



**DeafBlind**  
ONTARIO SERVICES

# keeping [in touch]

DeafBlind Ontario Services | Fall 2026



# Weaving connections for National Deafblind Awareness Month



Alec, who is deafblind and lives in a DBOS Supported Living Home, is an active advocate for the deafblind community and enjoys getting involved in events for National Deafblind Awareness Month.

“It’s important for people to know about people who are deafblind so they can understand their challenges, communicate respectfully, and help create a more inclusive and supportive community,” says Alec.

In June, DeafBlind Ontario Services once again joined the global awareness initiative #CreateAndConnect, led by Deafblind International. The campaign invites communities to engage in creative expression that fosters awareness, joy, and connection to raise awareness for National Deafblind Awareness Month. 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 is made up of hand crafted pieces created by people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services, intervenors, friends and family, local knitting clubs, and community members from across the province.

## 2026 Highlights

**49**

**Yarn Bombing  
installation locations  
across Ontario**

**16**

**Local displays for the  
*Great Sudbury Yarn  
Adventure***

**6**

**Table displays in malls,  
markets and Chamber of  
Commerce events**

**401**

**Stories shared in the  
media (articles, radio/tv  
interviews)**



Strengthened community partnerships with local groups like Royal Oak Senior Living and the students at Pickering College



Continued support from local municipalities with installations and government officials attending media events



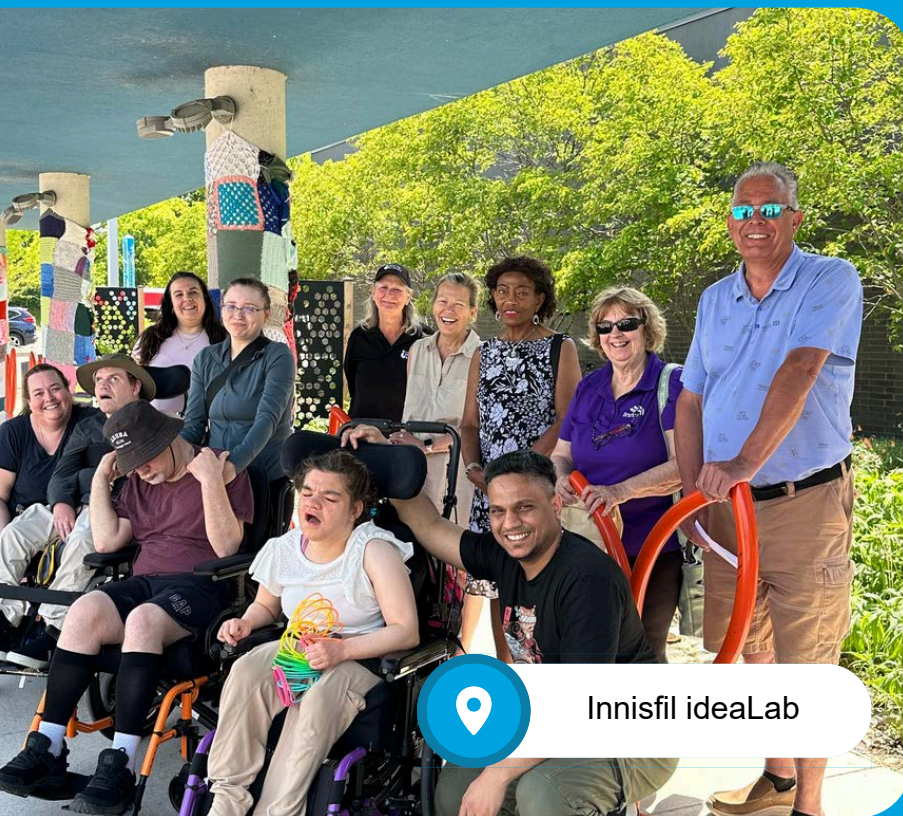
Ongoing support from local library partners like the Innisfil iDEA Lab and new partners in Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, and Ottawa



Peterborough Square



St Thomas Elevated Park



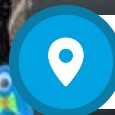
Innisfil ideaLab



I.D.A. Vars Medical Pharmacy

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Grand Theatre, London

# Finding Connection Through Sign Language: Braydon's Journey

International Week of Deaf People is a time to celebrate Deaf culture, promote accessibility, and recognize the contributions of Deaf individuals in our communities. It is also an opportunity to listen to the experiences of Deaf people and learn how to create a more inclusive world.

This year, we're proud to introduce Braydon, a 21-year-old supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services (DBOS) who is passionate about connection, advocacy, and living life to the fullest.

For Braydon, communication is an important part of everyday life. His preferred method of communication is American Sign Language (ASL). Having access to interpreters and support from DBOS' Communication Support Professionals (CSPs) helps ensure Braydon can communicate clearly and participate fully in his community.

When he's not busy advocating for accessibility, Braydon enjoys spending time with friends, socializing, staying active through swimming and baseball, and playing video games.

Since moving into a DBOS Supported Living Home in June, he has benefited from the support of his CSPs who assist him with communication and everyday life. Being surrounded by people who know ASL has made a meaningful difference in his daily experiences and sense of connection.

As part of our Living My Best Life service model, individuals are encouraged to explore their goals, dreams, and aspirations. When discussing what he hopes to achieve in the future, Braydon didn't hesitate. "My goal is to fly to British Columbia next year for a Deaf gathering," he says.

Technology plays an important role in helping Braydon stay connected and independent. He uses his phone regularly and relies on alerting devices that vibrate to wake him up in the morning. At home, flashing alert systems notify him when someone is at the door. These tools help ensure he can access information and navigate daily life more independently.

Braydon believes strongly in the importance of self-advocacy and accessible communication. "I will advocate for myself when it comes to accessibility. I value clear communication," he says.

Over the years, he has spoken up about the need for interpreters in settings such as hospitals and virtual meetings. Access to communication is not just a convenience; it's a human right and allows Deaf individuals to fully participate in decisions that affect their lives.



Like many Deaf people, Braydon has faced barriers in his community. "There were times when no one knew how to sign," he says. "I felt isolated and frustrated because I didn't have access to information."

His experience highlights why awareness and accessibility matter. When communication barriers exist, people can be left out of conversations, opportunities, and important information. When asked what change he would like to see, Braydon's answer was simple: "I wish more people would learn to sign."

For Braydon, International Week of Deaf People is about coming together and celebrating community. This year, he plans to attend a Deaf flag-raising event in Peterborough and spend time socializing with friends.

As we celebrate International Week of Deaf People, Braydon's story reminds us of the importance of accessible communication, inclusion, and respect for Deaf culture. By learning, listening, and advocating for accessibility, we can help create communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

# Honoring Deaf Culture: Raising the Deaf Flag in Peterborough



We proudly joined community members at Peterborough Square on September 23, 2026, for our third consecutive Deaf Flag raising, recognizing the International Week of Deaf People and the International Day of Sign Languages.

Established by the World Federation of the Deaf in 1958, the International Week of Deaf People is celebrated annually during the last full week of September. The week promotes awareness of Deaf people's rights, achievements, and the vital role sign languages play in creating inclusive communities. This year's theme, "Declaring Deaf People's Human Rights", emphasizes the importance of ensuring equal access, participation, and recognition for Deaf people around the world.

As the official symbol of global Deaf communities, the Deaf Flag represents pride, identity, and unity. It was formally adopted by the World Federation of the Deaf during its 20th General Assembly in July 2023 and continues to bring together sign language users worldwide.

The celebration featured a meaningful flag-raising ceremony, followed by refreshments, cake, and opportunities for community members to connect. It was a wonderful occasion to celebrate Deaf culture, recognize the significance of sign languages, and strengthen relationships within our community.

## CDBIS Professional Award

DeafBlind Ontario Foundation is excited to introduce the Certified Deafblind Intervenor Specialist (CDBIS) Professional Award!

The award supports professionals in Ontario's deafblind sector in pursuing internationally recognized professional certification through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP).

This award is designed to invest in professional growth while strengthening the quality and consistency of services for individuals who are Deafblind or have dual sensory loss. The successful applicant will receive up to \$1,200 in funding to support their CDBIS certification.

**The deadline to apply has now been extended to November 1<sup>st</sup>!**

Learn more and apply on our website:  
[deafblindontario.com/foundation/cdbis-professional-award/](https://deafblindontario.com/foundation/cdbis-professional-award/)



Investing in the future of professional  
excellence in Deafblind services



# Stirring Up Confidence: Sureyya's Journey in the Kitchen

For Sureyya, cooking is about much more than preparing a meal. It is an opportunity to learn new skills, build independence, connect with others, and explore her creativity. With support from DeafBlind Ontario Services, Sureyya has been working toward her cooking goals and discovering just how much she enjoys spending time in the kitchen.

Sureyya's interest in cooking began at a young age. At around seven or eight, her mom started teaching her how to cook for herself. Those early lessons sparked a lifelong appreciation for food and gave her the confidence to keep learning. While she has always enjoyed cooking, her love of desserts played a big role in inspiring her to take cooking classes.

**"I like all desserts, especially anything with chocolate."**  
**Sureyya says.**



Before joining a cupcake-making class, Sureyya already had some baking experience. With help from her mom and her intervenors at DeafBlind Ontario Services, she baked treats such as lemon cake and vanilla cake. Still, she was excited for the opportunity to learn something new and gain more hands-on experience.

One of the things Sureyya enjoys most about cooking classes is the chance to learn more about the cooking process. She loves understanding the different steps involved in preparing food and feels motivated every time she learns a new skill.

"The classes give me a good education about cooking," she says.

Whether she is following written instructions of a recipe, or learning in person, Sureyya enjoys both approaches and appreciates every opportunity to expand her knowledge. Her favourite part of any cooking class is simple: tasting the finished product.

Recently, Sureyya learned how to make chocolate and vanilla cupcakes. After baking them, she decorated them with colourful sprinkles, making the experience even more fun. While placing the cupcakes in the oven was the most challenging part of the process, she found the rest surprisingly easy, especially using the cupcake liners, so they didn't stick to the pan.

At the end of class, she was able to bring the cupcakes home and proudly shared them with her intervenors and roommates.

Although baking is enjoyable, Sureyya's true passion is cooking meals. She particularly enjoys making healthy dishes, and salads are among her favourite recipes. Caesar salad, ranch salad, and Asian salad are all at the top of her list. She also loves using vegetables in her cooking and is happy to include just about any vegetable in a recipe.

Many people have helped Sureyya develop her cooking skills over the years, including her mom, her high school teacher, and her DeafBlind Ontario Services intervenors, Amber and Cassandra. Their support has helped her gain confidence and continue developing her abilities in the kitchen.

When it comes to comfort foods, spaghetti & meatballs and pizza are two favourites she enjoys making. One of the most challenging dishes she has tackled so far was steak cooked on the barbecue.

“The steaks were very big and hard to flip,” she recalls.

Sureyya became involved in cooking classes after sharing her interest with her intervenors. Learning to cook was one of her ‘Living My Best Life’ goals, and the classes provided the perfect opportunity to work toward it.

Cooking has also helped Sureyya build meaningful relationships. She enjoys cooking with her roommate Carol, collaborating with her intervenors, and spending time with her peers. Through the classes, she has formed new friendships, including a special connection with Linda, who coordinated the program.

Sharing food with others is one of the most rewarding parts of the experience. “It feels awesome,” says Sureyya. The positive reactions she receives make her feel proud of what she has accomplished and encourages her to keep learning.

Looking ahead, Sureyya has plenty of culinary goals. One of her next challenges is learning how to make chicken fettuccine alfredo from scratch. She is also eager to try making banana bread and is always searching for new dessert ideas.

If she could take a cooking class anywhere in the world, she would choose to go to China to learn how to make Chinese cuisine. Chicken fried rice, orange chicken, and noodles are among her favourite dishes, and she would love to learn how to make them herself. She is also interested in Mexican food and enjoys the idea of exploring foods from different cultures.



Most importantly, Sureyya wants to continue sharing what she learns with the people around her, including her roommates and her mom.

Through determination, curiosity, and the support of intervenors, Sureyya continues to build valuable life skills and confidence in the kitchen. With every new recipe she masters, she is proving that learning never stops, and that cooking can open the door to independence, connection, and infinite possibilities.

# Measuring the Impact of Research

## DeafBlind Ontario Services and Research Partnerships

DeafBlind Ontario Services plays an important role in research by sharing real-life experience, community knowledge, and the perspectives of people with lived experience. This helps researchers focus on questions that matter to people who experience sensory loss. By working closely with universities and researchers, we help make studies more inclusive, encourage participation, and ensure that research results can be used to improve services and supports.

In July 2025, changes were made to the Foundation's charitable purposes, creating an opportunity to consider how DBOF can support research, innovation and donor-funded priorities that improve and transform the lives of the people served by DBOS.

## How We Measure Research Impact

We evaluate how research creates meaningful impact for the people and communities we support. This includes engaging people with lived experience in the research process, enhancing services, strengthening employee knowledge and skills, informing policies and practices, and sharing valuable insights across the sector. We also assess how research contributes to greater accessibility, inclusion, and quality of life.

While publications and conference presentations remain important indicators of success, our primary focus is on the real-world outcomes of research. We are most interested in how research drives tangible improvements, such as more effective services, innovative supports, and expanded opportunities for people to live meaningful, independent, and fulfilling lives.

### The Impact of Research Partnerships

- 15 people with lived experience participated in research activities.
- Increased knowledge of research and data collection across employees of the organization.
- Increased public awareness of disability-related issues through infographics and educational resources highlighting population data.
- 5 new research partnerships initiated.
- Our peer-reviewed research publications generated 255 reads and received 27 citations
- Knowledge-sharing activities included presentations to the Ministry of Health and plain language articles published in the Deafblind International bi-annual publication *DbI Review*.



## Why It Matters

Research partnerships help create practical solutions that improve accessibility, strengthen services, and support inclusion. Together, we are building knowledge that leads to better outcomes for people we support and their families.

# A Cherished Reunion: Donna and Uncle Ernie's Special Bond

Family connections can have a lasting impact, no matter how much time has passed. For Donna, who is Deaf and supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services' (DBOS) Supported Independent Living (SIL) Program, reconnecting with her uncle Ernest, affectionately known as Ernie, after a decade apart became a treasured chapter in her life.

One day, while looking through family records, Donna told a DBOS Communication Support Professional (CSP) that she wanted to reconnect with her uncle. With some online searching and a few phone calls, Ernie's contact information was found, and plans were made for the two to meet again.

The reunion was an emotional moment for Donna. "It had been a very long time since I saw my Uncle Ernie," she shared. "The last time I saw him was in 2014, so we had lost contact for 10 years. Since the death of my brother Mike in 2018, I did not have any family left that I could visit. Finding Uncle Ernie brought tears of joy to my eyes. I was so excited to see him again."

When they reunited, Donna and Ernie spent hours looking through old family photographs, sharing stories, and reminiscing about summers at the family campground. Ernie, a Second World War veteran who served in Belgium and Holland, also shared photos and memories from his 2025 trip to Holland for the 80th anniversary commemorations of the liberation of the Netherlands.

Their renewed connection led to many meaningful visits, and when Donna learned Ernie was turning 100 years old, she wanted to make the milestone unforgettable. She organized a surprise birthday celebration in Peterborough, bringing together friends who had become an important part of her life. "When he arrived, he did not realize it was for him and was very surprised when he saw all the 100th birthday decorations," Donna recalled.



The group enjoyed lunch, cake, and conversation, while Ernie especially loved a birthday banner filled with fun facts about the year he was born. After the celebration, Donna proudly showed her uncle her apartment, her artwork, and her beloved cat, Falicity, sharing the independent life she has built with support from DBOS. "It was such a great time," Donna said.

In the summer of 2026, Ernie passed away. Although Donna was heartbroken, she was grateful to attend his Celebration of Life at the Fenelon Falls Legion, where she met many of his military friends and shared memories of a remarkable man. The ceremony featured a slideshow, heartfelt speeches, and a special toast with rye and ginger ale, Ernie's favourite drink.

"It was wonderful to get to share fond memories of Uncle Ernie with so many people," Donna said. One memory in particular brought comfort. Several people told Donna how often Ernie spoke about his 100th birthday celebration and how much it meant to him. He had even displayed the birthday banner on the back of his couch.

Although their reconnection came after years apart, the time Donna and Ernie shared together created lasting memories. Through family stories, joyful visits, and a milestone birthday celebration, Donna strengthened a treasured family bond and reminded her uncle just how loved he was.



# The Clarke Family Shares Why They Give with Purpose



For Stephen and Michèle Clarke, supporting DeafBlind Ontario Foundation is deeply personal.

Their connection to DeafBlind Ontario Services began through their great-niece, who lives in a supported living home in London. Watching her journey and seeing firsthand the impact of the support she receives inspired them to make a meaningful gift that would help others and their families.

"We have observed and marvelled at the trials and triumphs of our great-niece since the day she was born," they share. "Her parents have always spoken positively of DeafBlind Ontario Services, and we have witnessed its incredible impact on them and their daughter."

As they considered where to direct their charitable giving, the Clarks wanted to support an organization they trusted and understood. After learning more about the needs of people served by DeafBlind Ontario Services, they chose to make a gift of publicly traded securities.

Their decision was both practical and purposeful. "We chose a gift of securities for pragmatic reasons," says Stephen. "It allowed us to make a substantial donation without meaningfully impacting our cash flow."

While gifts of securities may be unfamiliar to some donors, they can offer significant tax advantages while creating a lasting impact for a cause that matters deeply. The Clarks encourage anyone considering this type of gift to explore their options and speak with a financial advisor.

"Investigate," they advise. "Your financial advisor will be able to explain the relative tax benefits of gifts of securities and how they will or will not impact you. The process is simple, quick, and can be very specifically targeted."

Most importantly, their gift is about people.



**"We hope our help contributes to the enjoyment and quality of life of the people that are supported, and assures their families that they are respected and admired."**

For those considering a similar gift, the Clarks offer a simple reminder: "Your gift will be about people. Your gift will touch every family and every resident in a consequential way."

To learn more about making a gift of securities, visit [deafblindontario.com/donate-a-gift-of-securities](https://deafblindontario.com/donate-a-gift-of-securities) or explore resources from Will Power at [willpower.ca/the-7-steps-to-donating-securities/](https://willpower.ca/the-7-steps-to-donating-securities/).

You can also connect with Lauren, Manager of Major Gifts, to discuss your options at [l.culver@deafblindontario.com](mailto:l.culver@deafblindontario.com) or 905-853-2862 ext. 228.

# A Friend With Vision - Steven's Story



Few people have witnessed the impact of DeafBlind Ontario Services (DBOS) as closely as Steven Gaylord. As a founding member, his connection to the organization spans decades and is deeply personal. His connection is also rooted in family. Both of his sons, Brad and Lance, received support through DBOS, and Lance continues to receive support in York Region today.

Steven became a *Friends with Vision* monthly donor because he believes regular giving creates meaningful opportunities for people who experience sensory loss. "Continuous giving is easy," he says. "It helps people do what they enjoy most and stay active in their community." He sees monthly giving as a way to help fund critical needs, such as accessibility items and transportation, that improve quality of life and community participation.

When Steven thinks about the impact of monthly giving, he thinks of Lance. One of Lance's greatest joys is swimming, and until recently, he also enjoyed independently grocery shopping in a store he knew well. For Steven, these experiences represent independence, community involvement, and the opportunity to enjoy everyday life. "It means being able to give opportunities and experience life to the fullest," he says. "It means having the ability to help fund immediate priorities and plan for long-term needs."

His experience as both a parent and supporter has shaped his perspective on giving. "It's personal," Steven says. "Simple joys really do make a difference. The people supported by DBOS become part of the family." When asked what he would tell someone considering monthly giving, his answer is simple: **"Just \$10 a month adds up. When you give, you help others live their best life, and in return, you get the joy of making a difference."**

Learn more about monthly giving at [deafblindontario.com/foundation/ways-to-give](https://deafblindontario.com/foundation/ways-to-give).



## Running for Family - Kevin's Story

On May 23, Kevin Daoust completed the half marathon at the Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend in support of the DeafBlind Ontario Foundation (DBOF), raising an incredible \$4,155. His inspiration was his brother, Steve, who is deafblind and lives in a DeafBlind Ontario Services supported living home in the Ottawa area.

Growing up, Steve faced significant communication barriers due to profound deafness and vision loss. Learning sign language was challenging, but over time he developed his skills in Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ). In 2020, Steve moved into a DeafBlind Ontario Services supported living home, where consistent support from intervenors has helped him expand his communication skills, initiate conversations, and become more engaged with the world around him.

Kevin says he chose to fundraise for DBOF because the Foundation is "integral to empowering the people they support to live full and active lives."

He encourages others to get involved: "Your support will truly transform lives and lead to endless possibilities for people like Steve."

Interested in hosting your own fundraiser or third-party event? Visit [deafblindontario.com/third-party-events](https://deafblindontario.com/third-party-events) or contact Cassandra Lang at [c.lang@deafblindontario.com](mailto:c.lang@deafblindontario.com) to learn how to get started.



# Building Trust, Empowering Choice



For Dave Lively, a Communication Support Professional with DeafBlind Ontario Services, supporting people is about more than daily routines. Every day, Dave has a single goal in mind: “To remove barriers and provide the individual with the support they need to make their own choices and participate as independently as possible.”

Three years ago, Dave began supporting a person with complex communication needs. Building a strong connection took time, patience, and trust. “At the beginning, I didn’t always understand what they were trying to communicate or what they needed from me,” Dave recalls. By taking the time to learn their unique communication style, Dave developed a meaningful relationship that empowers the person to express their needs, preferences, and choices with confidence.

Dave has also seen the impact of person-centered support through community experiences planned with accessibility and comfort in mind. Watching people supported participate in new experiences without barriers is one of the most rewarding parts of his role. These experiences have reinforced Dave's belief that effective support requires creativity, flexibility, and a genuine commitment to understanding each person.

A gift made in honour of an employee like Dave celebrates the dedication and compassion that help people who experience sensory loss live rich, meaningful, and self-directed lives. To make a gift in honour of an employee or person supported, visit [deafblindontario.com/give-in-memory-or-in-honour/](https://deafblindontario.com/give-in-memory-or-in-honour/) or contact Cassandra Lang at [c.lang@deafblindontario.com](mailto:c.lang@deafblindontario.com).



## Our Donors

April 2026 - August 2026

**We are sincerely grateful to our valued partners - corporations, foundations, service clubs, and community members - whose generosity makes a significant impact. Thank you for your support!**

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University of Western Ontario

## Can One Small Act of Generosity Change A Life?

We know it can.

Every day, thanks to generous donors, people supported by DeafBlind Ontario Services gain greater independence and dignity. Your gifts fund essential equipment, accessible housing, transportation, and experiences that build inclusion and community engagement.

The collective kindness of many creates extraordinary change, removing barriers, providing opportunities, and helping people live their best lives.

This Giving Tuesday, you can make a meaningful impact - one person, one gift at a time.

Donate today!

**GIVING  
TUESDAY**