



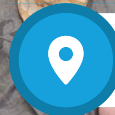
keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Fall 2025

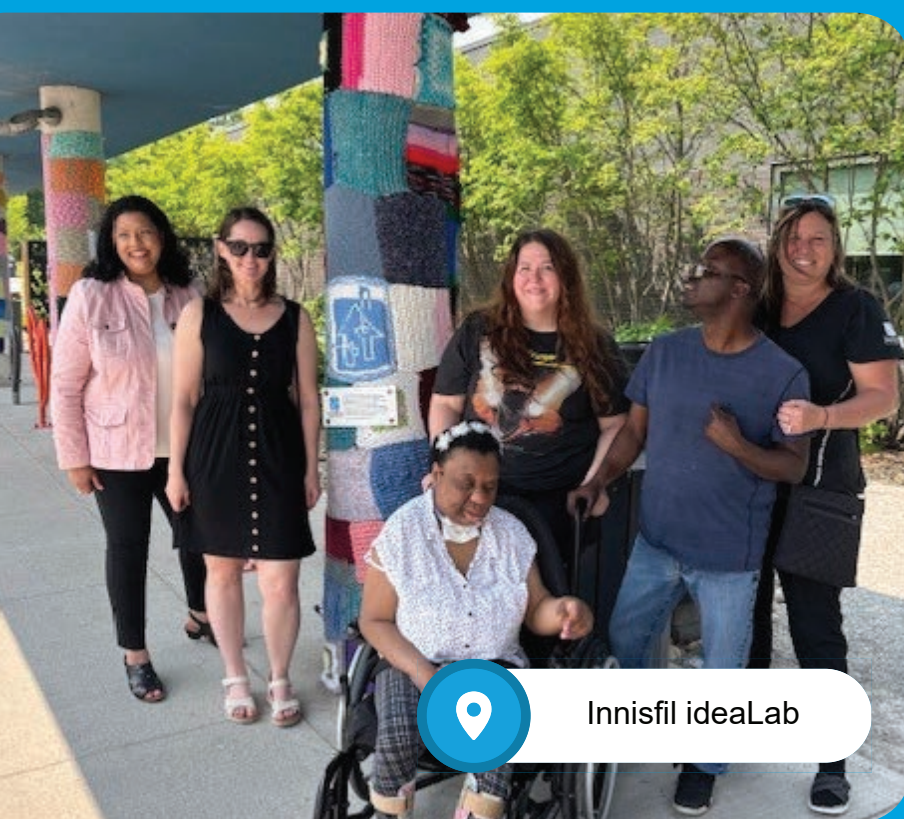




Peterborough Square



First Choice Hair, Embrun



Innisfil ideaLab



Bay Used Books, Sudbury

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Grand Theatre, London

yarn bombing

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



Steven has been supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services since 1997. His journey with us began in a shared home with two roommates, but today, he lives independently in his own apartment—a milestone that reflects both his personal growth and the impact of our Supported Independent Living (SIL) program.

Steven's life is rich with meaningful experiences. His intervenors help him with everyday tasks like grocery shopping and visiting the mall, to swimming and attending local events. He also enjoys going for drives around the city and dining out at restaurants.

With the help of his intervenors, Steven has played an active role in setting up yarn bombing displays in his community.

"It's important for people to learn more about DeafBlind Ontario Services and the deafblind community," says Steven. "Awareness directly helps people who are deafblind."

This June, DeafBlind Ontario Services was proud to join the global awareness initiative #CreateAndConnect, led by Deafblind International. This campaign invites communities to engage in creative expression that fosters awareness, joy, and connection. Our chosen form of expression? Yarn Bombing - a vibrant, tactile art form that symbolizes unity and the diverse talents of people who are deafblind.

Each installation by DeafBlind Ontario Services is made up of hand crafted pieces created by people we support, intervenors, friends and family, local knitting clubs, and community members from across the province. This year, we yarn-bombed 26 locations across 5 regions right here in Ontario!

The connections didn't just stop at our provincial borders. Through art, stories, and the sheer joy of this project, we spread awareness across the province of Ontario, throughout Canada, and even made headlines across the world!

We need you to join our Yarn Bombing Crew!

We're planning even bigger installations in 2026 and we will need your help!

There are many ways you can get involved including creating pieces, sharing ideas for new installation locations, helping us set up for the event and more!

Scan the QR code to sign up for more information and make sure you follow us on social media for the latest updates!



Celebrating International Week of Deaf People: Doug's Story

Each September, International Week of Deaf People gives us the opportunity to celebrate Deaf culture, language, and the vibrant community that surrounds it. This year, from September 22-28, we honoured the theme “No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights”- a powerful reminder that true inclusion begins with communication. To celebrate, we're shining a spotlight on Doug - a proud member of the Deaf community whose story reminds us of the importance of accessibility, independence, and connection.

Doug communicates using American Sign Language (ASL), a language that empowers him to express himself fully and connect with others. In addition to being Deaf, Doug is also experiencing declining vision, which adds another layer to his communication needs. If you ask Doug what brings him joy, he'll tell you about his love for wrestling - whether it's watching matches on TV or attending live events. He also enjoys spending time with friends and family, playing games, and creating paint-by-number masterpieces on his iPad. Technology plays a big role in Doug's daily life. His iPad is more than just a device - it's a tool for creativity, communication, and connection. Whether he's playing games, sharing his interests, or video chatting with family every week, Doug uses his iPad to stay engaged and connected.

Doug's journey with support services began in the 1980s with Array Services, and since our amalgamation in 2021, he has been part of the DeafBlind Ontario Services community. For many years, Doug lived independently through our Supported Independent Living (SIL) program. In 2024, he moved into one of our supported living homes - accessible, barrier-free, affordable housing with 24/7 specialized support services. While Doug now has support around the clock, he takes great pride in maintaining as much independence as possible.

Like many Deaf individuals, Doug has faced barriers to communication in the community, especially in situations where people were unfamiliar with ASL. Today, with the support of intervenors, he feels confident knowing he has the tools and support to navigate any situation. “I feel that I can go wherever I want” Doug shares.

Professional Intervenors play an important role in supporting and empowering the people we support. They foster independence through a holistic and person-centered approach of “do with, not for.” Intervenors support people who are deafblind to gain independence, build their life skills, and take an active role in all areas of their lives.



For Doug, this support is especially vital as he navigates both hearing and vision loss. If Doug could change one thing about society, he says he wishes more people would learn ASL. Greater awareness and understanding of sign languages would open more doors to inclusion, independence, and connection for people like Doug.

To mark International Week of Deaf People, Doug joined in on a week full of activities with his housemates, including group painting, and a Deaf-themed movie night. He also joined DeafBlind Ontario Services and the community for a special event - raising the Deaf flag at Peterborough Square on September 23, 2025.

Doug's story is a powerful reminder of the importance of accessibility, independence, and community. Let's celebrate the Deaf community and commit to building a world where everyone can communicate, connect, and thrive.

Honoring Deaf Culture: Raising the Deaf Flag in Peterborough



We were honored to raise the Deaf Flag for the second year in a row at Peterborough Square on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, in celebration of the International Week of Deaf People and the International Day of Sign Languages.

This annual celebration, held during the last full week of September, was initiated in 1958 by the World Federation of the Deaf to raise awareness about the rights of Deaf people and the importance of sign language. This year's theme, "No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights," highlights the essential role of sign languages in ensuring full human rights for Deaf communities worldwide.

The Deaf Flag, approved by the World Federation of the Deaf during its 20th General Assembly in July 2023, stands as a powerful symbol of unity and pride for sign language communities across the globe.

The day's events included a heartfelt flag raising ceremony, followed by cake, light refreshments, and friendly conversation - a meaningful way to honor Deaf culture and connect with our community.

Celebrating Caregiver Excellence: Anne-Marie Desmarais Wins National Award

Congratulations to Anne-Marie Desmarais, recipient of the 2025 Coup de cœur Award - Caregiver of the Year! Honored for her dedication and advocacy for people with disabilities, she was nominated by her manager and selected from nominees across Canada. Anne-Marie says the honour was "very unexpected" and that she feels truly humbled.

Deeply committed to her Francophone community in Ontario, Anne-Marie generously devotes her time and energy to advocating for the rights of adults living with disabilities. As an accounting clerk at L'Union Culturelle des Franco-Ontariennes and an entrepreneur, she balances her professional life with her role in supporting and advocating for her son Steve, who is supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services. "With the support of DeafBlind Ontario Services, I feel that we are all in this together," she says. "Steve wouldn't be where he is today without their support."

Driven by unwavering love and remarkable resilience, Anne-Marie transforms her personal experience into a force for collective change. She breaks stigmas, raises awareness, and uplifts other caregivers in her community. "As a caregiver, don't be afraid to ask for help or support for yourself. You need to take care of yourself too," she advises. Anne-Marie's leadership is not only inspiring - it's grounded in compassion and purpose. She embodies the spirit of advocacy and inclusion, making a lasting impact on those around her.



Three Years of Living My Best Life: John's Sensory Adventure to Niagara Falls

This September marks a special milestone - three years since the launch of our Living My Best Life service model at DeafBlind Ontario Services. This model is rooted in a simple but powerful idea: every person we support deserves opportunities and services tailored to their unique wishes and dreams. Through personalized planning and a variety of tools and approaches, our specialized support teams work to understand what is truly important to each individual.

One exciting part of this model is Sensory Excursions - customized experiences designed to engage the senses and bring joy, exploration, and connection. Earlier this year, John, who has been supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services since July 2009, began planning his own Sensory Excursion with the help of his intervenors.

Intervenors are professionally trained to act as the “eyes” and “ears” of the person who is deafblind through the sense of touch. They connect the person who is deafblind to other people and their community as a communication partner.

By facilitating the exchange of information and assisting with communication methods, intervenors empower people who are deafblind to thrive.

John uses Facilitated Communication with his iPad, and after researching a few ideas, he chose Niagara Falls as his destination. “Niagara Falls has so many things to do!” he expressed. With support, John created a detailed itinerary, and the adventure was set in motion.

On the way to Niagara, John made a meaningful pitstop to visit his brother before heading to the hotel. His first day was packed with fun - he explored the Skyline Waterpark, swam in the outdoor pool, enjoyed dinner, visited an arcade, and strolled along Clifton Hill, smiling and engaging with his intervenors throughout.

The next morning, John took a peaceful walk by the falls. On the way, he pulled the arm of his Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist (CDBIS) toward the Wax Museum. Inside, John explored the lifelike characters, soaking in the visual experience. That evening, John boarded a nighttime boat cruise featuring a spectacular fireworks show. He laughed and watched in awe as the boat passed the falls and the sky lit up in dazzling colors.

On his final morning, John returned to Clifton Hill and asked to visit the Fun House of Mirrors, where he navigated the maze with curiosity and joy. Next, he explored Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum. Initially rushing through, John suddenly stopped at a spinning, illuminated tunnel - a sensory highlight. He laughed and stayed in the tunnel longer than anyone else, clearly captivated by the experience.

At the end of his excursion, John shared with his intervenors that he had “lots of fun!” and “wants to go again!”



Connection, Culture, and Care: Fang's Journey at DeafBlind Ontario Services

At DeafBlind Ontario Services (DBOS), recruitment is about finding people who bring heart, empathy, and purpose to their work. Fang, a Community Support Professional (CSP), shares her journey and why DBOS has become more than just a workplace - it's a place where she feels truly at home.

Fang joined DeafBlind Ontario Services three years ago, seeking a better work-life balance and a career that aligned with her values. After learning about us from a friend, she explored DBOS online and felt an immediate connection to our mission of helping people live their best lives.

"I felt a strong alignment with its mission. I knew then - and still believe - that this is the kind of work I want to do."

As a CSP, Fang plays an essential role in supporting people who are deafblind, or those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or use non-traditional forms of communication. Her work involves much more than day-to-day support - it's about empowering individuals to build skills, develop language, share experiences, and form meaningful relationships.

She describes the people she supports as radiating optimism, even when faced with challenges. Whether it's enjoying a walk in nature, attending a concert, or sharing a craft activity, every moment becomes an opportunity for joy and connection.

Working at DBOS has given Fang a deep sense of fulfillment. She's seen firsthand how her care and support helps individuals lead brighter, more vibrant lives. Her approach is guided by empathy and a personal perspective: "I often reflect on what I would want if my own children were living in a similar environment—what kind of support, respect, and compassion I would hope they receive."

One of the most satisfying parts of Fang's job is the inclusive and welcoming environment. DBOS encourages cultural expression, allowing her to share traditions like calligraphy, Taiji, and traditional dance with her team and the people she supports. "These experiences have brought more joy and vibrancy to the workplace and made me feel truly at home." Fang fondly remembers decorating for the Chinese Spring Festival with her team and the people they support.



The celebration was filled with laughter, creativity, and a strong sense of community - an example of how DBOS fosters meaningful connections.

Through trust and understanding, Fang has helped the people she supports to thrive. "As I have gotten to know the individuals we support more deeply, I have been able to make a meaningful difference each day - starting from providing basic personal care, progressing to engaging in more activities together, and ultimately helping them live fuller, more enjoyable lives. We have someone who moved in about a year and a half ago, and over time I've come to understand her preferences, habits, and nonverbal cues. Building this trust has allowed me to tailor my care to her unique needs, which reinforces for me the real impact of the work I do."

If you're looking for a career where your compassion and creativity can flourish, DeafBlind Ontario Services offers a supportive, inclusive, and purpose-driven environment. Here, you're not just joining a team - you're becoming part of a community that values connection, empathy, and growth.

Research Update

Participation in new Research Project - Growing Up & Being Deafblind

DeafBlind Ontario Services is taking part in an international research project called Growing Up & Being Deafblind. This study compares experiences from the Global South and Global North countries to understand what supports or hinders individuals with deafblindness in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education, health, and well-being.

The research focuses on adults who were born deafblind or became deafblind early in life. These individuals may have gone to school, worked, or continued learning later on. The study will explore their experiences with things like education, health care, rehabilitation, and social services.

Data will be collected through one-on-one interviews. The results will help guide a larger international effort and offer practical suggestions to improve services and policies.

Research Collaborations and Partnerships in supporting people with a Developmental Disability and are Deaf, hard of hearing and non-verbal

DeafBlind Ontario Services is fostering academic and community collaborations to encourage the work of both prominent and aspiring researchers, as well as the involvement of people with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication. Our current collaborations and partnerships include:

- The World Federation of the Deaf
- Trent University, Ontario
- University of Manitoba, Manitoba
- Service Providers - Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility, Amant, Manitoba



ICF Core Sets on Deafblindness

Downloadable versions of the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) Core Sets for Deafblindness are now available on our website.

This includes:

- Comprehensive Core Set: Includes 218 codes covering all relevant aspects, including those essential for advocacy and policy.
- Intermediate Core Set: Contains 137 codes selected to support interdisciplinary communication.
- Brief Core Set: Features 33 codes prioritized for use in individual clinical encounters.

Information about the ICF core sets is now available in American Sign Language (ASL)

Scan the QR code to visit our website and learn more.



Planned Giving is for Everyone: Leave a Legacy Through Your Will



Planned gifts, like a gift in your Will, are a powerful way to support the work of DeafBlind Ontario Foundation (DBOF). Each year, thousands of Canadians make legacy contributions that may not be possible during their lifetime, offering both a lasting impact and potential tax benefits for their estate. These gifts help fund specialized, person-centered support for individuals who are deafblind, as well as those with developmental disabilities who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or use non-traditional communication.

While DeafBlind Ontario Services receives provincial funding, it doesn't meet all the needs of the people supported. The Foundation is the fundraising arm to DeafBlind Ontario Services. It exists to bridge that gap. After providing for loved ones, a gift in your Will is a powerful expression of your care and commitment - helping change lives, one touch and one sign at a time.

An anonymous donor, whose son lived in a DeafBlind Ontario Services supported living home for over 20 years, shares:

“I have nothing but praise for the amazing work DeafBlind Ontario Services does every day. We have put DeafBlind Ontario Foundation as the beneficiary of a gift in our Will, and hope you will consider doing the same, in whatever way you can.”

Leaving a gift in your Will is simple, with several options to choose from:

- Specific Gift: A set asset like cash, securities, or real estate.
- Residual/Percentage Gift: A percentage of what remains in your estate after other provisions have been fulfilled.
- Contingent Gift: A gift that takes effect only if other beneficiaries pass away before you.



Anyone can leave a legacy



If you are considering a legacy gift, we would be pleased to speak with you or your financial advisor in confidence. If you have already left a gift in your Will to DBOF, thank you! We encourage you to let us know your plans so we can establish or confirm how you would like your gift to be used. We can also offer recognition during your lifetime, should you wish.

Please reach out to Chelsea Dunn McIntyre, CFRE, Manager of Major Gifts, with your questions anytime. You can reach her by phone at 613-218-0812 or by email at c.mcintyre@deafblindontario.com.

You can also visit Will Power, a national campaign for Canadians to help make decisions about their Will, while including charities as beneficiaries. They have information, quizzes, and calculators that may be helpful for you and your family in your planning decisions. You can find DBOF on their website at: <https://www.willpower.ca/charities/deafblind-ontario-foundation/>

Community Partnerships: A Powerful Way to Give Back



At DeafBlind Ontario Foundation, we believe that meaningful partnerships build stronger communities and transform lives. When local businesses, service clubs, and community groups come together to support people who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication, the impact is immediate and lasting.

Your generosity raises vital funds for things like accessible housing, specialized equipment, and programs that empower the people we support to live independently and with dignity. Whether through fundraising events, awareness campaigns, or in-kind donations, your partnership sparks conversations and builds understanding.

Partnering with DeafBlind Ontario Foundation is a meaningful way to show your values in action. Add a "Proud Supporter" badge to your website or email signature, share a social media post, or display a donation jar or a QR code at your front desk. You could also host a Lunch & Learn to introduce your team to our mission. And, if you know someone who might want to help, make a referral with purpose, because every connection counts.

One thoughtful example of a community partnership is our annual Kits For A Cause campaign. We invite groups to donate care kits with essential items, directly benefiting those we support this holiday season. Whether you're a workplace looking for a team-building activity or a community group seeking a hands-on way to give back, Kits for a Cause is a simple, impactful way to show you care.

Will you help us build supportive communities? To learn more or participate in Kits for a Cause, contact Kayley Young at k.young@deafblindontario.com.

Empower Possibilities Every Month



Imagine creating lasting change - not just once, but every month. By joining our *Friends With Vision* monthly donor club, you become part of a compassionate community that champions independence, inclusion, and connection for individuals with sensory loss and communication challenges.

Your monthly gift helps us plan ahead and deliver essential services. For example:

- \$10/month can provide tactile markers to help someone navigate their home safely.
- \$25/month can support a personalized communication tool for someone who uses non-traditional forms of communication.
- \$50/month can help fund sensory excursions that build confidence and connection.
- \$100/month can help to ensure home accessibility features like ceiling lifts, ramps and elevators are installed and maintained for the benefit of the people we serve.

These examples show what your contribution could help to achieve every month, making your support meaningful and manageable.

Signing up is easy. Visit www.deafblindontario.com, or connect with Flory Amarasinghe at f.amarasinghe@deafblindontario.com or 289-763-9404.

On December 2nd, You Can Help Transform Lives!



Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity. When you donate to DeafBlind Ontario Foundation, you are helping someone access a wheelchair-accessible van, move into a barrier-free home, and receive specialized equipment that makes mobility and communication possible. Your support empowers the people we serve to live independently and connect meaningfully with their communities.

Your contributions truly make a difference. Your gift creates lasting change for those who need it most. From accessible housing and assistive devices to life-enriching programs that promote dignity, safety, and a sense of belonging, your generosity helps build a more inclusive future.

How can you help? Donate, share our mission with your network, or start a personal fundraiser. This Giving Tuesday, make your donation to DeafBlind Ontario Foundation. Be the reason someone feels seen and supported.

GIVING TUESDAY

Our Donors April 2025 - August 2025

We're grateful to our community partners for helping create meaningful opportunities for those we serve.

100 Men Who Give A Damn (Newmarket-Aurora)
Bingo World & Gaming Richmond Hill
BNI Business Elite Bradford
Corderio Roofing Ltd.
Elavon
Export Development Canada
Fanshawe Student Union
Filles Isabelle D'Embrun
HIEC
Innisfil Lions Club
J.P. Bickell Foundation
Knights of Columbus St. Justin, Martyr Council 11708
Needham Promotions Inc.
Rotary Club of Bridgenorth-Ennismore-Lakefield Inc.
The Oakes Foundation
The Robert Campeau Family Foundation
Valley East Lions Club

Charitable Gaming for Community Good

Charitable gaming is a powerful way to give back to the community. At DeafBlind Ontario Foundation, the proceeds from charitable gaming help fund programs for individuals who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing or use non-traditional forms of communication.

Through long-standing partnerships with licensed charitable gaming centers in Richmond Hill and Peterborough, we receive essential funding that supports accessible housing, specialized equipment, and life-enriching programs that empower the individuals we serve to live independently, connect meaningfully, and live their best lives.

Thanks to charitable gaming, we can respond to urgent needs, invest in long-term solutions, and ensure the people we support have access to the resources they need for a safer, more comfortable, and more connected life. We invite you to play with purpose. Together, we are building a community where barriers are removed, allowing people to live with dignity and choice.

BRIDGE

Sensory Loss Communication Training



Bridge - Sensory Loss Communication Training, offered by DeafBlind Ontario Services, provides customized training opportunities for organizations that support individuals with a sensory loss and/or communication challenges.

Scan to learn more
and view all upcoming
workshops.



Upcoming Workshops

November 6, 2025

Sensory Integration:
Making Sensory
Engagement Meaningful

November 27, 2025

Personality
Dimensions

December 8, 2025

Introduction to
Sensory Loss

January 19, 2026

Sensory Loss and
Aging

February 9, 2026

Communication 101:
Bridging the Gap