



DeafBlind
ONTARIO SERVICES

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DeafBlind Ontario Services | Spring 2024



DeafBlind
ONTARIO FOUNDATION



Embracing Independence: Sara's Journey to an Accessible Home

Sara has called one of DeafBlind Ontario Services' supported living homes in Peterborough her home for the past eight years. Our supported living homes provide accessible, barrier-free, affordable housing and access to specialized support services 24/7. When Sara first moved in, the home was a good fit for her needs and she found a community of friends who, like her, were on a journey to embrace life to the fullest. The support from her dedicated Direct Support Professionals (DSP) has been invaluable to Sara. These professionals empower individuals like Sara by assisting with communication, skill-building, information gathering, language development, and relationship-building.

While Sara enjoyed her time in the home, as time went on her needs started to change, causing a lack of accessibility and posing challenges in her daily life. Simple tasks, such as doing laundry, became obstacles due to the stairs. We recognized Sara's desire for greater independence and with the help of generous donations from those in our community, including the Lions Homes for Deaf People, City of Peterborough, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, we began the renovation project to make Sara's dream a reality.

The once 4-unit apartment-style home has been extensively renovated to better cater to the needs of the people we support, including Sara. With the addition of two more units, the home now accommodates nine individuals. The renovation prioritized accessibility, incorporating cutting-edge design and equipment to enhance maneuverability, functionality, safety, and independence.

After temporarily relocating during the renovation, Sara is thrilled to return to her newly renovated home. She eagerly chose a vibrant blue paint for her bedroom and plans to decorate her walls with her own beautiful artwork.

Sara's new suite is thoughtfully designed with accessibility in mind, featuring an accessible kitchen and bathroom, an elevator, handrails, and automatic door openers. Essential safety features such as flashing fire alarms and doorbells also ensure her well-being.

Sara is a woman of many passions, from painting and yoga to photography, swimming, and enjoying movies like "Freaky Friday." With her fully accessible home, Sara now has the freedom and opportunity to pursue her interests fully. She's especially excited about the garden space in the backyard and looks forward to gardening this spring.

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Yarn Bombing

Be a part of weaving connections for National Deafblind Awareness Month!

Throughout June, community spaces across Canada and around the world will be decorated with vibrant yarn creations – a form of street art, known as yarn bombing – to raise awareness during National Deafblind Awareness Month.

DeafBlind Ontario Services yarn bombing pieces will be on display in locations across the province including Newmarket, Ottawa, London, the Greater Sudbury Area, Peterborough, and Innisfil to name a few!

Each of these yarn bombing installations is made up of hand crafted pieces created by people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services, intervenors, friends and family, local craft clubs, and community members from across the province

Why do we Yarn Bomb?

By coming together to yarn bomb objects in as many cities and countries as possible in June, we strive to foster connections and unite a community with individuals, service and advocacy groups in the field, Deafblind International members and partners, and the wider global public.

Join us in June 2024 for a movement that will build awareness about deafblindness on a global scale!



Watch for Yarn Bombing installations in your community!

Check out the event page on our website for a list of Yarn Bombing locations and stop by to check one out!

While you're there, snap a photo and share it on your social media. Don't forget to tag us and use the hashtag #DbIYarnBombing2024

You can also email your photos to Amy at a.stevenson@deafblindontario.com

Scan here to visit our website for more information about Yarn Bombing and how you can get involved!



Beyond the Bounce: Terence's Live Sports Experience

As part of his Living My Best Life goals, Terence recently went on an adventure to embrace his passion for sports entertainment! As an avid sports enthusiast accustomed to watching various sports events at home, Terence decided to elevate his experience by attending live events. And what better way to kickstart this than by experiencing the electrifying performance of the Harlem Globetrotters?

Terence's adventure took him to the Sadlon Arena in Barrie, where he enjoyed an evening filled with jaw-dropping basketball skills, captivating tricks, and lots of laughter. But Terence wasn't just a spectator in the crowd; he had the privilege of holding a Magic Pass, granting him access to an array of behind-the-scenes experiences.

Terence found himself not only watching the game but also immersing himself in the heart of the action! He seized the opportunity to meet the players and got the chance to step onto the court and shoot some hoops under the bright lights! To top it all off, Terence had his basketball signed by the players to remember the extraordinary evening.

For Terence, attending events like this provides the opportunity for quality time with his intervenors in the community. Intervenors provide visual and auditory information to people who are deafblind. By facilitating the exchange of information and assisting with communication methods, intervenors empower people who are deafblind to thrive. They also play an important role in determining the Living My Best Life plans of the people we support. It's their connection and knowledge that help us understand what's important to the person supported so they can live their best life.

Thanks to the intervenors who support Terence, this night with the Harlem Globetrotters is just the beginning of an exciting journey filled with more adventures, more goals, and more opportunities to experience what is most important to him and live his best life!



One Family's Journey of Transformation and Generosity

June and Bruce Webster share a story of their son Curtis marked by challenges, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to his well-being.

Curtis, who was born with cancer, fell seriously ill and was rushed to SickKids Hospital, where he received his diagnosis at just one year of age. June explains, "... in one moment, our lives were turned upside down." After treatment, Curtis returned home, cancer free, but the cost was high. Due to the extent of his illness, Curtis is deafblind with a developmental disability. He attended his local school, and with support from W. Ross MacDonald, a school for the blind and deafblind, graduated in 2007. While this support was critical for the family, Curtis needed so much more. Bruce explains, "Outside of school, it was very hard for us. We had to adjust our lifestyle to his needs. We couldn't go out independently."



June Webster and her son Curtis.

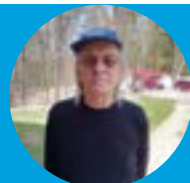
Initially consumed by the complexities of caring for Curtis, June and Bruce found the help they needed when he began receiving support from DeafBlind Ontario Services. Curtis moved into a supported living home in 2016. While there were concerns about moving Curtis from the family home, they recognized the importance of securing his future and ensuring he received the specialized support he needed.

Bruce describes the impact of DeafBlind Ontario Services as a "new lifestyle" that brought relief and newfound peace of mind for him and June. Their journey was marked by adjustments and uncertainties, but during it all they witnessed Curtis's incredible growth and independence. "Curtis is now thriving and making progress we never thought possible thanks to the support of his intervenors who help build his skills in independent living." She laughs, "It's nice to see him showing us the door when we visit!"

Intervenors are professionally trained to act as the "eyes" and "ears" of the person who is deafblind through the sense of touch. By facilitating the exchange of information and assisting with communication methods, intervenors empower people who are deafblind to thrive. For people like Curtis who are deafblind, the impact of the intervenor is immeasurable.

Moved by deep gratitude and a desire to help, June and Bruce chose to become donors. Their philanthropy was driven by a deep-seated belief in the power of generosity to transform lives. Recognizing the importance of extending support to other families facing similar challenges, they want to ensure others have access to the same level of care and assistance, while emphasizing the importance of raising awareness of people who are deafblind.

"If you want to feel the true meaning of being philanthropic, then make a donation to DeafBlind Ontario Foundation. Your gift will have a lasting effect. It's important to give to allow people the opportunity to experience a fuller, more complete life"



Bruce Webster

Self-advocacy guide for Canadians who are deafblind

Developed by DeafBlind Advocacy Group Canada in collaboration with DeafBlind Ontario Services

[Read the full guide:](#)



DeafBlind Ontario Services and the Deafblind Advocacy Group Canada (DAGC) recently launched webinars on self-advocacy based on their self-advocacy guide. The webinars acknowledge that a self-advocacy journey can be difficult to start. With this idea in mind, the guide share stories and identifies important points that can help someone interested in organizing their own advocacy.

The self-advocacy guide, created for Canadians who are deafblind, by Canadians who are deafblind, is intended to empower others interested in starting their own advocacy journey. The guide was the result of a collaboration between DeafBlind Ontario Services and the DAGC after research confirmed that no Canadian resource existed. The two co-chairs (Penny Bennett and Dawnelee Wright) who led the Deafblind Advocacy Group Canada, wanted people starting their own self-advocacy to have a tool that references Canadian legislation and policies.

Most importantly, the webinars encourage someone interested in self-advocacy to be aware of their rights under specific policies and legislation where they live – as an example, internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), nationally the Canadian Human Rights Code and provincially through accessibility legislation.

Any advocacy initiative should include an understanding of the various rights each of us has to be accommodated and to have barrier free access to goods and services to live a good quality of life. The document is organized to help someone get started and captures four main areas:

1) Self-knowledge; 2) Action Plan; 3) Communication/ Negotiation Skills; and, 4) Finding Support

The webinars highlighted the idea that someone interested in learning about self-advocacy may not want to start at the very beginning of the document – they may (as an example) want to jump right to the personal stories to get a sense of what self-advocacy might look like in real life.

Prior to the webinars, the self-advocacy guide was launched as a poster presentation at the Deafblind International Conference in Ottawa Canada and shared on social media.

The guide also encourages the reader to engage others in their self-advocacy journey - for advice, for support or even to share ideas.

Empowering Independence: Ben's Journey

When you ask Ben what he most enjoys about living independently, having a space of his own where he can fully relax is important, and he takes pride in his space. "Taking care of it makes me believe in myself. I can learn skills and do things I did not know I could do on my own." Since moving from his family home 6 years ago, Ben is now part of the Supported Independent Living (SIL) program, developed for people living with a developmental disability and who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or who use non-traditional forms of communication and lives independently with minimal support. Ben has learned many new skills like using public transit and being able to do his own grocery shopping. "I feel proud of myself for learning to do these activities. Now my goals are focused on learning more skills to be even more independent."

Describing himself as a curious individual with a passion for history and current events, Ben finds great pride in his family's farming heritage and sharing the importance of growing good food. Social events and particularly those involving his family make him happy. Along with these interests, he enjoys the challenge of building Lego sets and vintage cars.

With his many interests and activities, Ben stresses the importance of communicating in his own way. American Sign Language (ASL) is Ben's preferred method of communication, giving him the ability to do more than he could ever do before. Working with a direct support professional (DSP), Ben has expanded his communication skills and is more comfortable communicating with others in social situations, making him feel included in the Deaf community. Direct support professionals assist people with communication, whether they are deafblind or live with a developmental disability and are Deaf, hard of hearing, or use non-traditional forms of communication.

Their role is to support and empower the person to learn concepts, skills, gather information, develop communication and language, and establish relationships. These professionals work with the individuals supported using a mutual and collaborative approach. They work to understand the person's unique needs and offer support that fosters inclusion, respecting their need to make choices about their communication preferences.

Living on his own has given Ben the confidence to pursue other activities. One of Ben's achievements is his candle-making business, something that brings him both pride and joy. Selling his candles at various events, such as Mayfest, farmers markets and his family's farm vegetable stand, has been rewarding. It makes him feel good knowing that his creations bring happiness to others and adds to his sense of accomplishment.

Ben also volunteers at Delta Bingo on behalf of DeafBlind Ontario Foundation, where funds are directed towards priority needs like assistive devices, recreational and social programs. He says that he's, "happy to help out!"

In his pursuit of independent living and communicating in his own way, Ben is an advocate for accessibility and inclusion.



Research Spotlight

Development of Global Framework on Deafblindness

[Study II an Expert study capturing the Professionals' perspective:](#)



[An Enriched Communication Approach in Sensory Loss:](#)



DeafBlind Ontario Services is proud to participate in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Core Set, a global framework on deafblindness project.

This project is significant research bringing together: Principal Investigators Dr. Walter Wittich (University of Montreal) Dr. Sarah Granberg (Orebro University, Sweden), Dr. Atul Jaiswal (University of Montreal) and Dr. Mahadeo Sukhai (CNIB Deafblind Community Services), along with stakeholder group – DeafBlind International, as well as Ricard Lopez, Parent, Founder and Board Member of European DeafBlind Network, Barcelona, Spain, Centre de réadaptation Lethbridge-Layton Mackay du CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de l'Île-de-Montréal, Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille du CISSS de la Montérégie-Centre, Canadian Hearing Society and Canadian Helen Keller Center.

All four phases of the ICS Core Set development on deafblindness are now complete. The following Phase two publications are under consideration:

Study II an Expert study capturing the Professionals' perspective.

In addition, a paper entitled "Development of core sets for deafblindness: an international expert survey on functioning and disability of individuals living with deafblindness using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health" was submitted for consideration to the European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine journal.

Study III, the Qualitative Study focusing on Lived Experience perspective

For this study, DeafBlind Ontario Services facilitated participation of five individuals with deafblindness supported by their Intervenors/parents/family member to share their lived experiences in semi-structured interviews. A paper synthesizing the outcomes of the qualitative study, "Development of Core Sets for deafblindness using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: The perspectives of individuals with lived experience" study was completed and submitted for consideration to The European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine journal.

"An Enriched Communication Approach in Sensory Loss" article was published in November 2023 in the International Journal of Direct Support Professionals.

The final phase of the ICF Core Sets initiative culminates in the International Consensus Conference, scheduled for October 7-9, 2024 in Spain.

Updates from DeafBlind Ontario Foundation

You're invited!

Become a vital part of our community by joining our Friends with Vision, monthly donor program! Monthly donors provide essential support that enables each person we support to live their very best life. By pledging a monthly contribution, you are making an even greater impact on the lives of the people we serve - all year long.

What's in it for you?

- Consistent impact - your monthly donation ensures a steady stream of support, allowing us to plan and implement programs and projects effectively;
- Convenience - set up your donation once for a lasting difference;
- Maximize impact - all contributions, regardless of size, amplify the impact of your generosity;
- Community – you'll be joining a passionate group of individuals dedicated to our mission and helping to create positive changes.

Ready to make a lasting impact? Join our Friends with Vision Monthly Donor Program today by visiting our website at www.deafblindontario.com or by contacting Marlene by email m.quinton@deafblindontario.com or phone at (855) 340-3267 ext. 289.



Bingo! It's more than just a game.

Charitable gaming helps provide opportunities to further enrich the lives of the people we support. But, how does this work?

Our team of committed volunteers take turns hosting guests who attend Bingo World Richmond Hill and Delta Bingo and Gaming in Peterborough – this includes one person supported through our Supported independent Living program in Peterborough. This has proved to be a great vocational experience for him.

Volunteers greet guests, help game winners, keep the place tidy, and act as representatives of our organization. We are incredibly grateful to this group of volunteers for their time and talents.

Funds raised through charitable gaming are used for things like support services and community programs for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal and deafblind, along with interpreting services, assistive devices, transportation related to community activities, house maintenance, and employee training opportunities.

If you would like to join our volunteer team in Richmond Hill or Peterborough, please reach out to Marlene by email at m.quinton@deafblindontario.com. Big thanks to Delta Bingo in Peterborough and Bingo World Richmond Hill for their partnership that make so much more possible!

May is *Leave a Legacy* Month

Your legacy gift to DeafBlind Ontario Foundation is a simple and powerful way to be remembered. It's a way to touch the lives of people who are deafblind, as well as those who are Deaf, hard of hearing and non-verbal with a developmental disability now, and in the future. Join over 3 million Canadians leaving a gift in their Will to charity - using the power of your Will to make a big difference in this world.

Your legacy ensures every person supported will thrive with specialized support services to meet their basic needs and so much more – including turning houses into homes that maximize their mobility and independence; giving them the tools to accomplish ordinary and extraordinary things; and breaking the silence and penetrating the darkness with rich communication and meaningful experiences. Together, we are transforming lives, one gift at a time.

Create a lasting impact.

Visit [Will Power](#) for details on how to get started



Please contact a member of the Foundation at 1-855-340-3267 or email development@deafblindontario.com with any questions.

Our Donors: November 2023 - March 2024

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

100 Women Who Care Central York, Bingo World & Gaming Richmond Hill, BNI Business Elite, Bruce Elevator Service Ltd., Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Charles Norcliffe Baker and Thelma Scott Baker Foundation, Conseil scolaire catholique Nouvelon Cordeiro Roofing, Crate Designs Furniture, Delta Bingo – Peterborough, Egan Family Foundation, Gary's Service & Towing, Giant Tiger, Harry E Foster Charitable Foundation, HearingLife Canada, Humber College, iA Financial Group, Jeff Smith Plumbing-Heating Ltd.,

Kits For A Cause, Knights of Columbus St. Joseph's Council No. 6361 Charitable Welfare Trust, Knights of Columbus St. Justin, Martyr Council 11708, Lions Homes for Deaf People, LIUNA LOCAL 183 Executive Board, London Health Sciences Centre Foundation, McLellan Group Contracting, Minnow Lake Lions Club, National Mah Jongg League Inc., Needham Promotions Inc., Neighbourhood Network, Oakville Foundation for Intellectually Handicapped People, Ontario Power Generation, Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation,

Quota International of Peterborough, R.A. Beamish Foundation, Resident Care Pharmacy, Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command Charitable Foundation, Silver Linings Healthcare, The Samosa Master Inc., Udora Leaskdale Lions Club, United Way Waterloo Region, University of Western Ontario Communications Sciences and Disorders Student Council, Valley East Lions Club, Victor & Rhoda Shields Charitable Foundation, Voll's Contract Flooring.

Bridge - Community Training

Bridge – Sensory Loss Communication Training provides customized training opportunities for organizations that support individuals with a sensory loss and/or communication challenges.

Upcoming Workshops:

Sensory Integration: Making Sensory Engagement Meaningful
June 3, 2024, 12:00-4:00pm

Adapting Environments for Sensory Loss
July 15, 2024 1:00-4:00pm

Introduction to Sensory Loss
August 19, 2024 12:00-4:00pm

Sensory Loss and Aging
September 23, 2024 1:00-2:30pm

Aging in Place with Sensory Loss
October 7, 2024 1:00-2:30pm

[Register for a workshop:](#)



Contact us for more information:
mcs@deafblindontario.com
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The DBOS Store

The DBOS Store is a retail outlet for products made by people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services.

Beautiful hand-made items like beeswax candles make the perfect gift! These artisan items can now be viewed and purchased on Etsy!



[Scan here to visit the store on Etsy!](#)



email dbosstore@deafblindontario.com for more information.



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