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APRIL 2014

MAGAZINE

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

2014 Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award Recipient





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WhyNot.

The Canadian
Helen Keller
Centre
Award Issue



WhyNot. Magazine / APRIL 2014

Published by the *Canadian Foundation
for Physically Disabled Persons*,
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twitter.com/cffpdp

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Design & Production: Craig Allen

Printing: Thompson Printing, Paris, Ontario

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Cover: Photo, George Brown College

IN THIS ISSUE

Messages 4

6 The Art of Bringing People Together

Living Proud and Giving Back 8

12 The Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award
Our 2014 recipient is George Brown College

The 2013 Award Luncheon 14
CNIB is Honoured

18 New Funding Provides Skills Training

JuneFest 20
Deaf-Blind Awareness Month Event

2013 CHKC Award Luncheon Committee Members

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Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, a charitable organization founded in 1985, assists people with physical disabilities to live fuller lives. Its mission is to create awareness in the public, business communities and government of the abilities of persons with disabilities and their needs in the areas of housing, employment, education, accessibility, sports and recreation and research. In the past thirty years, the Foundation has raised substantial funds, which it has distributed to a wide variety of organizations and events. These include the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame, the Eternal Flame of Hope, the Rotary Cheshire Home, the Canadian Helen Keller Awards Luncheon, the annual Great Valentine Gala, the King Clancy Awards, The Hon. David C. Onley Award, the Corporate Awards, the WhyNot Marathon, the first Canadian Marathon for the Paralympics, Jeff Adams' CN Tower climb and Rolling Rampage on the Hill.

M



It gives me great pleasure to send my warmest greetings and congratulations to George Brown College on being honoured at the 10th Annual Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award Luncheon.

When we give—whether in time, talent or money—we grow as individuals and as a community. As governor general, I firmly believe Canada has benefitted richly from the contributions of professionals, volunteers and philanthropists who dedicate themselves to helping others. Today, the Canadian Helen Keller Centre honours an institution which has demonstrated a stalwart commitment to enriching the lives of students with physical disabilities.

I congratulate the staff and students of George Brown College on receiving this honour and I thank you for making Canada a smarter, more caring place to live.

David Johnston
The Governor General

It is with pleasure that I extend warm greetings to the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons on the occasion of your 10th Annual Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award Luncheon.

Through commitment and hard work, your Foundation has made great progress in raising awareness and recognition of the accomplishments, and unique gifts, of persons living with disabilities. Since 2001, the Canadian Helen Keller Centre has provided deaf-blind persons access to the life skills training and information they need to achieve independence. Your staff and volunteers are truly dedicated to furthering accessibility, which I define as that which allows a person to reach their full potential.

This year you are honouring an organization, George Brown College, for its outstanding contribution to deaf-blind education.

As The Queen's representative in Ontario and as Patron of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, I send my best regards and warm wishes for an enjoyable afternoon.

David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

GEORGE BROWN



On behalf of the consumers, staff and board of directors of the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC), I am so pleased to welcome you to the 10th annual CHKC Award Luncheon.

CHKC's doors opened well over a decade ago to offer Canadians who have a hearing and vision loss the opportunity to learn new skills, increase independence and decrease isolation.

Over these many years, we have seen challenge and triumph for CHKC. Challenge because we continue to rely heavily on fundraised dollars, and triumph because of the strong partnerships we have cultivated with a number of key stakeholders. These valued partners include the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, which has been a strong supporter of CHKC from the beginning. Today's event is a testament to their commitment in ensuring CHKC's sustainability from year to year.

We are also grateful for the support of other exceptional partners like George Brown College and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The college provides the skilled professionals the deaf-blind services sector needs, and the Ministry provides unparalleled levels of funding not found anywhere else in this great country. Corporate sponsors and individual donors assist CHKC in projects both large and small.

And, finally, to everyone in attendance this afternoon, you are an honorary partner of the Canadian Helen Keller Centre. Your presence demonstrates that, at the end of the day, it is people who make a difference in the lives of others.

Cindy Accardi

*Executive Director,
Rotary (Don Valley) Cheshire Homes Inc.
Canadian Helen Keller Centre Inc.*

As founding chair of the Canadian Helen Keller Centre, I am delighted to welcome you to the 10th annual CHKC Award Luncheon.

Over the years we have recognized the community involvement of many deserving honourees. Each has made a significant contribution to help people with disabilities, including the deaf-blind community.

This year's award recipient, George Brown College (GBC), is a valued partner of CHKC as it offers the only college program in Ontario training people to be the "eyes" and "ears" of people who are deaf-blind. GBC graduates enter the job market as professional intervenors, ready to facilitate communication, independence and access to information.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is another key partner. Their investment since 2006 has helped CHKC offer high-quality, uniquely tailored programs that expand the skills and confidence of people who want, and are capable of, living independently and safely. We are delighted to have the Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Community and Social Services, provide a keynote address this afternoon.

Corporate sponsors including Cineplex, IBM, ICICI Bank Canada, Otto Bock, Scotiabank and TD Bank are also important partners to the success of today's event. They exemplify what a good corporate citizen looks like: forward thinking, influential and compassionate.

The disability of deaf-blindness, which includes all types and degrees of dual hearing and vision loss, can be isolating and restrictive. CHKC's training programs help people who are deaf-blind achieve their full potential.

On behalf of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, I offer our sincere gratitude for your support.

The Honourable Vim Kochhar

*Chair,
Canadian Foundation for
Physically Disabled Persons*

Welcome to the 10th Canadian Helen Keller Centre annual award luncheon. It's been 10 years – my, how time flies.

I've been involved with the Canadian Helen Keller Centre for several of these past 10 years. What I love about CHKC is knowing that those at the centre can, and do, make a difference. When I find myself complaining about some experience in life that I would have liked to have gone better, I look at the people I've met through CHKC, and quickly conclude that I have absolutely nothing to complain about. I would describe the group as inspirational mentors – a group without a better track record.

Many intervenors working at CHKC, and across Canada, are graduates of today's award winner George Brown College's Intervenor for Deafblind Persons program. The innovative curriculum offered by GBC not only turns out intervenors who are highly skilled and ready to work, but they exemplify leadership in post-secondary education.

I've observed the Ontario Government's recognition of the special needs of this relatively small group of individuals. Their growing support to individuals who are deaf-blind, and organizations like CHKC, is much appreciated and satisfying. It would be easy for the needs of this relatively small group to be lost amongst the needs of much larger, more vocal, groups of people. I am pleased the Ontario Government chose to respond and not let their needs be lost. Without the support to employ professional intervenors, organizations like CHKC could never begin to offer what deaf-blind people need to live an independent life, with quality experiences.

My role wouldn't be complete without acknowledging the outstanding work done by the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons' Founding Chair the Honourable Vim Kochhar. Over the last three decades his leadership at the Foundation has, and is, influencing a major change in how Canadians view disabilities and what's possible when we all make a difference.

Larry Corke

*President, Gulfcom Inc., GoneViral TV
Chair, CHKC Award Luncheon*

The Art of Bringing



THE ARTS play an integral role in the lives of many. Art has the ability to speak to our emotions through paintings, sculptures, music, dance, photography and more. The Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) brings the love of art to its consumers as individuals, both at its training centre for people who are deaf-blind and through one-on-one services in the community.

An important part of the CHKC mandate is to provide support to deaf-blind seniors. These services foster independence to help people

ous woman. Violet's interests span from classical music to local, national and international news and she remains on top of the world around her.

It should therefore come as no surprise that Violet's original service request was equally extraordinary – that CHKC find someone to visit her home and play her piano. An accomplished pianist, Violet had always read music by sight. But, over time, her progressive vision loss caused by an eye disease called macular degeneration meant she could no longer play.

CHKC matched Violet with Joel Giroux, a longtime Intervenor and talented musician. Over the past three years, Joel has spent time with Violet once or twice a week. Violet also accesses Intervenor services through Rotary Cheshire Homes (RCH), the founding parent agency of CHKC. These two agencies work closely together to provide services to the community and attract volunteers who offer additional support. "The time Joel spends with Violet is very much about who she is as an individual. Violet does not have a community

conversation and we've listened to a lot of Glen Gould playing Bach," explains Joel Giroux. "Violet loves talking about him and about the personal histories of musicians. She is fascinated by composers and their life histories, including their indiscretions and bouts of madness. Violet is also very interested in hearing about concerts I've attended, especially classical music in contemporary settings. Whenever I can, I share stories of what I have been hearing."

Playing the piano was the impetus for Joel's initial time with Violet, but the services CHKC and RCH provide for



CHKC assists seniors in community participation

of advanced age continue to live independently in their homes. They also provide opportunities for social interaction outside of a senior's own family and friends.

The Right Note

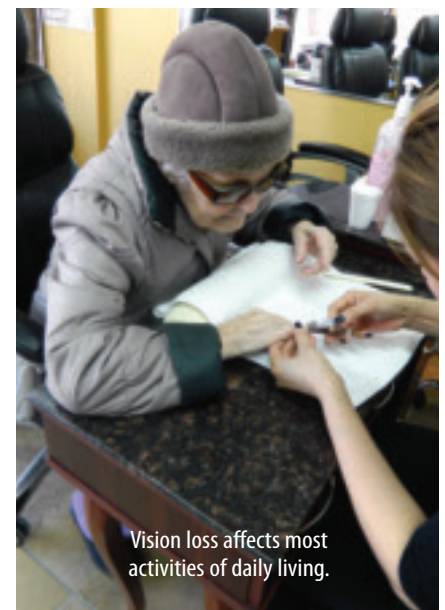
Violet Stephenson is 100 years old and has been using the seniors services of CHKC for approximately three years. Push away any images in your mind of a frail old lady shuffling about in her home. Indeed, Violet is quite the opposite – an extremely mobile and vigor-

ous woman. Violet's interests span from classical music to local, national and international news and she remains on top of the world around her. It should therefore come as no surprise that Violet's original service request was equally extraordinary – that CHKC find someone to visit her home and play her piano. An accomplished pianist, Violet had always read music by sight. But, over time, her progressive vision loss caused by an eye disease called macular degeneration meant she could no longer play. CHKC matched Violet with Joel Giroux, a longtime Intervenor and talented musician. Over the past three years, Joel has spent time with Violet once or twice a week. Violet also accesses Intervenor services through Rotary Cheshire Homes (RCH), the founding parent agency of CHKC. These two agencies work closely together to provide services to the community and attract volunteers who offer additional support. "The time Joel spends with Violet is very much about who she is as an individual. Violet does not have a community

of like-minded people who listen and talk about music, so we have rejuvenated that important part of her life," said Marta Zaharia, Seniors Coordinator for CHKC. "This is an excellent example of how we try to find connections between Intervenors and our clients." During their time together, Violet and Joel often discuss current events or listen to the late Glen Gould, a celebrated 20th century Canadian pianist renowned for his interpretation of music by Johann Sebastian Bach.

"Glen Gould is a regular topic of

her have expanded over time. As with many deaf-blind seniors, CHKC and RCH help Violet with essential daily living tasks such as reading mail and the newspaper, banking and going to the doctor and other appointments. Intervenors also communicate auditory and visual information from the environment to Violet, which deaf-blind consumers are not able to get on their own. Assistance with daily living and individualized services helps seniors remain independent, even when, as in Violet's case, their families, friends and



Vision loss affects most activities of daily living.

neighbours remain closely connected and actively involved.

“I don’t know what I would do without CHKC and RCH,” said Violet. “I like to feel independent and do things for myself, like shopping, banking and getting my nails and hair done. With help, I can do all these things and more. CHKC and RCH also give me a meaningful connection to music and the community, which is especially important at my age.”

“The importance of having someone to listen to you cannot be stated strongly enough,” adds Joel Giroux. “The ability to go over one’s personal history with somebody for whom the story is new and to do so in the context of talking about current events, what’s happening in the world, and to share one’s experiences with someone who is actively listening to you is very

time to socialize and have a cup of coffee or tea. All participants are over the age of 60, but younger volunteers are bringing the art of photography and giving to the program.

Nadine Anderson and LeeAnn Huitema are two deaf-blind women who live independently in their own apartments at Rotary Cheshire Homes. Both volunteer their time for Rendezvous at Helen’s – Nadine as the group’s exclusive photographer and LeeAnn as a host managing food, beverages and decor for the meetings.

Nadine’s journey into the art of photography began on a trip to Toronto’s Distillery District. CHKC had invited the entire deaf-blind community and Nadine was there taking photos along the way, showing obvious delight in documenting the day. This light bulb moment resulted in Nadine becoming

private Facebook page for our community members to enjoy and we showcase them in other appropriate ways as well.”

With Nadine’s success at CHKC, there has been talk of furthering her photography work through other volunteer activities and education. She is already lending her keen eye to photograph events for the Deaf-Blind Association of Toronto and the Ontario Deaf-Blind Association.

LeeAnn Huitema plays a different yet equally important role for Rendezvous at Helen’s. She arrives early, prepares coffee, tea and snacks, and then, using her artistic flare, decorates the house in keeping with the theme of each week’s activity. While seniors are actively participating in program activities, LeeAnn is there to assist as needed.

“We are proud and grateful to have



Nadine with camera beside Community Corner



Nadine taking pictures

important. It is as necessary as any other kind of service that CHKC or RCH provides.”

While classical music continues to touch Violet’s soul, other artistic pursuits are playing an important role in CHKC’s drop-in program for seniors, called Rendezvous at Helen’s. For some, it is quickly becoming a “picture perfect” fit. Held every other Tuesday afternoon, each Rendezvous at Helen’s meeting features activities focused on health care clinics, guest speakers, cooking and nutrition, games as well as

CHKC’s volunteer photographer.

“I love volunteering at CHKC,” said Nadine. “I always take pictures at barbecues, the Christmas party, workshops, clubs, etc. CHKC is very wonderful.”

“Nadine takes great pride in taking pictures of our seniors and their activities, and our seniors value the role she plays,” said CHKC Seniors Coordinator Marta Zaharia. “It has become a true passion for her over the past two years and she does a wonderful job. The photos are posted on a

LeeAnn as a volunteer. She adds so much to Rendezvous at Helen’s and the pride she takes in everything she does is evident,” adds CHKC’s Marta Zaharia. “We are able to reach our goal of involving volunteers from the community in CHKC’s programs because of the commitment of people like LeeAnn and Nadine.”

Whether in the homes of its clients or through group activities such as Rendezvous at Helen’s, CHKC is proud to be fostering the artistic interests of the deaf-blind community.

LIVING PROUD AND GIVING BACK

FOR DECADES, people have made donations to causes and campaigns that are close to their hearts. Some give in very public ways – running to raise money, attending black tie fundraising galas, campaigning door-to-door, or championing a cause with a social media campaign. Others do their good more quietly, making behind-the-scenes contributions that help strengthen their community. One such individual is Toronto's Bing Chen.

Bing embodies a spirit of gratitude by giving back to the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) – the organization that provides him with services to support him both in his work and daily life. Knowing more about Bing will help to illustrate this

giving spirit and how CHKC has been of assistance on his life's journey.

Bing's Story

Originally from China, Bing's hearing loss was not discovered until the age of two. Doctors told his parents he would benefit from a cochlear implant, but his mother declined and Bing learned sign language.

As he got older, Bing started to notice he was losing his vision as well. "At night when I was playing basketball with my friends it would be really hard for me to find the ball," said Bing. "I didn't think anything of it. I was just patient with myself."

Bing attended the Metro Toronto School for the Deaf (MTSD) after mov-

ing to Canada from China at the age of 12. An eye doctor's exam recommended by MTSD revealed Bing was losing his peripheral vision and that he had Usher Syndrome, a condition characterized by hearing loss and progressive loss of vision. "They told me that as I got older I would continue to lose my vision and eventually become completely blind. I was really scared. I didn't know what to do," he said.

With support from CHKC, Bing knows he can continue to learn skills that will become important as his sight worsens. So far, he has participated in Braille classes, cooking clubs and a workshop on safety in the community. Now 22 years old, Bing has also learned how to use a white cane while



Bing and Mélanie in front of donations in kitchen



Bing stocking shelves in Target backroom

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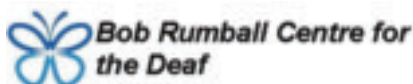
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CHKC Thanks you for your support



travelling. His ability to travel independently is helping him succeed in his first-ever job as a stocker with the Target Corporation in Toronto.

Literacy training with CHKC instructor David Hamen is also playing a big role in Bing's workplace success. David is university educated and, like Bing, is deaf. This is a significant asset because the two gentlemen communicate via American Sign Language (ASL), which is their first language, and David can hone in on the exact kind of literacy Bing needs because he also uses ASL for communication.

On Target

Bing has been involved with CHKC for two years and, for the past nine months, has met with David for 1.5 hours every week. Originally, general literacy was the focus of these one-on-one classes. In the fall of 2013, Bing's hiring by Target to stock shelves and assist with merchandising in the back room shifted the emphasis of his class work. David's instruction to Bing now also includes a variety of workplace literacy issues, including understanding memos posted on staff bulletin boards and signs in the back room. In addition, David works to help Bing understand Target's workplace policies, the company's vision and goals, and best practices for communicating with colleagues.

"Bing and I work on finding ways to communicate with different words he learns," explains David. "Sometimes we focus on communication strategies and look at solutions and ways to avoid any misunderstandings."

After approximately five months on the job, Bing is enjoying his work, even though he finds the early start time challenging.

"Bing travels to work on public transit using his white cane. He starts at 4 a.m. and works until the early afternoon," said Mélanie Gauthier-Perley, Training Coordinator for CHKC. "During his first month or so on the job, Bing attended work with an Intervenor. This specially trained professional acts as the eyes and ears

of a consumer like Bing and provides information about the environment and surrounding circumstances. CHKC's support makes it possible for Bing and other individuals who are deaf-blind to succeed in meaningful employment."

"Working with Bing is a lot of fun," adds instructor David Hamen. "He tells me how much he really loves his job at Target. He shows a lot of enthusiasm for his job and respect for his co-workers. We discuss how sometimes his job can be a challenge when it comes to communicating with his team members. As some do not know ASL, they have to find ways to communicate with each other as a team."

Target reports that Bing's hard work is paying off. "Bing has proven himself to be a reliable member of our team and is dedicated to consistently improving his performance," said Joshua Gordon, Executive Team Leader – Human Resources for Target at Centrepoint Mall.

Giving Back

Bing is being supported by CHKC to better understand his job. As a result, he is a proud contributor to his community and a proud supporter of the Centre.

"Without any fanfare, Bing regularly shows up with supplies for the Centre – many times with donations of coffee and tea to be enjoyed by fellow consumers who are participating in our programs and receiving services from CHKC," explains training coordinator Mélanie Gauthier-Perley. "Bing's amazing and ongoing generosity is a reflection of his pride in CHKC and desire to give back to the deaf-blind community. His contributions and acts of kindness make such a big difference and we are extremely appreciative of his support."

"I am proud to work with Bing. He is amazing," adds David Hamen.

Indeed, Bing is a wonderful example of the giving spirit that has helped to build CHKC into a vibrant organization for the deaf-blind community.



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2014 Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award Recipient:
GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE



The College

With a long history of educating students in the heart of Toronto, George Brown College is fully woven into the economic, cultural and social fabric of the city. It's one of Canada's largest, most diversified and highly respected post-secondary institutions, serving a broad and vibrant student body of over 24,000 full time students, with a rich program mix of apprenticeship training, certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The college has three main campuses in downtown Toronto, including Casa Loma, St. James and the new Waterfront campus, which opened in September 2012, along with 10 training facilities for almost 25,000 full time students.

The President

Anne Sado has been President of George Brown College since 2004. Her impact on the vision, direction and culture of the college has resulted in significant growth and has activated a critical public discussion on the value of college education in Ontario's economic development. In 2013 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada and that marks an apex in a highly decorated career.

In the past she was named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women for the second time by the Women's Executive Network as well as being named a Women of Influence Diversity Champion. She also received the YWCA's Women of Distinction in Education award, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her role impacting the socio-economic vitality of the city through her work at George Brown and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for her work with the YWCA of Greater Toronto.

The Program

The Intervenor (for Deaf-Blind Persons) Program started in 1991. Members of the deafblind community worked for more than twenty years to get formal recognition and training for intervenors. Nine organizations from that community worked for two years to develop this unique college level program and the first graduating class was in 1993. It remains the only program of its kind in the world.

Over 350 men and women have graduated from the program and are working across Canada and the world.

Deafblind intervention involves three components: an individual with deafblindness, the world around them and communication. Through the relationship of these three factors the world of the individual with deafblindness becomes alive and within reach.

The population of individuals with deafblindness is unique and complex. People may have been born deafblind or acquire deafblindness later in life. In both groups the spectrum stretches from those who are profoundly deaf and totally blind to those who have residual hearing and/or vision. Although degrees of ability vary, the need for intervenor services is constant. There are countless needs expressed by this community that can only be met with the provision of specialized services and alternative communication methods.

Intervenors are skilled in communicating with individuals with deafblindness and provide access to the world in which we live. In addition to learning Adapted American Sign Language, Two Hand Manual, Large Print, Voice-Over, Braille and environmental, concrete & touch cues, students learn sighted guide and orientation techniques, also about assistive technology, anatomy, medical challenges faced by some consumers and program planning.

The George Brown College Intervenor Program graduates intervenors skilled in the various methods necessary to become the "eyes and ears" for individuals with deafblindness. Our goal is for every individual with deafblindness to attain their greatest level of independence.

The women and men who enter the Intervenor Program have made a two-year commitment to learn a wealth of information and to do on-the-job learning about how the job is really done. This process is made complete when, working together, agencies provide placement opportunities and faculty advisors assist students to combine the theory, the practice and the necessary commitment.

The dedication, passion and expertise of the faculty ensure that students are learning with the best in the profession!





Photos by
Steve Blackburn

Canadian Helen Keller Centre AWARD LUNCHEON 2013

Held at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel
on April 25, 2013 to honour **CNIB**



Top Left – John Rafferty, President & CEO, CNIB, 2013 CHKC Award Recipient **Top Middle** – Premier Kathleen Wynne shaking hands with Ravi Vijh and Irene Rusek
Top Right – Rob Snoek, Emcee, Director, CFPDP **Bottom** – Medal winners from the 2012 London Paralympics, (Back Row) Patrick Anderson (Gold Medal, Basketball), Virginia McLachlan (2 Bronze Medals, Athletics), Sabi Marwah, Vice-Chair & COO, Scotiabank, Hon. Vim Kochhar, Chair, CFPDP. (Front Row) Jared Funk (Silver Medal, Wheelchair Rugby), David Durepos (Gold Medal, Basketball), Lt. Gov. David C. Onley, Michelle Stilwell (One Silver and One Gold Medal, Athletics)



Top Left – Lt. Gov. David C. Onley and Richard Onley, Vice President, Finance & Admin, Nipissing University **Top Right** – Hon. Vim Kochhar, Founding Chair, CFPDP, Lt. Gov. David C. Onley and Former CFPDP Director, John Bailey **Bottom** – Larry Corke, Award Chair, CHKC, Cindy Accardi, Executive Director RCH & CHKC, Aide de Camp, Lt. Gov. David C. Onley and 2013 CHKC Award Recipient, John Rafferty, President & CEO, CNIB

Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award

In 2005, the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) began recognizing pioneers and leaders in the fields of Visual Impairment, Deafness and Deaf-Blindness with The Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award. The annual awards ceremony is a key fundraising event for the CHKC's many programs to help people who have become deaf-blind.

The Canadian Helen Keller Centre Award Recipients:

2013 Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) was recognized as the country's leading provider of rehabilitation services and support for people living with vision loss. Between its research, public education, advocacy and rehabilitation programs, CNIB's goal is not only to improve the lives of Canadians who are living with vision loss today – but those of future generations.

2012 The Honourable David C. Onley, Lt. Governor of Ontario was recognized for his enormous contribution to build a barrier-free community for people with disabilities. Since being the Queen's representative in the Province of Ontario he has devoted his vision on adopting accessibility as the overall theme of his term in office.

2011 IBM Canada Throughout their 100 year history, diversity has been a part of their culture having hired the 1st disabled person 98 years ago. IBM's long commitment to diversity and accessibility has made them a well respected leader for the disabled community.

2010 The Honourable Vim Kochhar received the award for founding the Canadian Helen Keller Centre and Rotary Cheshire Homes. Vim has spent 30 years removing barriers for persons with physical disabilities and recognizing them for their abilities.

2009 ICICI Bank Canada decided early on to assist organizations that work in support of physically disabled individuals. This important commitment reflects the shared values of the bank, its employees and Canadians to ensure inclusive communities where we live and work.

2008 Microsoft Canada has made an enormous contribution to the disabled community in Canada. They were responsible for assisting in many innovative initiatives including Children's Discovery Portal at CNIB.

2007 Reverend Robert L. Rumball
Founder, The Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf
The Reverend Robert L. Rumball received the award for his more than 40 years of working with people who are deaf.

2006 Jim Sanders President & CEO, CNIB
Jim Sanders received the award for his achievements in the field of visual impairment. Jim has spent 35 years with the CNIB, working to increase the quality of life for people with visual impairments.

2005 Joan Mactavish received the award to recognize 38 years as a pioneer and activist for the development and delivery of specialized services for people who have become deaf-blind.



Top – Premier Kathleen Wynne and 2005 CHKC Award recipient Joan Mactavish with Cindy Accardi, Executive Director RCH and CHKC. **Middle** – Rick Brown, Hon. Vim Kochhar, Chair, CFPDP, Lt. Gov. David C. Onley, Juergen Rust and Dorothy Price, Executive Director, CFPDP **Bottom** – Hari Panday, Honorary Lt-Colonel, 32 Service Battalion with Lt. Gov. David C. Onley, Ruth Ann Onley and Lieutenant (Navy) Beth Lei, Training Officer, HMCS York



**Proud to support the
Canadian Helen Keller
Centre Awards.**

**We are working together
with the Canadian Foundation
for Physically Disabled
Persons to make a difference
in our communities.**



New Funding Provides Skills Training

During the coldest winter that many of us can remember, it warmed the hearts of the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) team to receive new short-term funding from Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

As background, CHKC opened its doors in 2001 to provide deaf-blind Canadians with training opportunities and services, and to raise public awareness about the needs of people who are deaf-blind. The organization provides services to adults and seniors living in the Toronto area. People who live in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and across the province can access CHKC's services when funding is available. Those who live outside the GTA are able to stay at CHKC while they are receiving training, however funding opportunities are limited.

"We are grateful for the government funding CHKC receives from MCSS and pleased that they continue to recognize the need for the services we provide to consumers living throughout the province," said Cindy Accardi, Executive Director of CHKC. "With the new short-term MCSS funding, CHKC was able to welcome three consumers from different Ontario cities for training, offer workshops for consumers in their own communities, and provide a comprehensive first aid training and certification program in Toronto."

Penny Leclair, who is completely blind and hears using cochlear implants, came from Ottawa to spend two weeks at CHKC. She lives alone in her own home and has had no family in Ontario since her husband passed away. CHKC is helping Penny learn to do many of the things her husband did, like budgeting, organizing records and communicating with service providers.

"I do not have access to instruction by people who understand deaf-blindness in Ottawa," explained Penny. "The



Penny learning how to use a MAC computer at CHKC

opportunity to live at CHKC for two weeks is allowing me to practice the skills I've learned and get more instruction in areas I might have problems doing. The environment at CHKC is perfect for my needs. I can get notes in Braille to remind me of the new systems I am learning. When this training is complete I will be able to organize my finances better and I also now know how to use a Braille display together with my iPhone, so I can get more done in less time."

Also with MCSS funding, consumers in the Ontario cities of London and Paris have received training in technology and money skills. In early March, tech instructor Megan McHugh, who is deaf-blind, visited the Westmount Public Library in London to provide education about deaf-blind-friendly apps for iPads, iPhones and the iPod Touch. Four individuals referred through DeafBlind Ontario Services took part in the workshop.

"In the weeks leading up to the workshop, Megan gathered information about each participant so that she could make the course interesting for everyone," said Mélanie Gauthier-Perley, Training Coordinator for CHKC. "Her goal was to demonstrate apps that would be useful to attendees in their own lives, with a focus on communication, accessing information and education."

Also in March, CHKC instructor Tracey Riggitto travelled to Paris, northwest of

Brantford, Ontario, to present a money skills workshop. It was attended by three consumers of the Canadian Deafblind Association (CDBA) and their intervenors. The aim was to provide participants with tools and strategies to manage a budget, including organizing monthly bills, ways to save money, different types of bank accounts and interest rates on credit cards. Tracey provided a customized

binder to meet the needs of each participant and, by the end of the session, each had an individualized system to implement in their own lives.

"First aid training has also been very much in demand," said CHKC's Mélanie Gauthier-Perley. "The timing of the new MCSS funding could not have been better as we had recently identified an organization willing to adapt its course for deaf-blind consumers."

Live Safeli is run by James Li, a partner of the Canadian Red Cross. James worked closely with CHKC to modify a one-day first aid course to take place over two days and ensure the information could be properly communicated.

"James and Live Safeli were very supportive and our funding from MCSS enabled us to make this happen for 10 consumers," added CHKC's Mélanie Gauthier-Perley. "Our in-house intervenor went through the first aid manual and modified the text to make it easier to understand. James then reviewed our modifications to ensure we were still capturing the intent of the text. Once everyone was satisfied, manuals were provided to consumers to review in advance of the training."

"Like the other programs, this first aid training and certification would have been difficult to fund without the support of MCSS," said Cindy Accardi, Executive Director of CHKC. "As always, we are extremely appreciative of the Ministry's ongoing support."



June 18, 2014

**JuneFest 2014 celebrates
Deaf-Blind Awareness Month**

Mel Lastman Square, 5100 Yonge St.

**Toronto, Ontario
12:00pm to 4:00pm**



**Call for Nominations for
The 4th Annual JT Award
Deadline: April 18, 2014**

For more info visit www.junefest.ca



JuneFest is hosted by the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) and Rotary Cheshire Homes (RCH). This festival celebrates June as the official Deaf-Blind Awareness Month in the Province of Ontario, as well as the achievements of those living with deaf-blindness. Proceeds from the event go to providing services to people who are deaf-blind. To learn more about JuneFest 2014 please visit www.junefest.ca

JuneFest 2013 took place June 5th at Mel Lastman Square in Toronto, Ontario. Though it was a cloudy, cool day the crowds came out to celebrate **Deaf-Blind Awareness Month.**

JuneFest



Photos by Steve Blackburn



JF committee members Lee Simpson and Coralie Metcalfe.



Left – RCH and CHKC Executive Director Cindy Accardi with Founding Chair the Honourable Vim Kochhar.



Right – Local school children use vision simulators and learn about deaf-blindness.



Left – JT Award winner Eddy Morten from Vancouver, BC with the Hon. Vim Kochhar and Jim Thompson, husband of the late Joyce Thompson, JuneFest’s founder.
Right – Deaf-blind consumer Craig MacLean uses ASL to tell stories.



Left – Visitors at the Ontario Usher Syndrome Association information table. **Right** – Corporate sponsor ICICI Bank Canada. JF chair Ravi Balchandani far right.



Left – JuneFest 2013 Planning Committee.
Right – Deaf-blind consumer Jeff Chow with his intervenor Gordon Thompson.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



The Hall of Fame recognizes distinguished Canadians who have made a significant contribution in assisting, or enhancing the lives of persons with physical disabilities.

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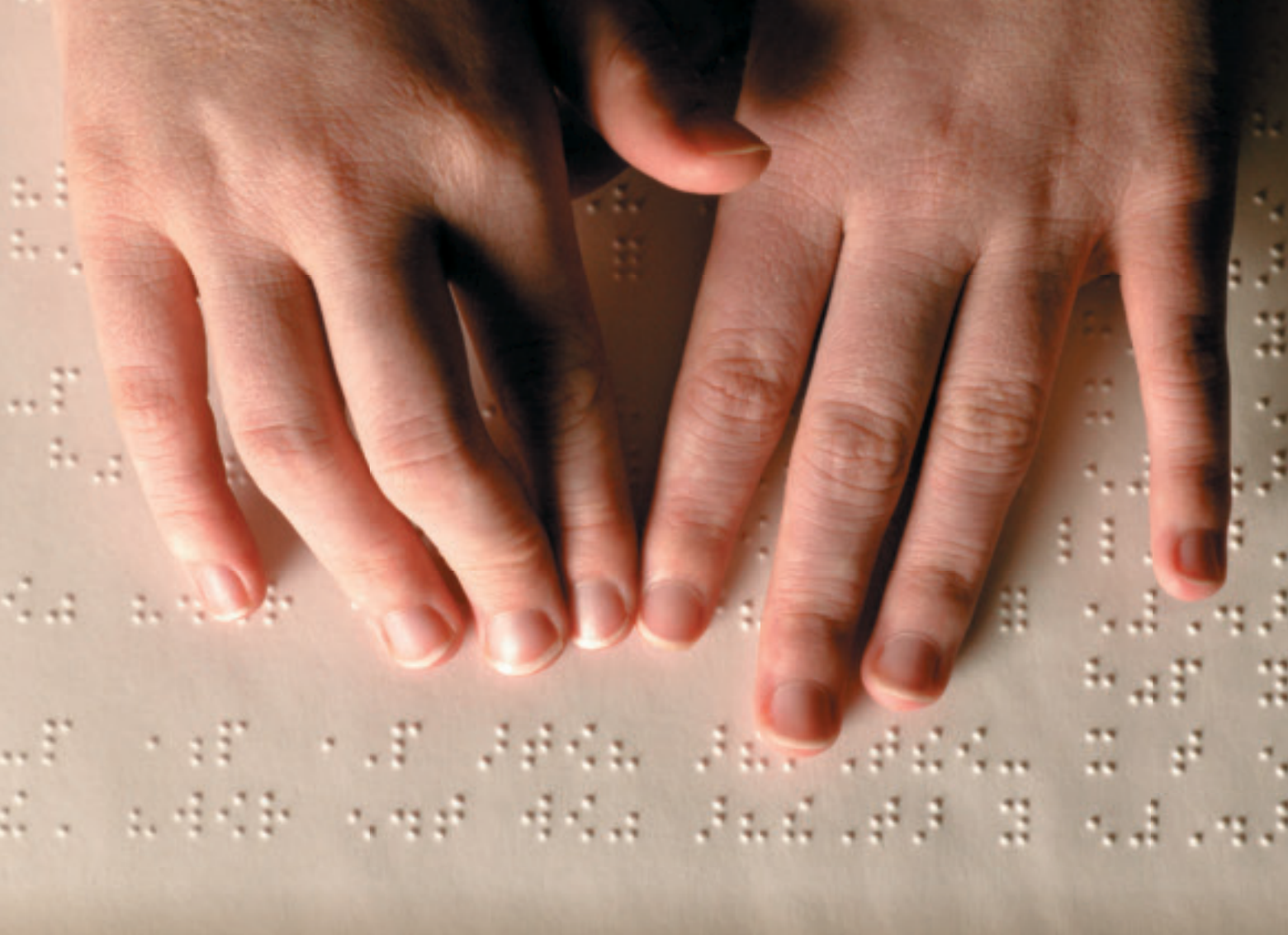
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