



# keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Spring 2026





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# A Comfort Dish Made by Memory

Dawn is deafblind and recently moved into a DeafBlind Ontario Services supported living home. She began cooking in her mother's and grandmother's kitchens – long before she relied on her senses in new ways. As a child, she learned by watching. As she grew, she learned by feeling. Even after her vision changed, the kitchen remained a place of confidence, memory, and joy.

Dawn's favourite dish is one she's known since childhood: Tomato Macaroni & Cheese. "It's a recipe that I grew up with, and I love the blend of flavors that all go well together" Dawn says. For her, it's the definition of comfort food. "It reminds me of my grandmother and my family."

Dawn relies on her senses to guide her through each step. "My sense of touch is so strong that I know what the item is without having to see it," she explains. She uses her fingers to measure ingredients and can feel when a sauce has thickened. "When I make my sauces, I'm able to tell when the sauce is getting thicker just by stirring." Smell tells her the rest: "My sense of smell helps me know when the meal is almost finished."

Even without vision, Dawn still relies on the images stored in her memory.

**"I can picture the food as I used to see it when I had my vision. I can still see it in my mind, and I do the same things as I used to, but with my mind's eyes."**

Dawn describes the flavour as "cheesy and tangy, especially when you add the acidity of the tomatoes." She also points out the importance of texture. "The breadcrumbs on top give a good crunch next to the softness and stringiness of the cheese and sauce." Overall, she says, "It's warm, soft, and delicious." *The Parts of Cooking She Enjoys*

"How do I feel when I cook this dish? Hungry for sure," she laughs. "Thinking about it makes me want a plate of it."



## Dawn's Tomato Macaroni & Cheese

### Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups Penne or Elbow pasta
- 3 ½ cups milk
- 1¾ cups old cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 heaping tablespoon flour
- ½ can unsalted diced tomatoes
- ½ cup breadcrumbs

### Instructions

1. Boil pasta in 5 cups of water. Stir occasionally. Cook until al dente.
2. Grate 1½ cups of the cheese.
3. Set up a double boiler:
  - Bottom pot: 5 cups of water
  - Top pot: 3 cups milk + 1 tablespoon butter
  - Let it simmer.
  - Mix remaining milk with flour until smooth.
  - Add to top pot and whisk until thickened.
4. Gradually add grated cheese and stir until blended.
5. Place pasta in a large casserole dish and pour sauce over it.
6. Spoon tomatoes evenly on top.
7. Sprinkle breadcrumbs across the surface.
8. Top with remaining ¾ cup cheese.
9. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
10. Bake for 1 hour.
11. Let rest for a few minutes before serving.

# Growing the Future Together

## Strategic Planning for 2027 - 2030

The current 3-year Strategic Plans for DeafBlind Ontario Services and the DeafBlind Ontario Foundation are set to wrap up in 2026. As we look ahead, the Boards of Directors are gearing up to chart an exciting new course for the next chapter - our 2027–2030 Strategic Plans.

The last 3 years were characterized by action and growth and our current plan's achievements included the introduction of the Enriched Communication Support Specialist internal certification, the creation of the Employee Connection Specialist position, our Values refresh project, robust Government relations strategies, succession planning, and so much more in the world of technology, research, fundraising, funding, and objective centric risk management!

A Strategic Plan is more than just a roadmap - it's a bold vision for the future. It defines the goals and priorities that will guide our work over the next 3 years. It reflects who we are, what we stand for, and where we're headed.

### How are we developing our new strategic plan?

The Boards' first step was to hire a consultant through a formal RFP process. From there, our work began with one essential principle: listening.

We began by understanding where we are today - through meaningful conversations with the people who matter most. That includes:

- Individuals we support
- Our dedicated employees across DeafBlind Ontario Services and the Foundation
- Volunteers, donors, and supporters
- Government partners

These insights will help shape a shared vision for the future. The Boards will use this input to imagine what's possible and set a clear direction for the next three years.



**We'll keep you updated as the process unfolds, and we look forward to launching the new plans in Fall 2026!**



# Media Update

We're pleased to announce the release of two new organizational videos that highlight our mission, our culture, and the people at the heart of our work.

Over the past several months, our team traveled across the province to capture authentic stories and ensure the voices of the incredible people we serve - and the amazing employees who support them - were meaningfully represented.

The result is a refreshed About Us video and a dynamic recruitment video, both showcasing the impact of our community and the dedication of our employees.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who participated and helped bring these stories to life, including the talented team at Black Belt Productions!

About Us Video:



Recruitment Video:



## Our Website Got a Refresh!

We've been working on something exciting... our new website is now live! Designed with a fresh look, improved navigation, and better accessibility - it's built to support our community more than ever.

Redesigning a website takes teamwork - and we're grateful. A big thank-you to the RC Design team who helped bring our new website to life! From the planning stages to final testing, this project reflects collaboration, creativity, and our shared commitment to better serving our community.

Check out the finished product:



# Intervenor Summit

Our very first Intervenor Summit was a dynamic 4-day event that included a host of knowledgeable guest speakers and brought together 27 fabulous Intervenor from 19 Developmental Service agencies across Ontario to network, share and learn.

The Summit took participants on a journey of self reflection, and equipped Intervenor by enhancing their technical and behavioral competencies through dual-role simulations, engaging topics, and hands-on learning sessions on the evolution of engagement and tailoring activities to the unique needs of individuals who are deafblind through the concepts of Curiosity, Interest and Layers.

A special thank you to the MCCSS for providing the funding to make this life-changing opportunity a possibility for so many.



**“A great learning experience that I can bring back to my co-workers and region”**



# Research Update

## Participation in New Research Project - Growing Up & Being Deafblind

DeafBlind Ontario Services supported individuals in a study titled Growing Up & Being Deafblind, comparing experiences in the Global South and North. The project focuses on adults born deafblind or who acquired deafblindness early in life, exploring education, health care, rehabilitation, employment, and social services.

Researchers completed five one-on-one interviews with people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services. Findings will inform an international initiative and support recommendations to improve policies and services. This work advances several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3 (Health & Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

## United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

In March 2025, the CRPD released its Concluding Observations on Canada's latest reports.

Civil society submissions—supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services—helped ensure the report, for the first time, explicitly recognized the essential role of intervenor services for people who are deafblind.

DeafBlind Ontario Services recently took part in a virtual follow-up session with the Office for Disability Issues to review priorities within the 92 recommendations. Our research and advocacy continue to support meaningful participation in national disability and human-rights discussions.

Read the full report here:



## New Publication: Social Determinants of Health & Older Adults with Dual Sensory Loss

DeafBlind Ontario Services collaborated on a new article, Social Determinants of Health and Older Adults with Dual Sensory Loss – A Scoping Review, published in PLOS One.

The review highlights how social determinants of health affect older adults with dual sensory loss and offers valuable insights for:

- Policy Makers: developing inclusive health and social policy
- Healthcare Providers: understanding barriers and improving service delivery
- Advocacy Groups: supporting equity, accessibility, and representation

By mapping current evidence and systemic gaps, this publication contributes to advancing health equity and inclusive aging strategies globally.



Read the full article here:





## An Extraordinary Life

**“I often forget how it’s the small things that the people we support enjoy and love.”**

This simple reflection from a direct support professional who supports Laurel offers a glimpse into what makes everyday moments truly special.

Laurel approaches each day with a deep sense of curiosity and fun. She loves being out in the community, sipping her favorite beverage - a hot tea from McDonald’s - browsing thrift shops for hidden treasures, swimming at the local leisure centre, enjoying pampering days, and exploring garage sales on the first bright days of spring.

Although she’s described as calm and content at home, something remarkable happens when Laurel steps into a new environment. She becomes fully engaged in the world around her, taking everything in with excitement and genuine interest.

She has a special appreciation for all things official or ceremonial. A person in uniform, firefighters, police, and military dress, instantly captures her attention. She’s equally drawn to the quiet symbolism of historical artifacts and ceremonial displays at places like the Royal Ontario Museum and the CNE Airshow.

Laurel is deafblind with some vision in her left eye, and communication is central to how she connects with people around her. She uses Signing Exact English (SEE) and some American Sign Language (ASL). When something catches her attention, her signing becomes lively and expressive.

A recent outing captures her essence perfectly. After a routine appointment, Laurel was invited to choose where she’d like to go for lunch, and she chose her favorite place - McDonald’s. A member of her support team shared:

**“It was simple and small, but it changed her day instantly. I had such an amazing lunch with Laurel. We had a great conversation with some laughs over tea and French fries.”**

At DeafBlind Ontario Services, specialized services are customized to each person’s unique needs, communication methods, and goals to live their best life. This person-centred approach is what gives people like Laurel the confidence to explore their communities and to communicate in ways that help them feel connected to the world around them.

Laurel’s story reminds us not to take for granted the small things that brighten our day, highlighting how, with the right supports, the potential of a person who is deafblind is limitless.



# A Commitment Shaped by Compassion and Care

Since first connecting with DeafBlind Ontario Foundation in 2022, Arthur and Emily have quietly built a meaningful legacy of compassion. Their giving is grounded in a simple belief, when people face complex communication and sensory challenges, donor support can be truly lifechanging.

Arthur remembers feeling drawn to the Foundation's mission right from the beginning. As he describes it, "Knowing your mission, I naturally didn't hesitate to do my part." That immediate sense of connection, rooted in empathy and understanding, became the starting point of a giving journey that has continued every year since.

What began as an instinctive gesture has evolved into something deeper. For Arthur and Emily, supporting people who are deafblind, as well as those living with a developmental disability who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or who use nontraditional forms of communication, reflects a genuine desire to help others live with dignity, independence, and a sense of belonging.

Their life experiences have shaped how they see the world and their role within it. Over time, they have become more aware of the barriers people face, and that awareness has strengthened their inclination to give. Their generosity is thoughtful and grounded by a values-based understanding of what it means to support others.

When choosing where to give, Arthur and Emily look for sincerity and true purpose, organizations that bring compassion to life through meaningful action. Their trust in DeafBlind Ontario Foundation comes from seeing the real impact of donor supported initiatives, from accessible housing to specialized equipment and engaging community programs.



A defining theme in Arthur's reflections is the belief in seeing things through. For him, giving is not a single moment but a path, one he and Emily feel committed to continuing. As he shared,

**"As time goes on, by following this charity path, it has become our quest to fulfill it right to the very end."**

This sentiment speaks to the heart of their philanthropy, quiet, steady support driven by empathy and a deep wish to make a lasting difference.

When asked what he would say to someone considering making their first gift, Arthur spoke warmly about the Foundation's work, highlighting the compassion behind efforts to support individuals at DeafBlind Ontario Services. He encourages others to share the mission with family and friends to increase involvement.

Arthur and Emily's story tells us that meaningful change often begins with a simple act of generosity, understanding, and the choice to do more. Their giving reflects not only who they are but also the kind of world they believe in, one where compassion guides us and every person has the opportunity to live their best life.



**DeafBlind**  
ONTARIO FOUNDATION

Reach out to us at [Development@deafblindontario.com](mailto:Development@deafblindontario.com)  
to request more information.

# May is Leave a Legacy Month

A time to reflect on the impact we can make beyond our lifetime.

A legacy gift to DeafBlind Ontario Foundation is a simple and meaningful way to shape the future of the people we serve.

By joining the more than 3 million Canadians who have chosen to leave a charitable gift in their Will, you're using the power of your legacy to create lasting change. Your gift ensures that each person supported has access to what they need, bringing comfort and security, today and for years to come.

Help us make the impossible possible. Together, we are transforming lives, one gift and one life at a time.

To explore your options, connect with the Foundation team at 1-855-340-3267 or email [development@deafblindontario.com](mailto:development@deafblindontario.com).



Create a lasting impact.

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



## Our Donors

November 2025 - March 2026

**We are truly grateful for the generosity of our corporate, foundation, service club, and community partners. Thank you!**

Ability Hive  
Bingo World & Gaming Richmond Hill  
BNI Business Elite Bradford  
Bradford Bulls Jr. A Hockey Team  
Charities Aid Foundation Canada  
Delta Bingo and Gaming  
DurhamCom Foundation  
Harry P. Ward Foundation  
Hodgson Family Foundation  
Kits For A Cause  
Luke Four Foundation  
Magna International  
MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy  
McLellan Group Contracting

Minnow Lake Lions Club  
National Mah Jongg League Inc.  
R.A. Beamish Foundation  
Snyder Construction  
The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation  
The Charles Norcliffe Baker and Thelma Scott Baker Foundation  
The League of Super Heroes  
The Oakville Foundation for Intellectually Handicapped People  
The Victor & Rhoda Shields Charitable Foundation  
Udora Leaskdale Lions Club  
Wilf and Jean Bell Foundation  
Youth and Philanthropy Initiative Canada

# Small Gifts Grow Big Impact

Learn how professional intervenors create opportunities for connection.

*Friends with Vision* monthly donors make it possible to provide accessible housing, specialized equipment, adaptive technology, and wheelchair accessible transportation. These vital supports address high-priority needs that are not covered by government funding. By providing these resources, we empower the individuals we serve to develop life skills, age comfortably in their homes, and spending time in the community without facing barriers.

Monthly giving also builds something bigger: a future. Because the support is predictable, the Foundation can invest not just in urgent needs but in long-term solutions and new opportunities. “Monthly giving helps create opportunities and experiences that simply wouldn’t exist otherwise,” shares Fiona, a Friend with Vision monthly donor.

Learn more about Steve through his mother Anne-Marie.

A recurring gift, in any amount, puts *you* in control. You choose what feels right for you, and together, we create a steady, powerful source of impact. Month after month, your commitment shapes lives, strengthening communities, and opens doors that would otherwise remain closed.

This spring, we invite you to join this circle of generosity. Monthly giving is simple, and the impact is profound.

Become a Friend with Vision monthly donor today and help build a future where every person we support has access to barrier free housing, specialized services, and the tools they need to truly succeed. Contact Flory, [f.amarasinghe@deafblindontario.com](mailto:f.amarasinghe@deafblindontario.com), to sign up.



## Lacing up for an amazing cause!

DeafBlind Ontario Foundation (DBOF) is thrilled to join more than 30,000 runners and walkers at the Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend this May 23–24!

We’re hitting the pavement to raise vital funds for the remarkable individuals supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services - 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.

Every step we take helps create greater independence, connection, and quality of life.

Want to make an impact? Here’s how you can get involved:

- Donate to support our campaign - or contribute directly to a participant or team.
- Share our campaign page with your network to help spread the word.
- Register to join our fundraiser for DBOF during Race Weekend.

# Yarn Bombing

## June 2026

Throughout June, community spaces across Canada and beyond will be transformed with vibrant yarn creations. This colorful street art, known as yarn bombing, is all about spreading joy and raising awareness during National Deafblind Awareness Month.

By coming together to yarn bomb objects in as many cities and countries as possible, 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.

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



### **Grab your yarn and craft colourful creations for displays!**

Whether you're an experienced crafter or ready to try for the first time, we need you to "Commit to Create" and be part of our local displays. Check out our Yarn Bombing guide for ideas!



### **Volunteer your time to help us get ready!**

Got some time to help? We are looking for local volunteers to assist with display set up and take down. Connect with us to learn more about what's happening near you.



### **Host a display!**

From counter tops, fences, windows and lobbies, we would love to connect and talk about hosting an installation.



### **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!

**Create and connect with us  
this June! Scan the QR code  
to get a copy of our Yarn  
Bombing Guide!**



**Reach out to Amy, the leader of our Yarn Bombing Crew  
[a.stevenson@deafblindontario.com](mailto:a.stevenson@deafblindontario.com)**

