



**Canadian
Deafblind
Association**
Supporting Access
and Opportunity
for All

Imagine...

...Life without sight, Life without hearing, Life without BOTH

Edition 43 No.2

Summer 2020

Intervention



COVID-19
Coping with isolation and social distancing



Zoom photos courtesy of CDBA-BC Chapter

www.cdbanational.com

Inside:

- Losing services and socialization during the pandemic
- Lesson #5 from Charlotte's Web
- National Deafblind Awareness Month
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- 2020 "Lend-a-Hand" charity golf tournament postponed
- Intervenor Organization of Ontario
- CDBA National Support Fund

Save the date for the 2021 Lend-A-Hand Golf Tournament!



Due to COVID-19 social distancing guidelines we have had to cancel this year's 2020 charity golf tournament. We cordially invite you to "Save the Date" for next year's event in support of persons who are deafblind and their families.

Monday, June 28, 2021

**Hidden Lake Golf Club,
Burlington, Ontario**

www.hiddenlake.clublink.ca

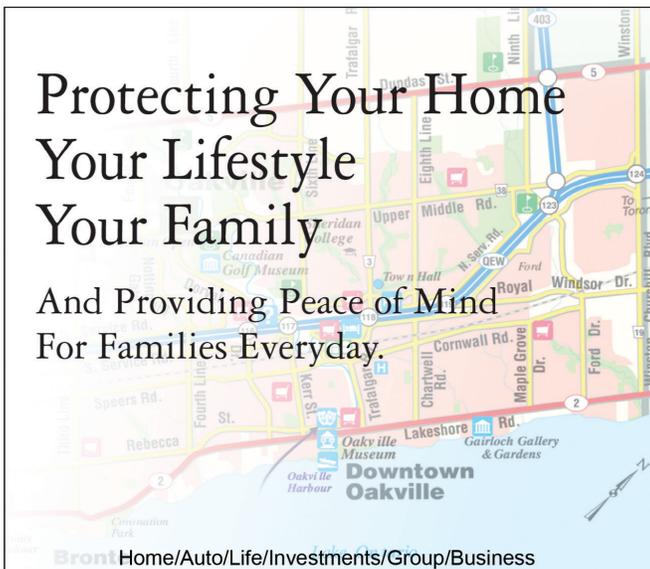
For more information, contact
tmcfadden@cdbanational.com



Volunteers: Carolyn Monaco, Nancy Mactavish, Sandra-Owen Peters, Kim McFadden

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The Canadian Deafblind Association (CDBA) was formerly known as the Canadian Deafblind and Rubella Association (CDBRA). “Intervention” magazine is published twice yearly in the Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter.

The Managing Editor would be pleased at any time to receive photos, articles, news items, letters, notices of future conferences, meetings and events, as well as stories about deafblind children, their families and adults - young and old.

All written material should be in the English language and may be edited for length. Opinions expressed in articles or letters are those of the author and not necessarily representative of the views of CDBA. “Intervention” magazine is available electronically and in print form to CDBA members, their families, and others upon request without subscription. Please contact:

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A Message From the President

Carolyn Monaco



2020 Annual General Meeting, CDBA National

It is with great pleasure that we announce the upcoming 45th Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Deafblind Association on Saturday, September 26, 2020 from 1:00-3:00 pm EST. Because of the COVID pandemic, the AGM will be offered via Zoom to all who would be interested in attending. A Registration Form can be obtained from our website www.cdbanational.com or by contacting the National Office info@cdbanational.com. Meeting registrants will be sent a link to enable attendance.

There may be Director-at-Large positions open for 2020-22 on the CDBA National Board of Directors. Should you know of a CDBA member (nominees must be members 30 days prior to the Annual General Meeting) who would be a suitable candidate that you would like to nominate and who would be willing to let their name stand for election, a Nomination Form is available on the CDBA National website www.cdbanational.com. Information regarding the time commitment and the individual knowledge and skill set

required of National board members can be obtained by contacting our executive director Tom McFadden at the CDBA National Office tmcfadden@cdbanational.com. Should you be unable to attend the meeting in person, please make your vote count by filling out a Proxy Form, also available at www.cdbanational.com.

As always, in addition to my President's Report as well as year-end summaries from Executive Director Tom McFadden, auditor Peter Shennett, and our Chapters, there will be several other important matters to discuss and be decided. We really hope you will free up some time to join us on Saturday, September 26, 2020 for our 45th Annual General Meeting.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Monaco
President, CDBA National



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Bill C-20, An Act Respecting Further COVID-19 Measures, received Royal Assent on Monday, July 27, 2020, and also came into force. This Act includes the one-time financial assistance of up to \$600 to people with disabilities. It's a done deal.

As a reminder, to be eligible for the funding you must be a recipient of one of the following programs or benefits:

- A Disability Tax Credit certificate provided by the Canada Revenue Agency;
Canada Pension Plan
- Disability benefit or Quebec Pension Plan disability benefit
- Disability supports provided by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Editorial From the National Executive Director

Tom McFadden



Welcome to our members, friends, colleagues and advocates for those who are deafblind as we present this Summer 2020 issue of "Intervention" magazine.

We hope that you and those you hold dear are staying healthy and safe during this challenging time. The unparalleled nature of this coronavirus has forced everyone to navigate through uncharted waters. We do not have a roadmap for what to expect – or when – but we do know that the pandemic continues to have a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities with disabilities such as the deafblind. It is for this reason – the COVID-19 pandemic - that the overriding theme of this issue features some incredible stories about its impact on the deafblind community.

In addition, you will read about overcoming accessibility barriers in the home with age-friendly features. We highlight how new technology is helping to bridge the communications gap presented by isolation and social distancing. We experience the heartwarming moment that a woman who is deafblind performs her very first “boogie” while standing on a vibrating dance floor. And once again, we can enjoy the 5th

installment of “Lessons from Charlotte’s Web - “Color Matters!”.

June 2020 is Deafblind Awareness Month

This year marked the 6th anniversary since the Senate of Canada recognized June as Deafblind Awareness Month. Like-minded organizations again worked on a collaborative video to “Make a Wave” across Canada and raise awareness about deafblindness. Short video clips were obtained from individuals in the field of deafblindness engaging in daily living activities. The video is posted on the CDBA National website www.cdbanational.com

Cancelled Golf Tournament Fundraiser and Donations in General

As with other charities and non-profits, falling revenues are a big concern. CDBA National is financed primarily through a combination of fundraising, government grants, individual donations and membership fees. Unfortunately, this year all four revenue streams have taken a huge hit due to a combination of social distancing measures affecting, for example, our annual “Lend-A-Hand” golf tournament, as well as the economic downturn, primarily affecting donors. Nonetheless, our work supporting our chapters and advocating for those who are deafblind, will hopefully continue unabated while awaiting a vaccine and an upturn in the fight against COVID-19.

I leave you with this positive-thinking quote:

“Take care of today – tomorrow will take care of itself”

Did You Know:

- Around 0.2% of the world’s population is living with severe deafblindness, and that 2% of the world’s population lives with ‘milder forms’ of deafblindness.
- Persons with deafblindness are ten times less likely to be employed than non-disabled persons, and 30% less likely to be employed than persons with other types of disabilities.
- Children with deafblindness are 17 times less likely to be in school than non-disabled children, and twice less likely to be in school compared to children with other types of disabilities.
- Between 20-75% of persons with deafblindness have additional impairments.
- There is a high prevalence of depression amongst persons with deafblindness, but low access to mental health services.
- Children with deafblindness are less likely to live with both parents.
- Persons with deafblindness report a low quality of life and experience restrictions in participating in a wide-range of activities.

(Source: World Federation of the Deafblind Global Report on Deafblindness)

Overcoming Barriers to the Involvement of Deafblind People in Conversations about Research: Recommendations from Individuals with Usher Syndrome

By Andrew Skilton, Emma Boswell, Kevin Prince, Priya Francome-Wood and Mariya Moosajee

Plain English summary

Usher syndrome is the most common cause of deafblindness worldwide and is estimated to affect between 3 and 6 people in every 100,000. Children are born with hearing loss and develop sight loss in their early years of life. A barrier to the involvement and participation of deafblind people in research is access to information in appropriate formats. The degree of sight and hearing impairment experienced by individuals is variable, so there is not a one size fits all solution. We held a research discussion group, that included five people with Usher syndrome, to consider people's accessibility needs for an upcoming research project involving this condition.

We have identified a number of considerations for including deafblind people in conversations about research:

- i) using appropriately sized meeting rooms which offer control over lighting, layout and sound;
- ii) where appropriate, ensuring written/printed materials are high contrast (e.g. black text with a yellow background) and in large (18 point and above), sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial);
- iii) identifying the relevant communication support for the individual whether that be sign language interpretation, lip reading, hearing loop, speech to text reporting or a combination;
- iv) ensuring that there is access to emotional support for both people who are deafblind and their

families before, during and after the research.

The outcome of this work is a checklist of considerations when planning to hold a research conversation with someone who is deafblind and hinges on earlier interactions to identify the appropriate support needs for the individual.

Abstract

Background Usher syndrome is the most common cause of deafblindness worldwide. Children are born with hearing loss and develop sight loss in their early years of life. It is estimated to affect between 3 and 6 people in every 100,000. A barrier to the involvement and participation of deafblind people in research is access to information in appropriate formats. Individuals have varying degrees of sight and hearing impairment meaning there is not a singular solution to supporting all people's communication needs. There is evidence that severe sight and hearing impairments are used as exclusion criteria in some research studies. This exclusion may extend into involvement activities.

Methods

Eight people, including five people with Usher syndrome, attended a research discussion group. Through this activity, we identified what to consider when looking to improve the experience of taking part in a discussion about research for deafblind individuals.

Results

Among contributors two people made use of standard British Sign Language

interpretation and one communicated using hands-on signing. Contributors highlighted the limitations associated with signing and lip reading such as exhaustion and clear lines of sight as well as the need for additional formats such as speech to text reporting, and high contrast (e.g. black text with a yellow background) printouts with large (18 point and above), sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial). A large proportion of discussions were on the importance of wrap around emotional support for people who are deafblind and their family throughout the research pathway. This includes counselling, peer support and sensitive and mindful facilitators of involvement activities.

Conclusions

The range and specific nature of the communication methods and support offerings that deafblind people depend on are broad and require researchers and involvement practitioners to reach out to deafblind contributors earlier on, in order to appropriately tailor approaches and put the most suitable support in place.

Informed by this discussion group, we have developed a checklist of key considerations to support the inclusion of deafblind individuals in research conversations, supplemented with input from the sensory disability charity Sense.

Keywords: Usher syndrome, Deafblind, Deafblindness, Accessibility, Sight impairment, Hearing impairment, Involvement, Participation, Research, Communication

Deafblindness and Online Accessibility

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Did you know that the deafblind community represents approximately 2% of the world's population?

Deafblindness is often referred to as 'dual sensory loss' or 'dual sensory impairment', and is defined by Deafblindness UK as "the loss of sight and hearing to the point where your communication, mobility, and ability to access information are impacted". Included in this are progressive sight and hearing losses over time.

This makes the condition more prevalent in the older population, as this is when hearing and eyesight will naturally decrease. However, deafblindness is prevalent across all age groups - although in many cases it goes undetected.

How Deafblindness Affects Everyday Life

Having hearing and visual impairments make everyday tasks more challenging. In the physical world, deafblind people struggle with a whole range of problems that most of us would not even stop to consider, such as following signage directions, reading menus, or having a conversation in a noisy environment.

In the online world, there are even more barriers as there is no human presence, and therefore nobody to ask for clarification or explanations when there is information that users can't read or understand. The information is simply either accessible, or it's not. The scope of issues encountered by deafblind web users is varied. For example, a person with decreased vision may struggle with certain fonts or text sizes, whereas someone who is colour blind will have problems reading text due to poor colour contrast with the background. This is why accommodating for a broad spectrum of accessibility needs online is so important, and why the Recite Me assistive toolbar is such a valuable tool.

Deafblind Accessibility & Inclusion Online

At Recite Me, we believe that people with

visual impairments should have the ability to customise a website and view the content in whatever way works best for them, and there are many reasons for companies to accommodate this requirement. One is simply the moral principle that it's the right thing to do, as everyone should have the opportunity to be able to access online content. This has become increasingly important in recent months, as with social isolation at an all-time high due to Covid-19, concerns have been raised that deafblind consumers could become doubly isolated if they are unable to access all of the information they need online. There are, of course, multiple business benefits of online inclusion too, such as enhancing brand image, extending market reach, and driving innovation.

In addition to the ethical and corporate arguments for being inclusive of the deafblind community, there are various legal requirements too, as it is expected by law that businesses and service providers do not treat disabled people less favourably. Companies that are leading the way with innovations that promote inclusivity for the deafblind include:

Apple – In its latest update for ios14, Apple appears to have focused on aspects that are important to those who are deafblind. New features include a 'back tap' function for easier access to favourite shortcuts, and sound detection software to alert users to ambient noise like fire alarms. Improvements have also been made to existing features for voice control, headphone accommodations, magnification options, and sign language recognition.

Barclays Bank – The Barclays mobile banking app has been designed with deafblind accessibility in mind and includes features like inverting screen colours and voiceover technology to make information easier to access, along with fingerprint and face recognition for easier access to the app in general. Users can also chat face-to-face using the video banking service whenever they have the app open.

Google - Google's latest update includes contrast minimums that are important for those who are colour blind or have decreased vision. Improvements to the autocomplete feature makes writing and typing easier too.

How to be Deafblind Friendly in 2020

So how can you make your website more accessible to the deafblind community? After all, not many organisations have the resource and development budgets of the giants mentioned above to custom-build platforms and apps. We encourage all businesses to think about how people with sight and hearing loss interact with their company and consider what adjustments can be made to make their lives easier. Bear in mind that the potential rewards could be significant. In a recent survey, the Click-Away Pound Survey discovered that:

- 71% of users leave a site that they find hard to use.
- For 81% of users, ease of use is more important than price.
- £17.1 billion was spent by consumers in 2019 on sites that were easier to use (up from £11.75 billion in the 2016 survey).

One of the simplest and most efficient ways to optimise your online presence for diversity and inclusion is to install an accessibility feature like the Recite Me toolbar. Recite Me is a cloud-based web accessibility solution that allows users to customise the way they consume a website. For deafblind users, this includes several features that allow content to be perceived either through sound or by enhanced visual means. Users can:

- Utilise the text-only function to reposition text on a screen.
- Adjust the font, size, colour, and spacing of the text.
- Use the screen mask and on-screen ruler to hold their place on a page.
- Have text read aloud in over 40 different text-to-speech languages
- Choose the colour contrast between text and background.

Heartwarming Moment Deaf and Blind Woman Enjoys Her First Boogie After Sound Engineer Builds Her a Special Vibrating Dance Floor

By Agnes Nantambi and Luke Andrews for MailOnline



She smiled as she danced along to tracks filled with bass.

A deaf and blind mother-of-two got the experience of a lifetime when she boogied for the first time on a vibrating dance floor built in her garden.

Marilyn Dommett, 62, from Southampton, lit up as she shook her hips and swung her arms to the sensation of the beat.

Daughter Crissy, 32, said they got the idea because Marilyn kept placing her hands on speakers in the house in order to feel the vibrations.

Sound technician Simon Kilmister, 39, built the dance floor for the family while observing social distancing rules.

A touching video shows the mother smiling, laughing and jigging from foot to foot as she enjoys the vibrating dance floor.

At one point she bends over to touch the floor with her hands, to check the floor is really there, and then starts to clap.

And she was so thrilled she even appeared to mime a tear of happiness streaming down her face.

The rock fan boogied away to bass-heavy tracks by Snoop Dogg and Motley Crue when the dance floor was built at her home on May 2.

Marilyn has been deaf for her whole life and blind for the last 15 years. She is only able to tell the different between night and day, and can't make out shapes.

'I could feel the vibrations all the way from my feet to my head which made me want to dance,' delighted Marilyn said.

'I loved feeling the sound of the music. It gave me such joy.

'Thank you to Simon for being so thoughtful and giving me an experience I never thought I could have.'

Mr Kilmister, who offers interactive music for disabled people, made a dance floor for the mother after hearing about the family.

It is made up of a subwoofer speaker beneath a square wooden mat.

The bass from the speaker vibrates through the mat, allowing the user to feel the beat, and the levels can be

controlled so they can feel as much or as little as they want.

Her daughter, Crissy, said: 'This has brought an immense amount of joy to her life. She loves music and loves the vibration of music.

'She's always putting her hand and feeling the vibration of our speakers in the house.'

'We love a party at our house, so any excuse to go for a bit of dance we go for it.

'Now Mum can really join in and it's great. We can all just have a bit of a party together.'

Crissy said as soon as her mother got on the mat she was away.

'It was a really powerful sensory experience for her. It was so incredibly thoughtful for someone to put together something like that.'

Marilyn is more inclined to music that has heavy bass, as she can really feel the vibrations.

Simon, who creates interactive music for disabled people, said: 'I would love to develop this project further, and make it available to others.

'Marilyn's reaction to it was magical and really highlights the emotional power of music on a physical level as well as auditory.'

He has set up a website offering interactive and immersive audio installations for disabled people.

National Deafblind Awareness Month

By Greg Thomson

June 10, 2020 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (© AODA.ca Inc 2008-2019) info@aoda.ca

June is National Deafblind Awareness Month!

National Deafblind Awareness Month takes place across Canada in June every year. During this month, Canadians can learn about the disability of deafblindness. In addition, Canadians can celebrate the achievements of deafblind people in their communities and throughout the country.

National Deafblind Awareness Month

Deafblindness is a complex disability that affects people in different ways. People who are deafblind have limited sight and hearing to varying degrees. For example, one person who is deafblind may have some vision and hearing they can use. In contrast, another person may have no vision or hearing. Alternatively, someone may have no vision but some hearing, or vice-versa. In short, people who are deafblind have a range of disabilities.

Accessible Formats

Moreover, people with different degrees of vision or hearing may read or communicate in different ways. The accessible formats people use to read may depend on their degree of vision and hearing. For instance, people who are visually impaired may read large print, and access computers using:

- Large fonts
- High-contrast settings
- Screen magnification technology
- Large monitors

- Website settings that allow users to enlarge text and images

In contrast, people who are totally blind may read Braille. Someone who is totally blind with some hearing may use a computer with screen reading software. Alternatively, someone with no vision or hearing can read a computer screen using a Braille display.

Communication Supports

Similarly, people may use different communication supports. someone who is totally deaf with some vision may communicate in American Sign language (ASL) or by speechreading. In contrast, someone who is totally blind with some hearing may communicate by speaking, using a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Alternatively, someone who is totally deaf and totally blind may use ASL by feeling a signer's movements. In addition, they may communicate using a computer with a Braille display. They may speak their side of a conversation while the person they converse with types. They can then read the other person's typed words on the Braille display.

People may use combinations of formats or supports to communicate:

- In person
- By phone, Teletypewriter (TTY) or Video Relay Service (VRS)
- By email or text

Some people who are deafblind use assistive devices, such as white canes,

or communication devices, such as hearing aids. Likewise, some people who are deafblind have service animals, such as guide dogs or hearing alert dogs. However, other people's deafblindness is invisible. People who are deafblind cannot drive, but travel independently by bus, cab, or walking.

Raising Awareness

Many people do not have friends, family members, or colleagues who are deafblind. As a result, they may assume that someone who is deafblind cannot do every-day things, such as:

- Work
- Raise families
- Make friends and have fulfilling social lives
- Travel

Furthermore, people may feel uncomfortable when someone discloses that they are deafblind. This lack of knowledge may lead to discrimination. For instance, someone may not want to hire a person who is deafblind. National Deafblind Awareness Month is a chance to help the public learn more about all the ways people who are deafblind contribute to their communities. People who are deafblind can live full lives. When they have access to the formats and supports they need to communicate, they can be fully involved in their work, families, and social lives. Raising awareness should reduce the discrimination that people who are deafblind may live with.

You can now make donations online!

Through a partnership with CanadaHelps.org, it has never been easier to make a one-time or monthly recurring gift directly through CanadaHelps portal. This service offers an instant electronic receipt, and you can feel good knowing that your transaction is safe using advanced security technology.

To learn more visit the link from our website at www.cdbanational.com. Thank you for your support in ensuring that, "All people who are deafblind will live rich meaningful lives."



Lessons From Charlotte's Web

By Frances Jablonca

Lesson #5 Color Matters



Charlotte loved colors. It was thankfully something that her vision impairment did not seem to affect. Charlotte had CHARGE Syndrome. As well as issues with her hearing, severe to profound, and numerous other health problems, she was legally blind. For her, that meant 20/200 vision with no detected macula (the point of fine focus). Her iris had not fully closed gestationally around day 25, leaving a gap at the bottom of the blue of her eye, so that the black of her pupil ran through the bottom of her iris, giving the appearance of a key-hole shape to her pupil. This is called a coloboma. Due to how the brain flips images from the eye through the process of refraction, she had blank spots in the upper regions of her field of vision. As you can imagine, this had the potential for some hazards for her in her environment: an open kitchen cupboard was often an unexpected point of contact to her forehead. On the other hand, she observed things more keenly in her lower field of vision. In lesson #4, I expounded on her fascination for footwear and how she used this to identify people in her environment, more than by peoples' faces in many instances.

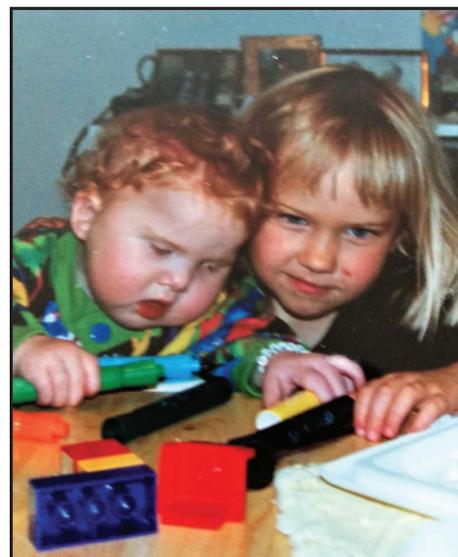
Fortunately, she had no issues seeing color and using this ability became one of her prime strategies for identifying particular objects and, importantly, to whom they belonged. For example, in our family, as with most families, we made sure each member had a different color of toothbrush to make it easier for Charlotte to find hers, especially as we had only one bathroom for a family of 5. Children eventually become more adept at scrutinizing the details for size, bristle pattern and shape to identify a toothbrush. However, with Charlotte's absence of a macula, those were details she could not easily perceive unless she studied the object under a closed-circuit TV. As she began to learn her colors, she quickly became fixated about the color of everyone's toothbrush color, and engaged in lively conversations over that topic -ad nauseum, I may add. But we were thrilled to see her make these basic connections. And as a result, we were able to better plan how to use color to help her access print, her environment and inform her sign language interpreters of which color of clothing would be the best background for their hands when they worked with her.

Children, being the perfect modelers of the people closest to them, often are excited about having the opportunity to be a 'mini-me' of a favorite family member. With Charlotte's older sister, Madeline, the few where I bought or made us a matching outfits grew old quickly. For Charlotte, however, matching clothes with her favorite people never really did. Naturally, matching clothing colors was the most basic and obvious way to do this. Eventually she did develop the ability to expand the criteria for matching beyond color as she learned to discriminate thicker textures and rudimentary styles. The intricacies of Charlotte's world of mimicry are a whole other article, beyond the scope of this discussion of color.

Undoubtedly, everyone uses color to identify things. We acknowledge family and friends arriving by the color of their car. Similarly, it helps us to find our vehicle in the mall parking lot. At a certain proximity we see the finer details and can discriminate if that red vehicle we are looking for is the model or brand of our own vehicle. My point is that until I am close enough to distinguish the details, color serves me



Same as Auntie J



Fascinated by colored markers



All the colors of the rainbow

only so far. Charlotte used the same technique of identifying a friend's or intervener's vehicle by its color while waiting for their arrival. Overall, this worked quite successfully for her. Her yellow school bus was of course easy to identify. (Not helpful if there had been two or more buses lined up though). The yellow cabs that were often sent to the house when she became an adult and used Calgary Access transportation, were also wonderfully obvious for her to discern. It got a bit tricky when her white handi-bus was arriving during, or just after a significant snow fall. But as I mentioned before, there are limitations to this method. I still chuckle about one instance when Charlotte was waiting for Linda, her past intervener who would still meet up with Charlotte a few times a year. Linda was coming to pick Charlotte up to take her out for coffee. I didn't see the text that Linda had sent Charlotte to inform her she was going to be 10 minutes late. So, when a black sedan had pulled up in front of the house right after she received this text, Charlotte, knowing Linda drove a black sedan, went out, perhaps thinking Linda was on time after all. I too assumed it her and went to the front door so I could wave to Linda. However, instead of seeing Charlotte get in and drive away with Linda, someone in the passenger's seat was jumping out or the vehicle looking extremely confused. Fairly quickly Charlotte realized this was not Linda's car and this was a stranger. She realized there'd been a mistake; she

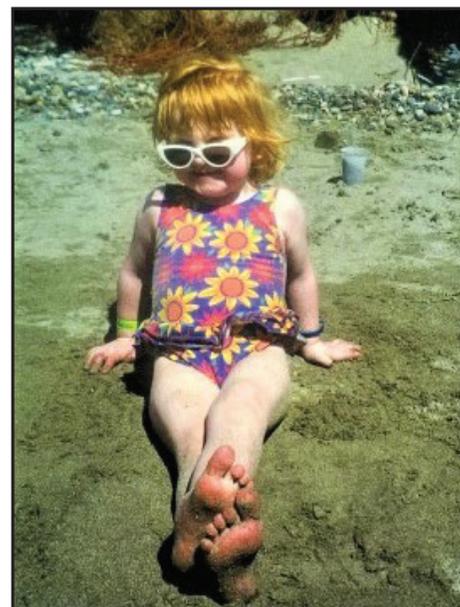
turned around and came back into the house while the vehicle made a quick getaway. Within 5 minutes Linda pulled up and we all had a laugh about what had just occurred. I suspect it was a driving instructor with a learner, as typically nobody parks in front of our house. I bet that was an unusual lesson for the learner.

Of all colors, yellow was one of Charlotte's favorite colors. It was also a contrast color under grey or black print that she could see really well. This was fortuitous for her as it's a common color used in safety markings in public places, such as the line to stand behind where the Light Rail Transit trains stop at the station, or the strip at the edge of the stairs in stairwells at her school.

It is also the color of the sun. Charlotte loved sunny days and the warmth of the sun, often finding a spot near a window with sun streaming in at home to sit in. The extra light exuded by sunshine also enhanced her vision. It was interesting that the first 5 years or so of her life, she had trouble with the brightness of the sun due to the aforementioned colobomas and the difficulty for her pupils to contract in bright lights. Eventually her eyes were able to adapt to bright light although she did always have sunglasses with her wherever she went.

In fitting form to Charlotte's fascination with color, and especially to yellow and her love of the sun, I was happy for this contribution from my husband. While

writing this lesson, I had prompted him for more examples about how reliant Charlotte was upon color to help her navigate her environment. He came up with a memory of close to 20 years ago, that is utterly poignant and sweet. He had taken Charlotte out for a walk to a lovely friend's house for tea. Umbrellas were needed as it was raining. Once inside, our friend had commented on Charlotte's fun red umbrella with blue flowers. Charlotte replied earnestly, (in American Sign Language) "I think we should paint my umbrella yellow so that it stops raining and the sun comes out again." Ingenious! If only the act of changing the color of something could always have such a profound impact.



Loving the warm sun



Red umbrella day

Distancing Hard For the Blind

By Emma Blackmore, *The Canadian Press* May 17, 2020

'I don't want to be scared anymore:' physical distancing tough for the blind

The physical distancing rules put in place across Canadian society are supposed to shield everyone from the ravages of COVID-19, but Nick D'Ambrosio doesn't feel protected.

Maintaining a two-metre distance from members of the public is a challenge for the 49-year-old, who has lost most of his eyesight and now travels with a white cane.

Neither that mobility aid nor his remaining vision are up to the task of keeping him at a safe distance from others, either in the Montreal-area drug store where he's stocked shelves for 22 years or while running essential errands further afield.

Other potentially protective measures — such as the widespread distribution of hand sanitizer dispensers or the installation of floor markers intended to manage crowds in public spaces — also leave him and other Canadians living with vision loss on the margins, D'Ambrosio said. Sometimes the only way to locate the new additions involves soliciting sighted assistance from strangers — thereby further increasing exposure to the novel coronavirus.

D'Ambrosio said he's fortunate to have supportive colleagues and loved ones who help mitigate his personal risk, but the additional barriers add another dimension of anxiety for blind Canadians navigating an already troubling time.

"I've been scared for a good portion of my life and I don't want to be scared anymore," D'Ambrosio said in a telephone interview. "But does the anxiety linger in me at times? I'd be lying to you if I say no."

While the ravages of COVID-19 are being felt across all of society, a growing chorus of voices has been sounding the alarm about the virus's impact on people

with disabilities around the world.

Earlier this month, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for governments to place greater focus on the unique needs of their disabled citizens.

"People with disabilities are among the hardest hit by COVID-19," Guterres said in a statement. "They face a lack of accessible public health information, significant barriers to implement basic hygiene measures, and inaccessible health facilities. If they contract COVID-19, many are more likely to develop severe health conditions, which may result in death."

Canadians living with vision loss are among those feeling a disproportionate impact from both the virus and the measures meant to protect against it, according to a recent survey commissioned by the Canadian Council of the Blind.

The online questionnaire, surveying more than 500 blind, partially sighted and deafblind Canadians, identified myriad concerns involving nearly all facets of everyday life.

Nearly half the respondents said they did not feel safe when leaving their home since the pandemic began, largely due to difficulties observing physical distancing protocols or failure of the able-bodied population to maintain a safe distance. Other concerns included the accessibility of COVID-19 testing sites, the ability to use public transit safely, heightened economic vulnerability and the increased toll that social isolation will take on mental health.

Council President Louise Gillis said blind Canadians have even been subjected to public scorn, being "hollered at" for inadvertently running afoul of public health measures that are inherently difficult for them to observe.

In nearly every case, she said,

the community's fears stem from pre-existing systemic issues now exacerbated by COVID-19.

"We seem to be more vulnerable when something happens," she said.

For Penny Leclair, who is deafblind, vulnerability comes from an increased sense of isolation and the withdrawal of key social supports over the course of the pandemic.

The 68-year-old North Bay, Ont., resident said she feels excluded from many of the workarounds most of society is turning to for social connection, such as video conferencing and other platforms that rely on sound and sight.

She's also cut off from the intervener services she relied on before the outbreak, since they've been scaled back and concentrated on people living alone.

Delegating all outside tasks to her husband, she said, has left her wrestling with both a loss of independence and powerful feelings of isolation.

"For deafblind people, touch is a must and dependence on an intervener is a part of life — not social," Leclair said in an email interview. "The intervener is not just a family support person, they are eyes and ears for deafblind people."

For Barbara Amberstone, a legally blind Indigenous elder living in Victoria, the greatest frustration comes from proposed coping solutions that she said leave large swaths of the community on the margins.

Most efforts to respond to COVID-19 have involved the use of technology, she said, noting everything from reading government information to maintaining social connection depends on an internet connection and accessible hardware and software. Such reliance on tech is further entrenched in the

vision loss community, she added.

But Amberstone said those who can't afford or access the technology, including those living in poverty or remote parts of the country, are now coping with an additional layer of isolation on top of those already imposed by the pandemic.

"It's so privileged," Amberstone said of the national response. "There's so much that poor people and disabled people are left out of."

The council report found public awareness and more effective messaging from all levels of government are needed to limit the effects of COVID-19 and its aftermath on the vision loss community.

D'Ambrosio agrees, saying the unique challenges he and his peers all face can't be ignored forever.

"Right now we're at the very early stages



Nick D'Ambrosio poses outside his place of work in Montreal, Saturday, May 16, 2020. Maintaining a two-metre distance from members of the public is a challenge for the 49-year-old, who has lost most of his eyesight and now travels with a white cane. The Canadian Press

and things are changing daily," he said.

"So I don't know if this is the new norm,

I don't know if this will persist ... but

eventually our rights will have to be heard."

CDBA National Support Fund

Purpose:

The purpose of this National Support Fund is to provide CDBA members living in Canada who are deafblind with another option for acquiring funds to assist them with the purchase of:

1. Intervention services during or as the result of an emergency
2. Intervention services for individuals confined to a hospital
3. Specialized education or recreation programs
4. Specialized equipment
5. Other services or equipment resulting from specialized or unique circumstances

The funds provided are short term and are to supplement other sources of funds and not intended to replace funding which may be otherwise available.

Emergency:

Defined as an unplanned event for which the individual or their advocate has had less than 14 days to prepare.

Supplemental:

To add to other funding sources which may be insufficient to cover short-term hospital stays, short-term special education programs or specialized equipment etc.

Criteria:

Persons Qualifying:

1. Those individuals who have been identified as deafblind and/or in a deafblind service program.
2. The individual or their family must be a member of CDBA.

Request for Funding:

Application:

Requests for funding may be received from any source on behalf of any qualifying individual or family from across Canada. The application form is available for download on the CDBA National website or by contacting the CDBA National office. Requests must be submitted in writing (preferably using

the application form) and include the following information.

- Name of person who is deafblind;
- Name and address of person making request;
- Description of the circumstance for the request;
- Indication of any requests to other organizations for support and their response;
- Any other pertinent information concerning the request.

How to Apply:

Contact the CDBA National Office info@cdbanational.com for an Application Form or go to the CDBA website at www.cdbanational.com



Coronavirus: Technology Bridges the Gap for Deaf and Blind Students Distance Learning

By Christen Kelley, *The St. Augustine Record* May 6, 2020 www.staugustine.com

Technology advances help Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind students succeed during period of distance learning.

Children across the country have had to make a major adjustment when schools moved to distance learning in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

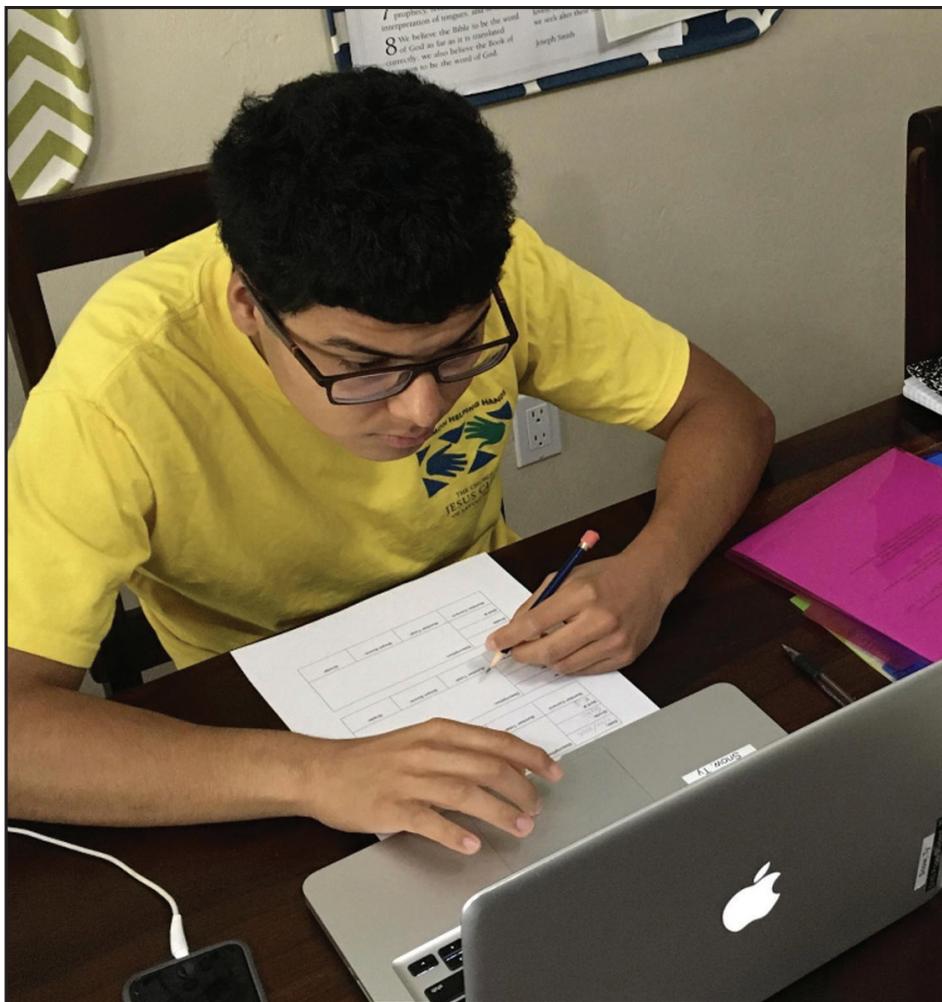
But for students of the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind in St. Augustine, online learning presents a unique challenge. Luckily, the technology available today has made the transition as smooth as possible.

“We couldn’t have done this 10 or 15 years ago,” said FSDB president Jeanne Glidden Prickett. “Having video and audio available and so readily usable for blind students and deaf students has been a major breakthrough for distance learning.”

Prickett said the increasing affordability and accessibility of Braille materials, including an electronic attachment for computers called a refreshable Braille display, as well as video conferencing in American Sign Language have bridged the gap between hearing or visually impaired children and those in a traditional school.

“The platforms like Zoom, Facetime, Microsoft Teams, these things have leveled the playing field,” Prickett said. “We have the technology, now our challenge is to make sure that every child has access to the technology.”

FSDB is a tuition-free state public school for students in pre-K through high school who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/visually impaired, or deafblind. The school had an enrollment of 525 in 2019, and about three quarters of the students live on campus Monday through Friday.



Ty Snow, the son of FSDB instructional administrator Tracie Snow, attends school from his home. Ty is deaf, and relies on video conferences in American Sign Language to communicate with his teacher.

Along with traditional school districts, FSDB had to take an extra week of spring break in March in order to prepare for distance learning. While the school has prepared for hurricanes in the past, this was something entirely different.

Administrator of Instructional Services Tracie Snow said because the school’s population has such specific needs, she had to adapt guidance from other districts and from the Florida Department of Education to suit FSDB. She also has a son in the deaf high school, so she understands what families are going through.

“Because we have 100 percent ESE students here, that really became our main focus and when you go a little deeper, we have students who are deaf and hard of hearing and we have students who are blind and visually impaired, so what does that look like for them?” Snow said.

Once the plan was in place, the next step was getting the materials out to families across the state. FSDB already had devices on hand for students, so they just needed to mail them out.

The school also sends packets and

lesson plans every week to give parents a heads up on what their child will be working on in the following days. When it comes to the lessons themselves, it varies between grade level and skill set.

Jamie and Jason Hoffnagle have two sons who attend the school, both of whom are deaf. Jamie Hoffnagle says her kindergartener Noah isn't mailed just worksheets but all the materials he would normally have access to in his classroom.

"He gets Play-Doh or paint, he gets all the papers and little cutout things that he teacher would have, he receives them in the mail the week before," Jamie Hoffnagle said. "His teacher also uploaded videos, all captioned for the parents. So it's amazing the work they're doing."

Twelve-year-old Joshua didn't have many issues working online, as he already uses Facetime to communicate with his friends every day. Fortunately the entire family of eight knows sign language, so there isn't a communication barrier.

That's especially important now that parents are having to step in and make sure that their children are participating in their online classes. It becomes even more complicated when that parent isn't fluent in ASL or doesn't know how to help their child whose vision or hearing impaired.

"If a blind child isn't sure where on the Braille document they should start a line, there's somebody physically next to them who is hand-over-hand showing them that line," Snow said. "For a child who is deaf, having somebody in the home who can spell an English word for them or read part of an English text for them is important. It really has to be all about teamwork."

Like all schools, FSDB's students and staff are missing out on the community experience that a school offers. It could be harder if a deaf or blind child doesn't have a way to communicate with the people around them.

"I do see the impact of the social distancing, the fact that he doesn't

have the opportunity to interact with his peers," Snow said about her son Ty. "One of the of the beautiful things about our school is that everyone can come together and can be with people who are like them."

There are approximately 50 seniors who will have a virtual graduation, which will be bittersweet for Prickett, who is set to retire at the end of this school year. She said she'll miss out on personally handing diplomas to those graduates.

One silver lining however, Prickett said, is that these graduates will have much more experience working online and communicating virtually.

"The major outcome here will be that students are even better prepared than we ever dreamed for a workplace where people work remotely," she said. "This is a 21st century skill that's kind of hitting us in the face right now, and it's a skill that every student graduating from high school should have right now."



Deafblind International Network of the Americas

Greetings!

Thank you for coming to our page that is part of the mission of the Dbl Network of the Americas. We want to be a place where we can share our successes, challenges and practices toward creating a barrier-free life to people with deafblindness.

We have convened a very small leadership group for our network to come up with a plan that will provide our members across the United States, Latin America and Canada with an opportunity to learn from one another in a meaningful way. To this end, we want to learn about the needs within our region and connect through this Facebook page, online training and conferences. Our hope is that you will join us.

Deafblind International, in an effort to remove barriers to participation, has decided to offer free individual memberships. We hope that you will join this international organization that offers access to information, their online magazine Dbl Review, and regional and international conferences. If you are not yet a member, you can go to this link deafblindinternational.org to join.

We are also happy to write that the Texas School for the Blind and Visually impaired (TSBVI) has enthusiastically become a lead organization in the network who will expand their highly successful Deafblind Symposium as a Dbl Network of the Americas activity. This will be a great opportunity for presenters and attendees from the network regions to participate and build relationships with one another. For more information please go to <https://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach>

If you would like to become a member of the network and receive future communication, kindly complete a membership form <https://forms.gle/aaLGHYPybNH7cbx7>.

With all good wishes during these challenging times.

COVID-19 Takes Touch Away From the Deaf-Blind

By Hannah Herner, Nashville SCENE June 11, 2020 www.nashvillescene.com

'We were isolated before, and when you add social distancing to it, it makes us feel a lot more isolated'

When COVID-19 hit, Forest Sponseller began thinking about what his mom, who is Deaf-Blind, is experiencing.

"The world for her exists in only three senses, and that's taste, touch and smell," he says. "That's all there is for her. And those are the three senses that will transmit a virus."

People who are Deaf-Blind rely heavily on touch and close proximity with others to communicate and complete daily tasks. Social distancing protocols designed to slow the spread of COVID-19 stand in the way of that.

Ashley Jackson uses tactile American Sign Language, in which she puts her hand on top of the hand of the person who is signing. She also uses what's known as protactile sign language to get more context. Someone might draw the shape of a room on her back or her hand with their finger, and note where the exits and other people are, along with other points of interest. There are also protactile signs to note expressions on others' faces, and to alert a Deaf-Blind person in case of an emergency.

Jackson, who is completely blind and has some hearing through cochlear implants, says hearing and sighted people take things like eye contact or a nod for granted. A handshake or a touch on the arm is what makes her feel acknowledged.

"I miss being able to touch a lot," Jackson says. "We were isolated before, and when you add social distancing to it, it makes us feel a lot more isolated. We don't enjoy going out right now because we can't touch anybody and we can't get close enough to communicate with anybody because we rely on touch for our communication. So many people

take for granted — all they have to do is look at one another and know what the other is saying."

On a typical day, it can be hard for others to understand Jackson's speech. She says it's frustrating when it's further muffled by a mask, but she'll wear one anyway. Jackson says she's especially worried about people who are Deaf-Blind and also have special needs. She's able to understand the virus and why she can't touch, but she knows people who aren't able to.

Many people who are Deaf-Blind have some level of sight or hearing. (For our interview, Jackson had her phone audio connected directly to her cochlear implants.) If a person has some eyesight, they can use zone interpreting, in which an interpreter stands close to them, or tracking, in which the Deaf-Blind person holds the elbow of the person to help their eyes track the signs. A challenge with tactile sign language compared to regular ASL is that a person can't point to things or use facial expressions. Touch is used to communicate all these things, and sometimes that involves touching the face. Sponseller, a certified interpreter for the deaf, wears a mask and uses lots of hand sanitizer when he communicates that way.

"People might give you strange looks because you're not supposed to be close together," Sponseller says. "But there's no way around it. The Deaf-Blind community at large is struggling with that."

Jackson was working on her master's degree in social work at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., when the pandemic hit. At first, she would meet with an interpreter individually, who would interpret video-conference meetings for her. But as the pandemic progressed, she was on her own.



John Forbes of the Tennessee Organization for the Deaf-Blind Eric England

"Learning online just doesn't work for me — [it's] not for people who do better with one-on-one instruction," Jackson says. "We don't realize how much we rely on people until now. I've noticed that I've become more depressed, I've become more lonely and emotional, craving contact. It's just scary not to have contact anymore."

It's hard to be left at the mercy of others — and for the Deaf-Blind, most of the time those others are volunteers. They need interpreters for certain things, like medical and legal appointments, but they also need Support Service Providers. SSPs help with day-to-day tasks.

John Forbes, former president and current treasurer of the Tennessee Organization for the Deaf-Blind, says finding an SSP can be difficult, even before stay-at-home orders started keeping some volunteers at home. The day he spoke with the Scene, Forbes

— who is Deaf-Blind himself — was planning his first trip to Walmart since February. He created a list that includes aisle numbers and a description of each item to help out his SSP. He could always bring along his video magnifying glass, but this way will save time. The person who is taking him is volunteering her time, after all.

An SSP is also required for each attendee to Forbes' favorite TODB event of the year: sailing on Old Hickory Lake. He is sure to send out the dates in his newsletter months ahead of time so that people have time to secure SSPs. The group had to cancel one of the twice-a-year state TODB meetings for the first time due to COVID-19.

When COVID-19 is under control and Forbes can come and go from his senior

living center as he pleases, he's going to keep working to establish a statewide SSP program that collaborates with local interpreting services to make sure the Deaf-Blind have the support they need. He'll write another grant to have a summer camp for the Deaf-Blind, in hopes of getting the funding again for the first time since 2012.

He's anxious to get his sign language teacher back in the building, and is staying brushed up on his newly learned Braille skills by reading the Bible. He'll also keep advocating for a state-provided curriculum for people who are late Deaf-Blind, like him. He wasn't diagnosed with Usher syndrome type II until he was 27, even though his hearing was always bad and his sight started to decline in adolescence.

"It takes a lot of time to go advocate," Forbes says. "You're going to hit dead ends, but you have to go back and try and try until you find a door that's wide open."

Having to wait for others to understand them is an everyday reality for people who are Deaf-Blind. Jackson hopes sighted and hearing people take the time and patience to listen, especially now.

"I'm talking quite a bit, but I feel like I have to say everything because I hope this will give people insight, and they'll take the time to listen because they don't have to go out to work and be as busy," Jackson says. "They have more time to listen, and I want them to take the time to listen to what I have to say and think about what I have to say."

Deafblind Woman Felt Isolated Because of COVID-19 Pandemic

By Gary Rinne, Thunder Bay News Watch June 29, 2020 www.tbnewswatch.com

Dawnelee Wright lost the crucial support of her intervenor for months.

For Dawnelee Wright, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into even sharper focus the need to maintain supports for people with sensory impairment.

The Thunder Bay woman lives with deafblindness, which is a combination of hearing and vision loss.

Wright was born blind, and in 2016 contracted a virus that led to neuropathic hearing loss.

DeafBlind Ontario Services was able to arrange for an intervenor – a person who's professionally trained to guide, support and communicate with clients.

"It just makes such a difference, because you have independence, you have privacy, you have freedom," Wright told tbnewswatch.com in an interview.

She said her intervenor, Samantha Deenik, accompanies her on outings and helps

around the home, "interpreting anything that is visual or auditory. And I have to admit she goes beyond that. She's become like a member of the family."

With Deenik's assistance, Wright – who is a wife, mother of two, student and part-time worker – is able to maintain a pretty busy lifestyle.

"Let's say I want to do some cooking. She'll help me with the recipe. If I wanted to help the kids with homework she would read it to me so I could assist them. Even fun activities like doing puzzles, going to movies, doing shopping, leisure activities like going to the complex," she said.

Deenik, she said, fills in "all that visual and auditory information that I'm not receiving, particularly in public when the hearing piece becomes really complicated."

All that changed, however, when COVID-19 restrictions were implemented under Ontario's state of emergency.

Wright lost her intervenor's essential support for three months, when Deenik returned to southern Ontario to self-isolate.

"I felt at a loss. Without her, I can't do things independently from my family. I lost a sense of privacy too," she said.

With COVID-19, she found that very little was accessible to her.

"The plexiglass barriers, the masks that people are wearing, the arrows on the floor. I can't navigate a simple clothing store anymore. I can't see to follow the arrows, and I can't hear people's voices when they're masked or behind plexiglass."

Wright said she appreciates that the government and citizens have acted responsibly in trying to contain COVID-19, but she feels the disability community has been "a little bit marginalized" in the process.

Continued on next page

She cited the example of stores allowing only one individual at a time to enter.

"Well, I have to enter with another, sighted person, and then you have to explain that. I'm deafblind, I need my intervenor, I need my husband, I need someone to accompany me. There's a whole level of challenges now that are really anxiety-provoking," she said.

Wright said social distancing can be extremely isolating for a person in her situation.

With the Ontario government relaxing its emergency orders, Deenik just recently returned to Thunder Bay to be at Wright's side once again.

"It was an amazing reunion. I was so excited. My kids were so excited," she said.

Wright said not having access to her communication partner because of COVID-19 was a stark reminder of what it would be like to not have an intervenor at all.

In future, she'd like to see more understanding and consideration of the needs of people in her situation.

"There are complex layers to life during a pandemic for everyone. But what if we



Dawnelee Wright (r) sits with her intervenor Samantha Deenik (submitted photo)

add another layer to accommodations that must be made? What if a person is both deaf and blind?", she asked.

The lesson for all, Wright believes, is to be open-minded, and to realize that "there is still the right to accommodate. We still have the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and

I think we have to figure out how we adjust, how we accommodate and still protect."

Having to make frequent visits to the hospital – and not being allowed a companion due to COVID-19 restrictions – Wright said she appreciates that the nursing staff have recognized her special needs, and have gone "above and beyond."

She said she believes the retail and public service sectors can remain diligent during the pandemic, but still pause to consider the circumstances of each individual, and take steps to ensure everyone can access services in a fair way.

Across Canada, nearly half a million people are deafblind.

Deafblind Ontario Services www.deafblindontario.com says people with these conditions have inconsistent access to supports, because the provinces make varying degrees of funding available.

The organization says its services are customized to each client's unique needs, method of communication and goals, with the aim of increasing their independence and enriching their lives.



Dawnelee Wright (r) is pictured with her daughter Brynn (submitted photo)



Intervenor Organization of Ontario

210 Empress Avenue, North York, Toronto, Ontario, M2N 3T9
 president@intervenor.org.ca

The Intervenor Organization of Ontario (IOO) is the professional organization for intervenors who work with people who are DeafBlind in Ontario. An intervenor is a trained professional who provides access to information for people who are DeafBlind so that a person who is DeafBlind may participate in their community however they so choose. Intervenor organizations are trained in a variety of communication methods and sighted guide to ensure safe travel and take direction from the person who is DeafBlind. For people who are DeafBlind, intervenors are one means to provide access.

The IOO is currently investigating the possibility of supporting intervenors across Canada, expanding our reach beyond Ontario.

Prior to expanding nationally, the IOO is attempting to gather baseline data and information on intervenors across Canada, such as the number of intervenors, their training/background, and work conditions. This information will help us in planning future initiatives, focusing our efforts on specific areas of the country, and better understanding the needs of intervenors.

Over the past several decades, numerous studies have been conducted that have focused on Canada's DeafBlind community, while intervenors have never been studied as a separate group. Intervenor organizations play a vital role in services for Canadians who are DeafBlind, though relatively little is known about this group of professionals. Although the IOO cannot unequivocally speak to the experiences of intervenors across Canada, we know that anecdotally, there are intervenors working in various pockets of Canada, and are often doing so in isolation with little support.

This study, which will be known as the "National Sample Survey of Intervenor Organizations in Canada" (NSSIC), is the first of its kind in Canada, and can be thought of as a census of intervenors in Canada. To stay on top of emerging trends and changes within the field in Canada and ensure we are aware of the changing needs of intervenors across Canada, we will aim for the NSSIC to be conducted every five years moving forward.

To gather data and information for the NSSIC, members of the IOO board will be contacting consumer organizations run by people who are DeafBlind, service providers, school boards, and other stakeholders who work with/employ intervenors in Canada or support people who are DeafBlind. We also hope to connect with individual people who are DeafBlind and intervenors (respectively) who can speak to their own specific situation and experiences in various regions of Canada. The IOO recognizes that it will not be possible to reflect and speak to every individual intervenor in Canada, which is why this project is a sample survey of intervenors.

Because a consensus has not been reached as to the specific role, function, and job title of intervenors in Canada, the NSSIC will also collect information on Support Service Providers (SSP's) and related professionals.

The project will be overseen by the IOO Vice-President, Laura Aguiar. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Laura by email at: vp@intervenor.org.ca. Members of the IOO board will begin reaching out to collect data in early June. We anticipate the results of the first ever NSSIC being published in January of 2021.

We look forward to collaborating with DeafBlind people, intervenors, and organizations across the country to learn more about the situation of intervenors in Canada.

Sincerely,

Marta Zaharia
 President, Intervenor Organization of Ontario

Intervenor Organization of Ontario

www.intervenors.ca

For over 25 years, The Intervenor Organization of Ontario (IOO) has been dedicated to promoting and professionalizing the field of intervenor services. As the first and only organization of its kind in Canada, the IOO believes that through increased awareness, standards, training, and understanding of the role of the intervenor and the process of intervention, this will lead to better quality of services for all individuals who are deafblind, who are at the forefront of all that we do.

The role of the intervenor is an incredibly diverse, exciting, and challenging one, and the IOO is pleased to provide resources, support, and a sense of unity for all intervenors to ensure services for individuals who are deafblind are delivered with passion, knowledge, and understanding. Through providing professional development and training

opportunities, a strong Code of Ethics, and a blog to provide a platform for sharing information, the IOO continually strives to meet the needs of its members and ensure highest quality of services.

ABOUT US

If you are an individual who is deafblind, family member, or other professional working in a team setting with an intervenor or supporting an individual who is deafblind, the IOO can provide awareness of the role of the intervenor, expectations of the role of the intervenor, and resources and information that may be of assistance when working with an intervenor, whether it is your first time or you are seasoned in working with



intervenors.

TAKE ACTION

The IOO strongly believes that individuals who are deafblind along with family members are at the forefront of this field, and support of our profession and field is strongest from persons who are deafblind along with their family members.

Pan-Canadian Disability Coalition

Why this?

People in Canada that live with disabilities represent 22% of the population and face a disproportionately high degree of discrimination. The Canadian Human Rights Commission's (CHRC) newly released report revealed that in 2019 alone, 52% of all complaints cited discrimination based upon disability. This represents a 36% increase from the previous year and the highest volume of complaints in a decade, which has already shown this to be the single most important trend in human rights. Further evidence of this trend emerges in data and reports from across Canada's Network of Provincial and Territorial Commissions and Tribunals (The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies)

Ableism and other types of systemic discrimination continue to negatively

impact people with disabilities living in Canada. Absence of representation, silos and fragmentation of people with disabilities has been compounded by the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

In June 2019, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Canadian government passed the Accessible Canada Act, which amended the Canadian Human Rights Act. This Act also includes the National Monitoring Mechanism (NMM), implementation, which will, through the Canadian Human Rights Commission and civil society be responsible for monitoring progress and reporting on the Government of Canada's ability to comply. The NMM will monitor whether people with disabilities and civil society organizations are both involved and engaged throughout the entire process. New legislation is in

place, it is imperative that disability communities across Canada remain equally united and engaged as legislation continues to evolve.

Why now? Concept & Approach

The intended impact of the Pan-Canadian Disability Coalition (PCDC) is the creation of a multi-level (Federal/Provincial/Territorial & Municipal) coalition that works collaboratively with disability and other civil society organizations, Indigenous organizations, individuals and stakeholders across Canada to engage with Government(s) (Federal, Provincial, Territorial, Indigenous and Municipal) and others to deconstruct and address systemic ableism and other intersecting forms of discrimination including audism, racism and sexism.

Disability and the deconstruction of an ableist society is by definition a societal issue. Focusing disability in a larger human rights monitoring framework, with the critical mass of a pan-Canadian coalition, will embed disability in the broader social justice movement. A movement that must demonstrate, its collective capacity to demand discriminatory and unjust systems be reckoned with and dismantled as is evidenced by recent events which have laid systemic racism bare before the world.

The proposed mandate of the PCDC is to employ a human rights (advocacy) and fact based (research) approach to ensure that attitudes (education) and policies, services and programs across Canada reflect the fact that nearly one quarter of all Canadians (22%) live with a disability. Coalition members have identified inclusivity, shared leadership, independence amongst members, lived experiences, intersectionality, collaboration and unity amongst its members as the markers of our success.

The PCDC proposes a Theory of Change approach. This approach enables the PCDC to move from contribution of individual organizations to a larger framework, while also helping to determine the best use of resources within the project's time frame. Using this model, the full submission will outline the key deliverables, intended outcomes, process phases, and what mechanisms and budget would support this approach.

Objectives

a. By August 2023, the PCDC will provide accessible mechanisms for community involvement and engagement in key areas of concern to people with disabilities and their families that include implementation, monitoring and enforcement of treaties, legislation, policies and services and other issues of concern.

b. By August 2023, the PCDC will provide timely and unified responses

to emerging and intersecting issues that affect people with disabilities in Canada including accessing the social determinants of health.

The Organization

The PCDC is a coalition of people with disabilities and disability organizations and their partners with a shared commitment to change using research, education, advocacy and policy as its levers. A Secretariat will be established to operationalize the activities of the PCDC. The coalition has already identified some key principles:

- Building this coalition inclusively means a commitment to full accessibility including disability accommodations, ASL, LSQ, Plain Language, respect for culture, including a commitment to the recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, working in both official languages, and being very deliberate in centering and supporting the leadership and increased capacity of the most marginalized in our community;
- Development of a strategic plan and business model that will move the coalition to be self-sustaining and will include developing grant proposals, the exploration of a social enterprise model, Foundations and others by the end of the 36 months
- The PCDC is a new entity that is the culmination of nearly four years of collaboration since the consultations in advance of the introduction and signing of the Accessible Canada Act.

Duration of Project

The 36-month project will commence in September 2020 and conclude in August 2023.

Key Project Milestones/Phases (outcome) – each phase will last approximately 12 months

Phase I

Engage the Community and Stakeholders

- 1) Community outreach and engagement
 - a) Confirm Partners
 - b) Engage key communities and

stakeholders

- 2) Identify key priorities through research and consultation with members
 - a) Prioritize issues that unite the disability community and increase capacity for systemic change;
 - b) Recommend solutions to issues based on a data-driven approach and general consensus of attitudes;
 - c) Mobilize community to affect change and influence policy
- 3) Governance structure
 - a) Develop governance structure
 - b) Submit a finalized governance structure
- 4) Monitoring and Evaluation
 - a) Finalize a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that aligns with the Government's Performance and Accountability Framework

Phase II

Develop Capacity and Practice

- 1) National Engagement
 - a) Create communities of practice/knowledge hubs (research, education, policy, advocacy)
 - b) Launch inaugural biannual conference that focuses on research, education, policy reform and advocacy;
- 2) Performance review
 - a) Conduct progress reports and evaluations on work to date;
- 3) Develop a Common Framework
 - a) Co-develop common indicators of an accessible community;

Phase III

Coalition Sustainability

- 1) Expand engagement with municipal, provincial, territorial, federal governments and civil society organizations, other stakeholders and the private sector
 - a) Conduct inclusive community leadership engagement sessions
- 2) Project management activities
 - a) Develop sustainability plan
- 3) Performance Review
 - a) Gather and report final performance results

'I Could Not Touch What Was Not Mine': How the DeafBlind are Coping With Social Distancing

By Theresa Vargas

April 19, 2020 *The Independent* www.independent.co.uk (© Washington Post)

If you could have peeked into a building on Gallaudet University's campus in Washington DC on a recent day, you would have seen a 6ft3 man crawling on the floor.

He was not hurt. He was not sick. He was trying to find his name on a case of water.

During another time, the task would have been easy enough for James Groff, a graduate student. The case had been left for him in a building not far from his dorm. The problem was that his case was not the only one there, which meant he had to locate the one bearing his name, and he had to do that with limited use of three of his senses.

Groff is deaf and blind and, because of social distancing expectations, he often can't rely on touch.

He couldn't run his hand across the cases to feel if they held tags with student ID numbers or names. He couldn't pick them up and bring them close enough to his face to use what little vision he has to decipher the letters and numbers on them.

"I had to get on my hands and knees to be able to read each one without touching it," Groff says. "I am a grown man and can provide for myself and find or make ways. But this was hard for me to do since I could not touch what was not mine, yet I had to be close enough to see my name. If it is that hard for me, imagine how hard it is for someone more medically blind than I am."

Groff, who hopes to one day become a US senator, describes himself as DeafBlind, with both words capitalised and combined to convey not only his



disabilities but also a sense of cultural identity. The DeafBlind community includes people who have zero ability to see and hear, and those who have so little that they have been medically deemed deaf and blind.

Groff describes his vision as "a mix between being underwater and getting shot while playing Call of Duty". Everything is blurry. He can't see lips well enough to read them or tell if someone near him is laughing. He needs touch to do that.

He uses his hands to get his bearings in unfamiliar environments and to communicate. Like many people in the DeafBlind community, Groff often relies on Pro-tactile American Sign Language, which incorporates hand-on-body motions to convey what the eye and ear can't detect. To signal to Groff that someone is laughing, an interpreter trained in that form of tactile sign language would make a motion that resembles a tickle.

"Without signals like this," Groff says, "I might miss out partially or wholly on what is happening around me."

The need for social distancing has disrupted all of our lives in significant ways. It has caused working parents to become stressed-out teachers, students to miss out on pivotal moments and the elderly to grow used to seeing relatives through glass windows and phone screens. In its cruellest form, it has also forced people to lose jobs, beloved businesses to shut down and families to mourn loved ones they didn't get to tell goodbye.

Those burdens are crushingly heavy, but for the most part, their weight has been shared. They

are part of our collective concerns and mutual mourning.

As a DeafBlind individual like myself, we are left out of everything going on around us

For many in the DeafBlind community, social distancing has created unique worries and exceptional challenges. It is forcing them to grow increasingly disconnected at a time when they need more than ever to be aware of what's happening around them.

In the past week, I have talked with people across the country who identify as DeafBlind to get a sense of how a population that relies so heavily on touch is doing now that grabbing a doorknob or standing closer than six feet from a stranger carries risks.

They described losing critical interpreter services, feeling increasingly isolated and fearing what might happen to them if they end up in the hospital.

“Are they letting patients who test positive keep their phones?” asks Quinn Michaela Burch who lives in Schenectady, New York, with her boyfriend, who is also DeafBlind. “If so and I did end up in that situation, I hope I’d stay coherent and alert enough to be able to use my phone to communicate.”

Before the phrase “flatten the curve” became part of our collective vocabulary, Burch had a trainer at the YMCA, and she took trips to the grocery store, the bank and an animal protection organisation with the help of “community habilitation” staff members. She also took walks to McDonald’s by herself.

Now, she says, the YMCA is closed, those staff members aren’t available to help her, and she doesn’t walk to McDonald’s anymore.

“My days are pretty bleak,” she says.

Haben Girma – a public speaker and the author of a memoir title, *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law* – gave a talk at Stanford University on 2 March. Since then, she has stayed at her home in the San Francisco area.

She had planned for a book tour in April. That has been cancelled. She was supposed to officiate at a friend’s wedding in May. That has been postponed.

“All my life I struggled with isolation,” Girma says. “My memoir captures the many ways I’ve tried to forge connections in a mostly inaccessible world. The current isolation brings back the old fears that never entirely flee. I miss shaking hands with readers at book talks. I miss swing dancing every Wednesday night. I miss fearless hugs.”

And unlike the rest of us, she can’t escape those emotions by bingeing on Netflix. Girma needs transcripts to access shows and movies. Her first Netflix experience, she says, was when she “devoured” the transcript of *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* “like a thrilling novel”.

But those transcripts are not easy to

get, she says. They also aren’t her most pressing concern amid the pandemic.

“I’m worried hospitals will not provide communication access for DeafBlind people,” she says. “Many DeafBlind people rely on tactile interpretation, which cannot be done remotely or even from six feet away. I’m worried hospitals facing scarce resources will decide not to save our lives. There is an ableist assumption that causes some people to think it’s better to be dead than disabled.”

Rossana Reis, a retired counsellor and advocate turned artist who lives in Washington, has already devised a backup communication plan in case she ends up at the hospital. She plans to use a device that would allow her to communicate through typing. Even so, she has questions.

“I’ve been reading stories of how doctors speak behind a glass and not sure how much the mic will transmit speech into text from a distance,” she says. “Would the medical staff be willing to type on my device, if it comes to that? Otherwise, I’m learning that many hospitals across the nation are not allowing interpreters in treatment areas. That would be problematic for me, as I am not able to rely on remote interpreting via video.”

She says only some states have deemed qualified sign language interpreters as “essential workers”. All states need to do so, she says. They also need to ensure that those workers have personal protective equipment.

“Being relegated to the keyboard for interaction with others outside their homes instead of in-person, pro-tactile/tactile communication, is not sustainable for many DeafBlind people,” she says.

DeafBlind students at Gallaudet University, a school for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, received an email telling them that services from support service providers and certified deaf interpreters would be terminated 3 April.

A copy of that email was provided

to me. It makes an exception for emergency situations and describes the decision as a “necessary one as our priority is to protect not only your health but also the health of your interpreters”.

“I am working on some very complex things, and taking away these services makes this work even more difficult,” says Groff, who is working on a master’s thesis on Taiwanese independence and hopes to graduate in December with a master’s degree in public administration. From there, he wants to go to law school.

Despite the new challenges he will face, Groff says he expects to “persevere” because he has seven years at the school behind him and a lifetime of plucking “backup plans out of thin air”.

He worries more about those DeafBlind students who just started at the university.

One of those students is Ali Goldberg. The freshman is majoring in education and uses tactile sign language to communicate.

“I feel so isolated, and I feel really alone,” he writes. “As a DeafBlind individual, we can’t see or hear what’s going on around us. We tend to feel more isolated as it is, and when you put us in an environment in which we have to be completely isolated, it makes us feel even more cut off from the world. It’s very depressing.”

In an email, he describes feeling “afraid for the future”.

He also expressed an appreciation for being able to talk about how social distancing is affecting him and a hope that it would help more people understand what the DeafBlind community is going through right now.

The experiences of the DeafBlind community may be unique, but their concerns shouldn’t be theirs alone. “As a DeafBlind individual like myself, we are left out of everything going on around us,” he writes. “Let’s get through this together.”

CDBA Chapter News

CDBA Alberta Frances Jablonca, *President*



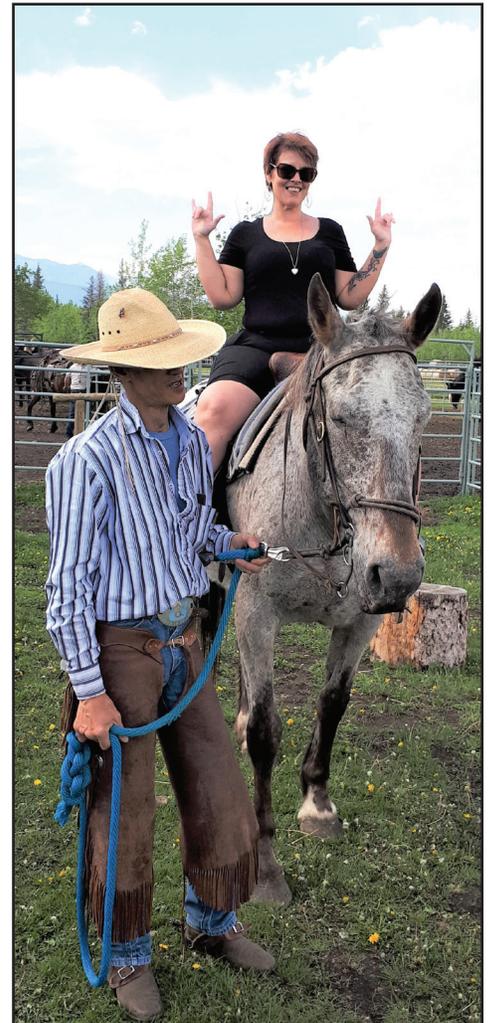
As president of the CDBA-AB Chapter board, I regret to inform that, during our 2020 AGM on July 20th, our board and members decided to close this chapter. The board has been struggling for years with low membership and lack of involvement at the volunteer level.

We wish to recognize the hard work of so many board members who, over the many years, have poured their souls into the organization and the many projects that they maintained, including:

- advocating deafblind awareness and recognition by the provincial government
- holding our annual fall Weekend Retreats
- the Deafblind Awareness events in June
- the Charlotte MacKinnon Memorial Wagon Ride and other outings
- fundraising events including the years of holding casinos, and
- providing personal support to our deafblind members

It is extremely difficult to decide to fold an organization that is vital to those who need this support. In light of this, I plan to continue to be involved at the capacity of an Alberta Liaison for CDBA members who reside in Alberta. Funding for equipment and intervention will continue to be available for deafblind Albertans.

Thank you to the CDBA National board for its involvement and ongoing support of our Chapter. I look forward to working with them to support the deafblind members in Alberta.



CDBA Chapter News

CDBA British Columbia Theresa Tancock, *Family Services Coordinator*



Working with a Pandemic

The pandemic of 2020 certainly put us in a 'tizzy'! Those with deafblindness had difficulty navigating this new world of online teaching – Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, Facetime, and so on. How does someone with a dual-sensory loss manage to benefit with virtual teaching and communication?

Our Spring Intervention Program had a decrease in participation, due to COVID-19. Direct support was not an option. However, what began as a potential limitation has become a new way of support for CDBA-BC!

We began offering Zoom Activity sessions in April and May. While this cannot, and will not, replace direct Intervention support, it did offer an opportunity for families to come together, if only for an hour or two, and create, network and have fun! Every Saturday, we had Intervenors presenting activities – making salt dough, bread-making, Father's Day gifts. During this phase of the pandemic and looking forward, we learned much about online learning and presenting. We learned we can slow the activity down (even the songs we followed on YouTube could be slowed), use larger, darker visuals (such as cue cards with 1 TBSP., 3 tsp. or 2 c.), allow sufficient wait time for all to create together – there were advantages to online learning and sharing that we would never have thought possible in the world of deafblindness!

In July, we began offering our Zoom Activity sessions on Wednesdays. The majority of our summer Intervenors were now supporting the children/youth directly during our Summer Intervention Program. This meant they could support the child/youth they were working with during their work week, although

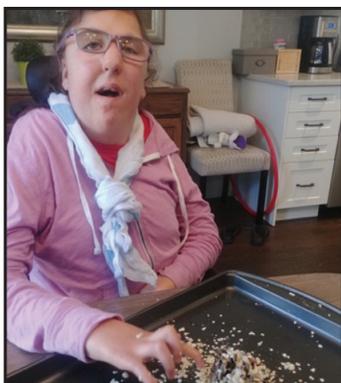
many families still continue to participate as well. The Zoom Activities began to take a wonderful shape, with the four features of Successful Intervention in mind: Anticipation, Motivation, Communication and Confirmation. Each weekly session begins and ends with the same 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' songs. An opportunity is made for the participants to share something special – whether it be about their vacation, birthday party or to read a special story to everyone! We also share online Sing-alongs with ASL, which brought us to develop our 'ASL Signs of the Week' to correspond with the activity. Each week's activities are presented by Intervenors, including a sing-along with an Intenor and her guitar.

An Intenor Resource Team has been created, who meet weekly to discuss and reflect on the week's activity and to plan the upcoming activity. These Intenorers have brought so much joy into the homes of our families and have a wealth of knowledge and wonderful ideas to share. In order to create 'Anticipation and Motivation',

boxes of craft supplies were mailed to all participants so that they would have the majority of supplies at their fingertips each week.

I cannot tell you how heartwarming this whole process has been – to be able to include families from all over our province for these Summer Recreation Zoom Activities has been wonderfully rewarding. We have decided this form of activity will always be something we offer, as well as our face-to-face activities (when we are able to resume them). We are already thinking about an October Harvest Series and a Winter Series!

On another note...We had 5 buildings light up in the Lower Mainland in recognition of Deafblind Awareness Month – BC Place, Surrey Civic Center, Anvil Centre, Vancouver City Hall and Rogers Arena! We sure missed meeting for dinner before the lighting and the photo-op and we greatly missed our annual Bowling event that typically pairs with our AGM (which was done via Zoom)!



CDBA Chapter News

CDBA New Brunswick Kevin Symes, Executive Director



The Canadian Deafblind Association-NB Chapter has been enjoying the warmer weather this past month or so.

This year has had an interesting start so far, with dealing the covid-19 pandemic and adjusting to the new world we are living in. We were all home for a few months and when June rolled around we were back to work, but were not able to do any Deafblind Awareness events, like we usually are able to do. This was a disappointment for all of us, as well as not being able to do our day trip and camp. We are planning on doing something for each region so that we can have at least one positive fun experience this summer for our clients and Intervenors, even if it has to be at separate locations.

The clients and Intervenors have been making the best of this new world we are living in by spending a lot of their time outside doing activities such as walking, picking rocks, picnic lunches, visiting beaches and lakes, sightseeing, visiting parks and just enjoying the beautiful weather.

CDBA-NB would like to wish you all a fun and safe summer.



Cathy Jo enjoying the nature park and picking rocks to paint.



Jamie celebrating 15 years at Superstore.



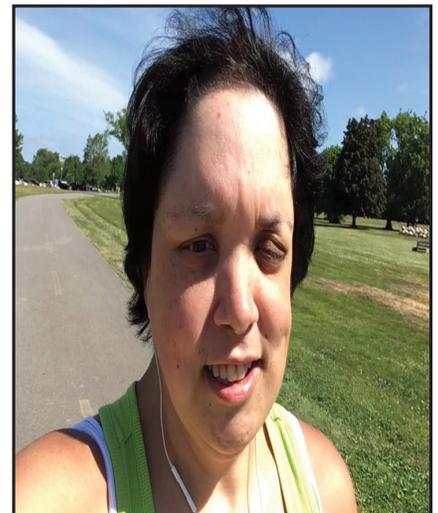
Eddy ready to celebrate Canada Day!



Kelsi and her Intervenor Holly, enjoying a day outside celebrating Kelsi's birthday.



Owen enjoying his lunch with a few new friends.



Sheena out for her daily walk, taking advantage of the nice weather.

CDBA Chapter News

CDBA Saskatchewan Leanne Kerr, *Program Admin Assistant*



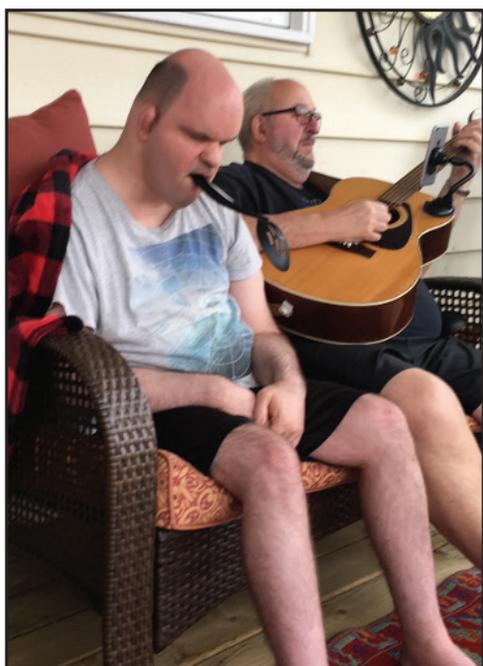
These past few months have definitely challenged us all to think outside the box in order to stay safe, but still productive during everything COVID. Two of the Individuals we support have temporarily moved in with their parents in smaller communities in order to maintain their safety while still being allowed to foster that family relationship. Other families are still waiting for the day that it is safe to visit their family member. Because touch is such a huge part of our communication, it would be quite difficult to maintain proper social distancing during family visits. We are using technology a lot more these days in order to keep up communication with families as well as with the Individuals who are away.

The Individuals, Intervenor and management made a bunch of masks with filters for everyone to use. They also made some masks with a clear window for improved communication through lip-reading.

One of the Individuals that we support passed away this Spring (not COVID related). This has been a big adjustment for the Individuals as well

as the Intervenor. Her parents would visit her in the group home daily, so we are missing having them around as well. She always wanted to people to be happy, so if you were having a bad day, she would cheer you up in no time!

We held a carnival in one of our group home's backyard in June. Each group home came separately and really enjoyed playing the games and winning prizes. The best part was the popcorn and pop at the end. It was a fairly hot day, so it was nice to sit out on the deck and enjoy an afternoon treat. We are spending a lot of time outside, going for community walks, hanging out in our own back yards, journaling, crafts and academic work.



DeafBlind Ontario Explains the Importance of Including Age-friendly and Accessible Features in Homes

By Samantha Maren, Deafblind Ontario Services

From walk-in closets to stainless steel appliances, fireplaces and custom cabinets, the list of coveted features in a house are endless. But, what about the elements that make a space 'age-friendly' and 'inclusive'?

More and more people are prioritizing accessibility when looking for a place to call home. Further, as the population ages, age-friendly communities are a necessity.

Statistics Canada 2019 data indicates that about 6.5 million people are 65 years and older in Canada and account for 17.5 percent of the population. The proportion of seniors in the population is expected to double by 2025.

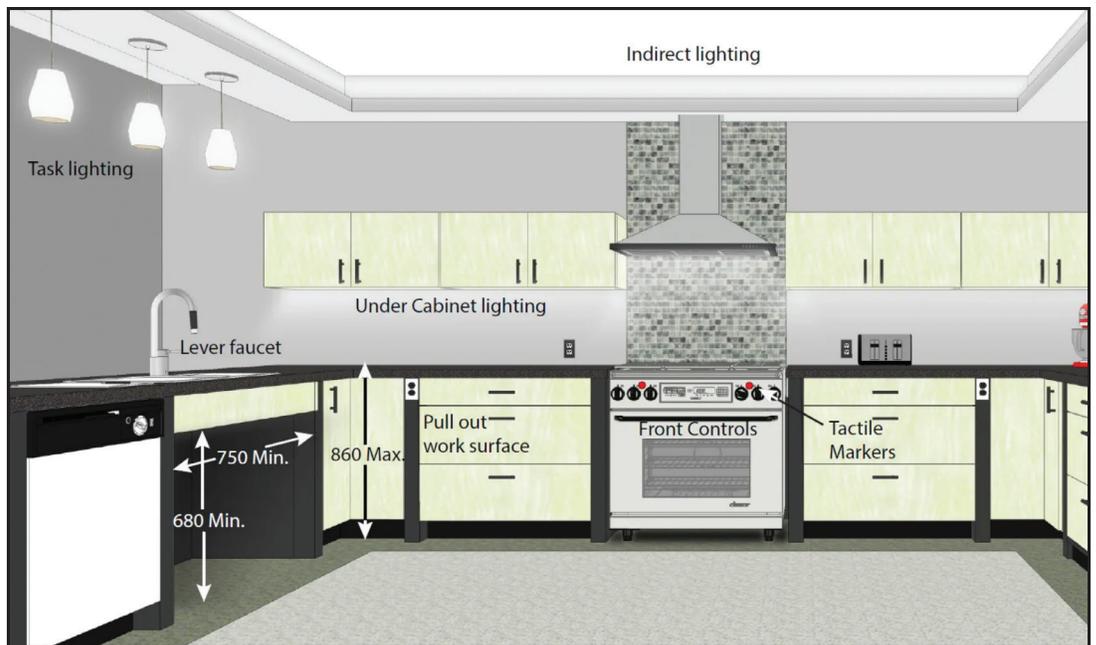
With this in mind, what does it mean to have an accessible home?

DeafBlind Ontario Services, an Ontario-based not-for-profit, aims to raise awareness about large and small-scale projects to improve the accessibility of a space in their **Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss**.

The newly released third edition of **Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss**, was developed by DeafBlind Ontario Services with the accessibility needs of individuals with deafblindness, a combined loss of hearing and vision, in mind. However, this free for download



Example of accessible house



Example of an accessible kitchen

resource can benefit anyone with sensory loss, including Canada's aging population.

According to the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI), 22 percent or 70,080 of Ontario seniors in

home care and long-term care reported experiencing vision and hearing loss combined.

"The purpose of this tool is to share guidelines and provide helpful tips that focus on establishing inclusive

environments for individuals with varying sensory loss. Inclusion of accessible features and design emphasizes efficient environments, space maneuverability, the importance of illumination, and the use of colour, texture, as well as specialized materials to name a few," says Kelly Patterson, DeafBlind Ontario Services' Manager of Client Services and Specialized Training.

Contrary to popular belief, accessible design does not need to be expensive and may esthetically enhance a space.

When looking at a kitchen, for example, there are a number of factors that can improve accessibility, ensuring that the space is functional and safe. Some of these factors include: efficient design, maneuvering space for mobility devices, minimal effort of use, ease of cleaning, illumination, and safety.

When designing kitchens, colour schemes need to be taken into consideration from the onset. Well thought out colour schemes in kitchens

assist with defining the features and enhancing the ability of those with low vision to understand and discern the features in kitchen environments.

Light-coloured flooring schemes could be cream, white, or a light grey with defined perimeters of colour contrasting material, such as baseboard a minimum of 100 mm wide when combined with light-coloured walls.

An alternate colour scheme to consider is dark-coloured flooring, light coloured cabinets, dark counters, light backsplashes, dark coloured drawer pulls, dark-coloured walls with light coloured outlets on the wall and light coloured trim.

One simple home improvement in the kitchen can include changing cabinet handles. These should be selected in a contrasting colour to the cabinetry and a "D" type pull is recommended.

The **Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss**, free for download on DeafBlind Ontario Services' website,

features comprehensive Accessible Design Guidelines, Quick Design Tips, and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Accessibility Enhancements section to provide readers with all of the information necessary to improve the accessibility of a specific space.

"Together, we can proactively break down barriers to make an environment safer, accessible, and inclusive to everyone in it," says Patterson.

DeafBlind Ontario Services provides accessible residential and customized support services in remote communities and urban centres across the province, including in Ottawa, Embrun, and Vars. Their holistic approach to Intervenor Services empowers people with deafblindness to achieve their goals and dreams. Learn more at <https://deafblindontario.com/our-services/accessibility-guidelines/>

Renew your membership or become a member of CDBA at

www.cdbanational.com/become-a-member



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Nominations are Now Open for Canada's Volunteer Awards 2020

The Call for Nominations for Canada's Volunteer Awards will be open from August 6 until September 30, 2020.

Now is your chance to recognize the impact that outstanding volunteers, not-for-profit organizations, social enterprises and socially responsible businesses create in your communities, especially now during this uniquely challenging time in Canada.

We all play a role in recognizing volunteers! By nominating an individual or an organization to Canada's Volunteer Awards, you are helping to raise awareness of the vital role that volunteers play in strengthening communities across Canada.

Canada's Volunteer Awards is a Comprehensive Volunteer Recognition Program

On August 7, 2020 the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development announced the 2019 Award Recipients and the organizations they chose to receive a grant. In addition to receiving an award at a ceremony from the Government of Canada, Canada's Volunteer Awards recipients have access to:

Funding Opportunities – Award recipients can choose a not-for-profit organization to receive a grant of \$10,000 (national award) or \$5,000 (regional awards).

Learning Opportunities – Recipients participate in an exemplary practices forum where they can share best practices with other sector leaders.

Networking Opportunities – Award recipients become part of the Canada's Volunteer Awards alumni community.

21 Canada's Volunteer Awards Recipients are selected

One national award

Thérèse Casgrain Lifelong Achievement Award: for individuals who demonstrate exceptional achievements through volunteering for at least 20 years

Four regional awards across five regions:

Emerging Leader: Youth aged 18 and 30 who have demonstrated community leadership

Community Leader: Individuals or a group of volunteers who have taken a lead role in developing solutions to social challenges in their communities.

Business Leader: Businesses that demonstrate social responsibility in their practices, as well as, for profit and not-for-profit social enterprises dedicated to creating social, cultural or environmental benefits for their communities

Social Innovator: Recognizes the contributions of not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit social enterprises that find and use innovative approaches that address social challenges in their communities.

You can play a role in recognizing Canada's volunteers!

Do you know an individual or an organization making a difference in your community? Nominate them to receive an award to recognize their significant contributions!

Thank you for helping us recognize the incredible efforts of individuals and organizations who are making an impact in communities across the country. Please help us spread the word by sharing this message with your networks.

For more information, or to learn more about the nomination process, contact us at 1-877-825-0434 or Info-cva-pbc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca.

If you are on social media, follow us on Twitter @ESDC_GC and Facebook @ESDC.GC for the latest updates on Canada's Volunteer Awards. Give our posts a Like or Share! We encourage you to share our content throughout this call.

FAITES LA DIFFÉRENCE
PRIX POUR LE BÉNÉVOLAT DU CANADA

MAKE A DIFFERENCE
CANADA'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS



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All people who are deafblind will live rich meaningful lives.



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