thank you” to the Subject Matter Experts (SME) who dedicated their proven expertise, experience and time over the past three years to create this important certification.

What’s the history of the CDBIS certification?

Between 2015 and 2018, the Intervenor Services Human Resource Strategy (ISHRS) was initiated to transform the Intervenor Services in Ontario. It was a partnership between the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and the agencies that provide Intervenor Services. Through ISHRS, a set of best practices in

human resources, behavioural and technical competencies were developed, distinct from the developmental services sector.

DeafBlind Ontario Services and CNIB Deafblind Community Services took a leadership approach in creating this certification program with ACVREP, which aligns with their shared commitment to making a real impact on the lives of people who are deafblind. They encourage everyone interested in taking their career as an intervenor to the next level to start the application process today!

Learn more about CDBIS:
<https://bit.ly/3LyaqF0>



Another successful Come to Your Senses Challenge

March 6–10, 2023

5 Days. 5 Senses. 5 Challenges. 295 Donors. Over \$27,000 Raised.

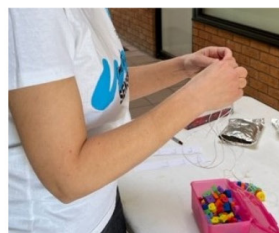
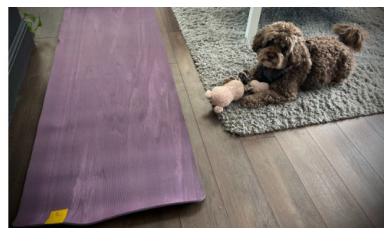
For a third year, 26 corporate and community teams and 105 participants across Ontario engaged their senses by choosing five sensory challenges over five days. Thank you to those who participated and supported our *Come to Your Senses Challenge*!

Each day during the five-day challenge period, participants shared photos and videos of their sensory activities on social media using the hashtag #ComeToYourSensesChallenge. The event is a fun and engaging way to raise awareness and funds to help people who are deafblind, as well as people who are Deaf, hard

of hearing and non-verbal with a developmental disability, to live their best lives.

With the support from our sponsors, donors and participants, we are thrilled to announce that over \$27,000 was raised! Thank you all for another successful *Come to Your Senses Challenge*! We couldn't do it without your continued commitment.

Watch the highlights of the challenge:
<https://bit.ly/3Ld2pnB>



May is Leave a Legacy Month

Donors like you make a difference in the lives of the people we support. With each gift, you make an impact on those who depend on the programs and services we offer. Leave your personal legacy while making a gift in your will, trust, life insurance, or make your donation of stocks, bonds and mutual funds where you receive substantial tax benefits.

Help us build a better future and let's work together to ensure the people we support have opportunities to live their best lives. You can make a difference by contacting a member of DeafBlind Ontario Foundation at 1-855-340-3267 or development@deafblindontario.com.

Make a gift with lasting impact.

You may also make your donation of securities and mutual funds directly to us by visiting us on Canada Helps.

<https://bit.ly/41GJpow>



Our donors: November, 2022–April, 2023

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations for helping us transform lives, one gift at a time.

Accessibil-iT, Ayr Animal Hospital, Ayr Farmers Mutual, Bell Media, BNI Business Elite, Bounce 99.5, Mr. and Mrs. Brian & Rebecca Watkinson, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce & June Webster, Mr. and Mrs. Bryant & Jean Barber, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, CTV Television Network, Davidson Works Mechanical, Harry P. Ward Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Jim & Anne Morris Dadson, Mr. Jim Kosiw, Knights of Columbus St. Joseph's Council No. 6361 Charitable Welfare Trust, MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy, Mr. Malcolm Ross, Meridian Credit Union Corporate Office, Morrison CPA Professional Corporation, Ms. Pam Bechard, Royal LePage RCR, Mr. and Mrs. Parham & Kathy Momtahan, N.M.C. Fielding Investments Ltd., Needham Promotions Inc., PEAK Investment Services Inc., Provix Inc Covidcamera.com, R.A. Beamish Foundation, Rotary Club of Innisfil, The BLG Foundation, The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, The Charles Norcliffe Baker and Thelma Scott Baker Foundation, The George Lunan Foundation, c/o Scotia Trust, The Harry E Foster Charitable Foundation, The KPMG Foundation, The Oakes Foundation, The Organic Moment Photography, The Printing House Charitable Foundation, The Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command Charitable Foundation, Udora Leaskdale Lions Club, Voll's Contract Flooring, Western Fire Protection Inc.



Thank you for making a difference!



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