

DEAFBLIND LEARNERS: Photos & Testimonials



by Alicja Taras

for The Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults

funded by
HRDC - National Literacy Secretariat, & the
Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, & Universities



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Funded by: Human Resources Development Canada - National Literacy Secretariat, & the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, & Universities

This booklet is available as PART 1 of the manual entitled, “Literacy Assessment Tools for Deafblind Learners”, 2002.

To order the manual (including booklet) please contact:
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- Learners of the LPDBA who graciously participated in the creation of these profiles. Their openness has allowed us the privilege to glimpse into the lives of learners who are deafblind, and to bear witness to some of their aspirations
- The many dear colleagues & friends who have patiently accommodated me during the trials & joys of this very special project

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Case Manager: Marg Powell

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the opportunity to hear what our Learners have to say.

It is with much pleasure that I introduce the individuals in the following pages. From their hands to yours - these candid testimonials reveal some of their most personal tribulations and joys. They welcome you to hear them, and to see them through images that wish to inspire a thousand words.

Deafblindness is the combination of both deafness and blindness.

Considered the most isolating disability, deafblindness separates the individual from other people and from their surroundings. Each person is unique and has different needs depending on the nature of the vision and hearing loss and the stage in life at which he or she was affected. Deafblindness has been described as one of the most isolating of disabilities.

Access to information is provided to the deafblind person in their preferred communication method. People who have the senses of vision and hearing continually receive information from many different sources: radio, television, newspapers, current events, family, and community involvement. When a person is deafblind, getting information requires a difficult and complex effort.

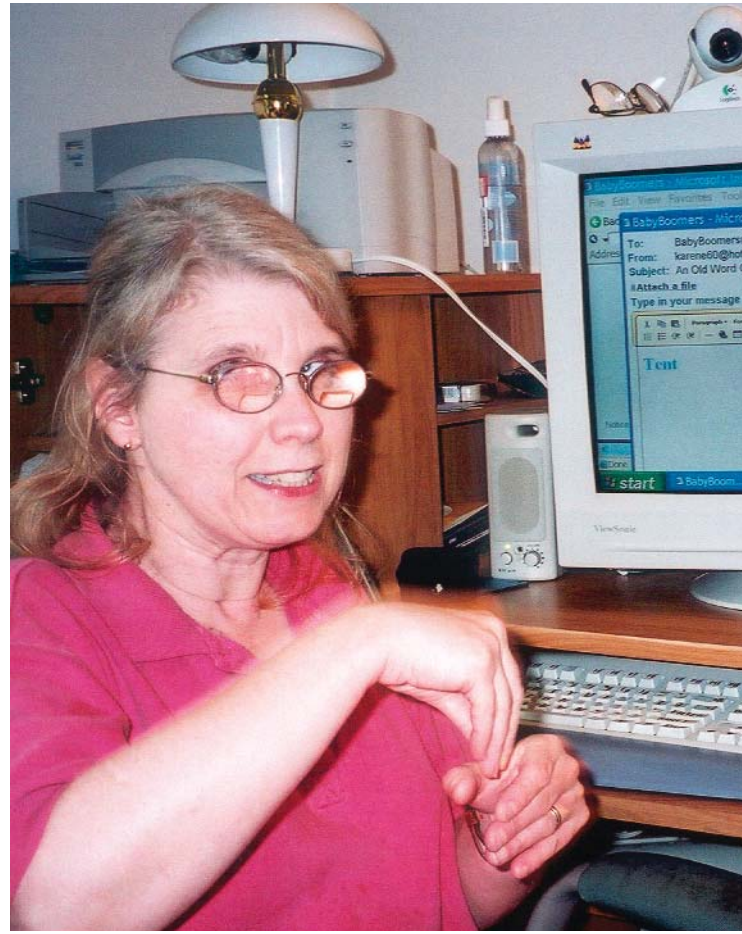
The Learners depicted in this booklet have contributed freely of their time and effort for the purpose of reaching out to the community at large. May their faces, stories, and quotes inspire you as they express Who they are through What they are...

Learners of the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults.

It is to each one of these individuals that I dedicate this work... and to my Teacher, for sharing the radiance and clarity that opens a world of Learning... with undying **Gratitude**

KAREN ESMAIL

THORNHILL



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
ASL

Receptive:
ASL

Hard copy:
Large Print

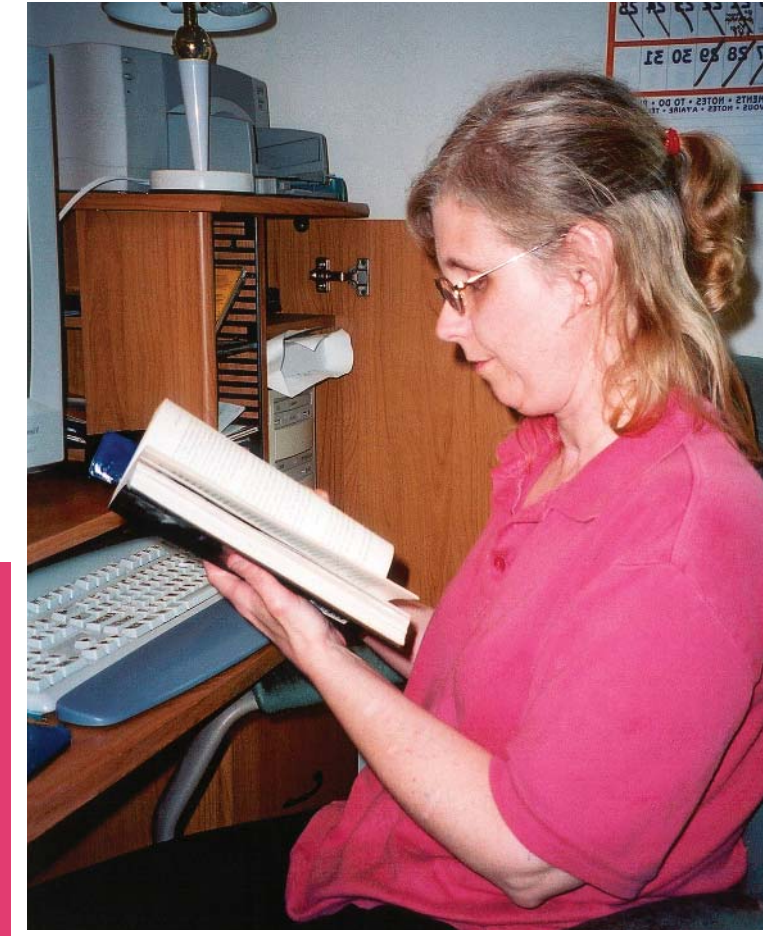
PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Wife & Mother

Teacher & ASL Technologist

CNSDB: Committee Member

DBAT Past Executive Member



*“God has given me a gift of teaching
My dream is to be the best teacher
Delighted to see students achieve their goals
Starlet Delight I am”*

*“My life has changed...
Now I am confident in myself.
In my way I want to tell everyone that I can share,
to sign and to laugh and to be watched”*

*“Success is like climb the ladder
Time to teach and time to listen
Time to learn and time to write
I feel accomplishment...
my dream come true”*

MY LIFE HAS CHANGED

My name is Karen Esmail and I am 45 years old. I am a deaf, visually-impaired learner in the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults in Toronto. I am married with 4 children. I work part time as an ASL technologist and teacher at George Brown College. I have worked at GBC in the Intervenor Training Program for 8 years.

I was born deaf and had cataracts due to rubella about 3 months into my mother's pregnancy. I had a heart murmur when I was born but that cleared up by itself. The cataracts were operated on to be removed but there is one left. I attended Metro Toronto School for the Deaf and graduated successfully. Then I attended Heydon Park Vocational School. After two years I transferred to Northern School and graduated. Unfortunately I did not get any kind of help from high schools and there were no services that I needed.

I use ASL very frequently. I also use BSL (British Sign Language), Hand-over-hand Sign, Two Hand Manual, and Lipreading. I started to learn Braille recently. I love to teach. I enjoy doing research, sharing testimony, reading books, and storytelling. I also love to swim, play games, write, and work on the computer. My past involvement on the executive of the Deaf Blind Association of Toronto (DBAT) was 2 years as corresponding secretary, then vice president for 6 months, then president for 2 years. I also joined CNSDB as a committee member. I took a public speaking course at RCA for my benefit. I am looking for any volunteer work to help people, like teaching or tutoring, or anything to help increase my knowledge and experience.

My dream is that I would be a best teacher and help people understand what I went through. To be a good teacher and to accomplish my development through learning, experience, and knowledge. I would also like to be a speaker and I would like to teach ASL and English skills. For now, I teach at college once a week. I want to work more than one day. So, I learn to improve my knowledge and gain experience better. My life has changed. I find literacy class is very helpful to me, through the teachers tutoring. Now I am confident in myself. My goal is to teach and to try to find more teaching work in near future.

Karen Esmail - Thornhill



ANTHONY CIPPARRONE

TORONTO



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
ASL

Receptive:
ASL

Hard copy:
Large Print

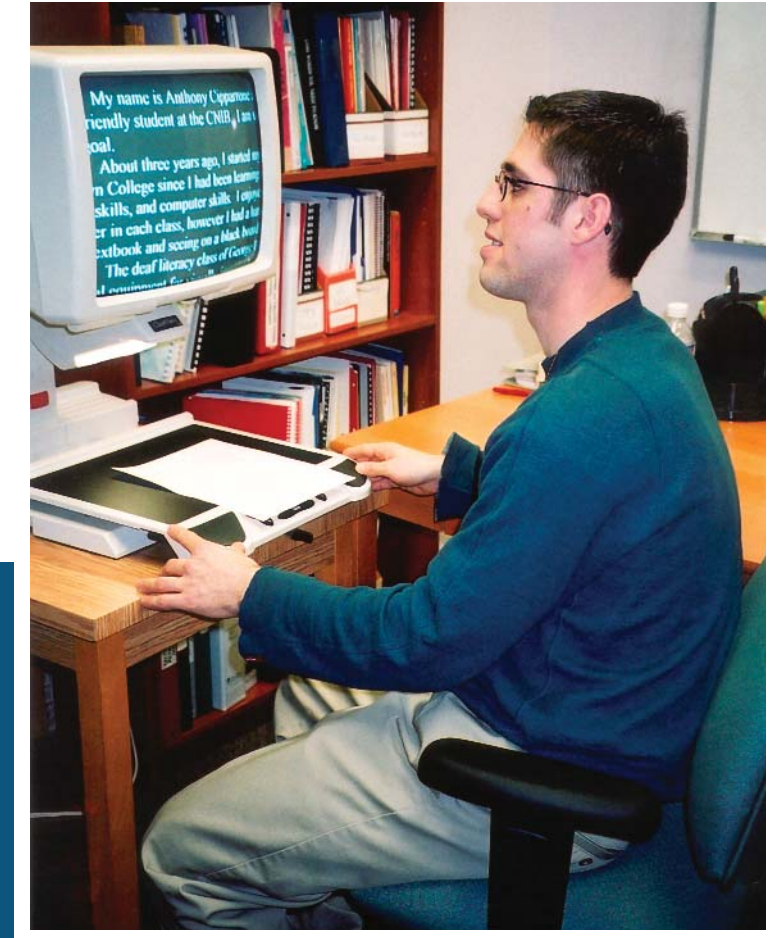
PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Postsecondary Student

Good Communication

English, Reading, Math,

Computers, Basketball



"My life is wonderful because I have a good time with my family and friends."

"I love deaf culture as it is a strong community in the world."

"Literacy helps students to learn many different skills."

SUCCESSFUL STUDENT

My name is Anthony Cipparrone and I am 24 years old. I am a smart and friendly student at the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults. I am writing this essay about my school and goal. About 3 years ago, I started my deaf literacy class at George Brown College since I had been learning a lot of English skills, math skills, ASL skills, and computer skills. I enjoyed good communication with each learner in each class, however I had a hard time reading each small word in any textbook and seeing on a black board about some information. The deaf literacy class of GBC didn't have any special equipment for visually impaired student. I didn't improve each skill, also I didn't be successful at GBC. I moved to CNIB from GBC because I preferred one on one tutoring at the CNIB - LPDBA.

I attend my literacy class at the CNIB after I enjoy learning a lot of English skills, reading skill, math skill, and computer skills in each class. CNIB is better with special equipment, clear communication, and Zoom Text on a computer for me. My teacher can sit closer with me for each general lesson in the literacy class. I improve many different skills because I am always working hard and I am motivated. I have a strong math skills and ASL communication. I will finish my literacy class this summer then I would go to Gallaudet University this fall. I am excited to be in a strong deaf community at Gallaudet, which can help me to improve a level of each skill. I will stay at Gallaudet for 5 years and I will study for an accounting program, educational program, and sociology program. Gallaudet has many interpreters in each class and they can help with most visually impaired students. I will have good communication with many new students at the campus. I hope I will be successful at Gallaudet and I will get the BA degree in the future.

CNIB is better than GBC because CNIB is better with any special equipment for me. I improve many different skills in each class at CNIB. My teacher can help better with me for good communication and general lesson in each class. When I will go to Gallaudet, I would like a challenged educational program in each class. I hope I will be successful to get the BA degree and become an accountant.

Anthony Cipparrone - Toronto



DOROTHY McMULLIN

HAMILTON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
ASL

Receptive:
ASL

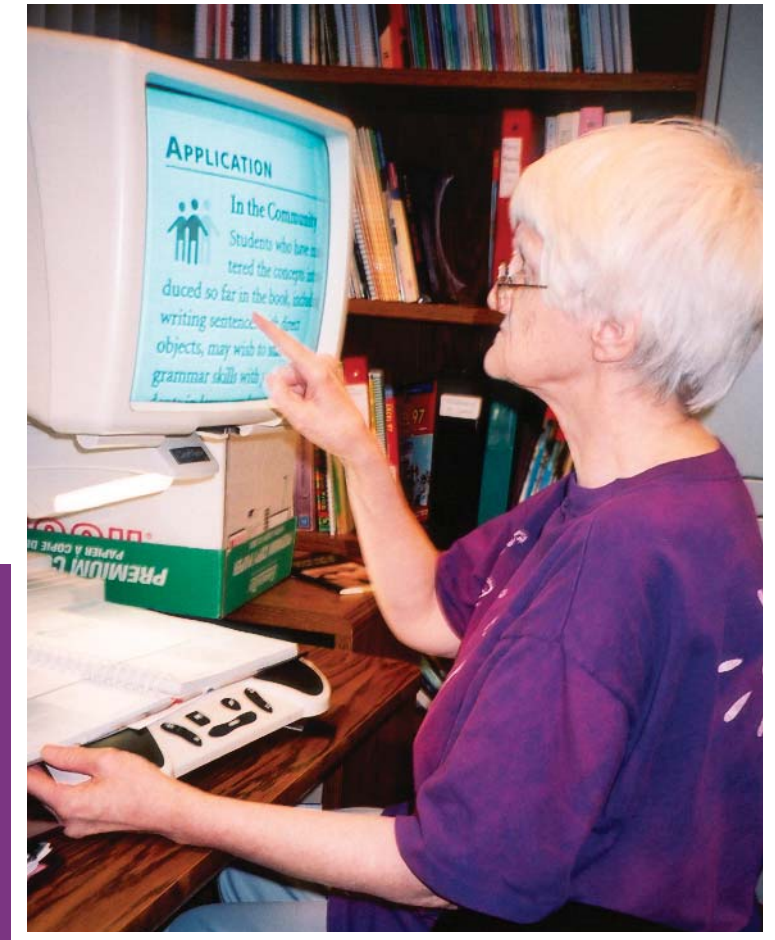
Hard Copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Senior Citizen

Homemaker

Travel, Socializing,
Letter Writing, Reading,
Cooking, Crafts



“Courage means that I find any friends who hide back from me, or their different story talks to gossip, I can walk toward each person away from her/his troubles to solve our problems so then I face them and overcome them. If I hear people’s false treatments gossip others, I walk toward to face them away from them. If so disturb - I can leave them away for so good”

“Literacy means that my life really changed so great. I can live on my own independence - going out everywhere. I really love my literacy class, to meet new friends, staff, and students in CNIB, and to learn more skills and socialize. Yes, Literacy means more Freedoms and Life to live and share with our friends”

I REALLY LOVE IT

My name is Dorothy Kathleen Violet McMullin. My birthplace was in North Bay, Ontario. I was born deaf, and blind in one eye. I enrolled in the Ontario School for the Deaf, in Belleville, Ontario in September 1949. I really like going to that school, to learn and gain education and school friends to socialize and care. I graduated in June 1964.

I decided to come to literacy class at the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults because I need to learn more computer lessons and more subjects. I really love it here. I have been coming since February 2001. I need more skills and it is better than my long stays in my apartment. CNIB instructors and staff really helped me in literacy class teaching me more skills. My life has changed. It is much different and more interesting because of the literacy class and my socializations with other literacy students here.

I have many friends. Three families of them are very close to me. I really love the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, since I was a small girl. My hobbies are cooking, body exercises, crafts, readings, and socializations to meet more friends. My real love is to travel and see new things as a tourist. I hope that my dreams come true to go away in flights on my special trips.

My goals in the literacy program include working with tourism, and caring for safari/zoo animals. Also to work in the collection gift shop and travel agent/tickets/coupon shops. Another goal is to volunteer at an agency for the deaf, and to work, care, and teach small preschool deaf or deafblind children. I want to improve reading and writing, also counting and mathematics for life skills. Another goal is to learn about the computer. Making letters, notes, special occasion cards, and playing Solitaire. Also E-mail and Internet. In the future I would be pleased to do more computer lessons and subjects and TTY device and BRS lessons. Many special thanks to all CNIB staff who are being our friends who really help and care here.

Dorothy McMullin - Hamilton
(translated, in part, by instructor L. Garrett)



PENNY LECLAIR

OTTAWA



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Two Hand Manual

Hard copy:
Braille

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Wife & Mother

Board & Committee Member

Reading, Walking in Nature,
Preparing international foods,
Weight lifting, Yoga



“My volunteer work includes the following: member of the City of Ottawa Accessibility advisory committee for a 3 year term, by appointment of the mayor of Ottawa; member of CNIB national committee development of an advocacy manual for volunteers and staff; member of national committee of CNIB Accessible pedestrian signals standard committee; member of Ottawa United Way speaker’s bureau, as a motivational speaker; member at large of Guide Dog Users of Canada; and a consultant for the ‘Literacy Assessment Tools for Deafblind Learners’ manual project,”



“At my computer I use a Braille display to do various tasks... It took me several years to learn all

this technology since much had to be signed to me that is visual and difficult to understand”

“Intervenors tape numbered Braille labels on my skeleton and I refer to corresponding Brailled lists of names of 210 different bones... hundreds of muscles are memorized by knowing where they attach to various bones... this is how I began to understand anatomy and physiology. Intervenors use play dough to create items that cannot be felt, using craft materials to create ways for me to understand body parts and how they function...”

“Words spelled into my hand provide substitutes for sight and hearing”

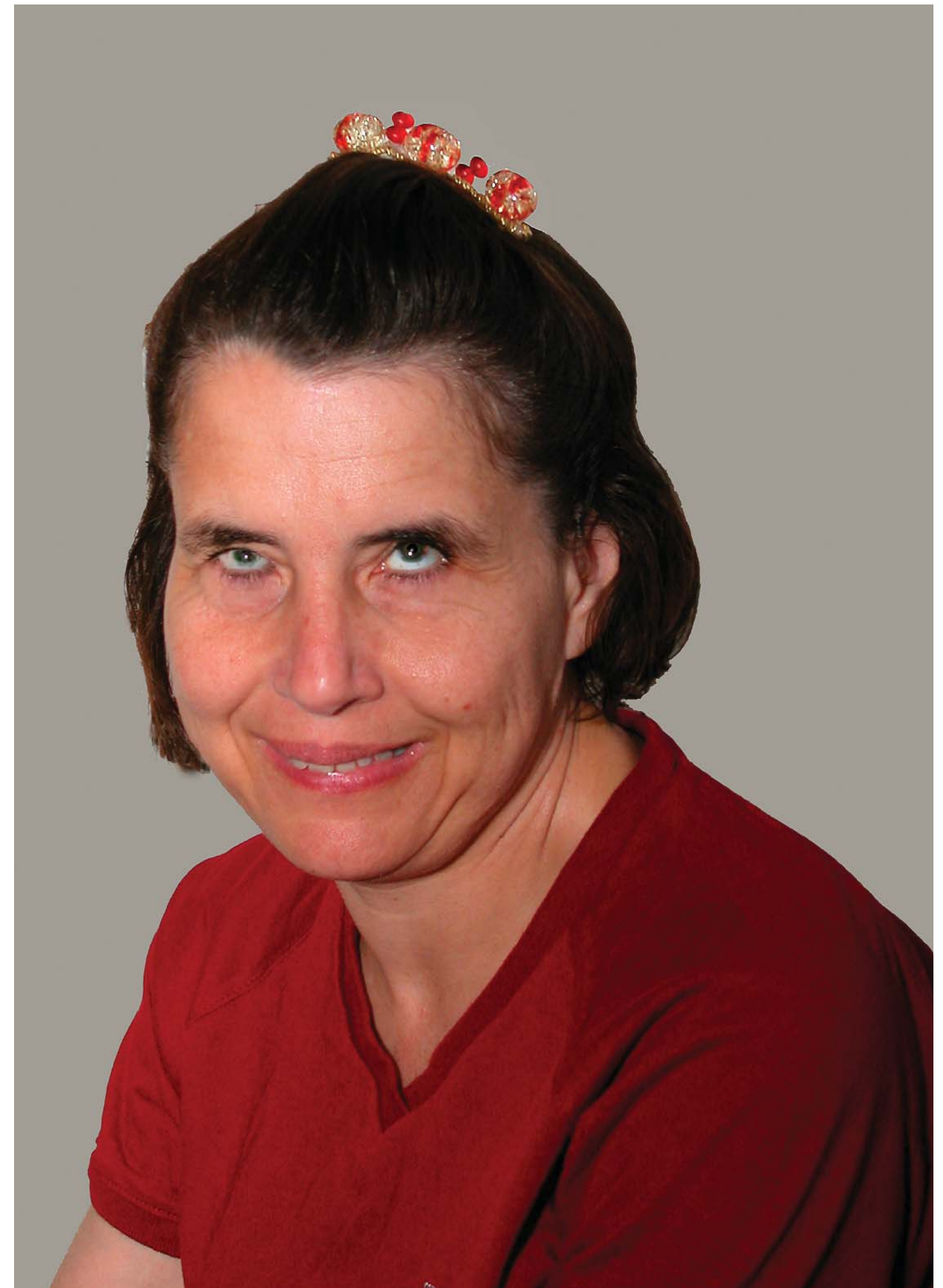
FIRST IMPORTANT STEP

I moved to Ontario from British Columbia in March 1997. I had never had professional intervention prior to moving to Ottawa. I knew the Two Hand Manual but had used it only to speak with other deafblind adults in the community where I lived before. In Ottawa I began to receive three hours of intervention, and learned what a difference sight and hearing could make to a person who cannot see or hear. I wanted to learn, and to experience and utilize my newly found asset, an intervenor. Unlike many deafblind people who have had sight for most of their growing up years, I have been blind since birth. Describing visual things to me is a challenge; but one that can be accomplished once special intervenors learn to use information I understand to create new concepts.

Then I entered the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults in Ottawa. I began to learn the keyboard and typing skills. I also learned how to use the various expression keys, which are used to make words have meaning and depth. After having my self-confidence tweaked through this learning experience I wanted to do something with my life. I explored the idea of writing a book. I discovered I did have some ability to write a book but I soon got bored in trying to organize and understand reader's position.

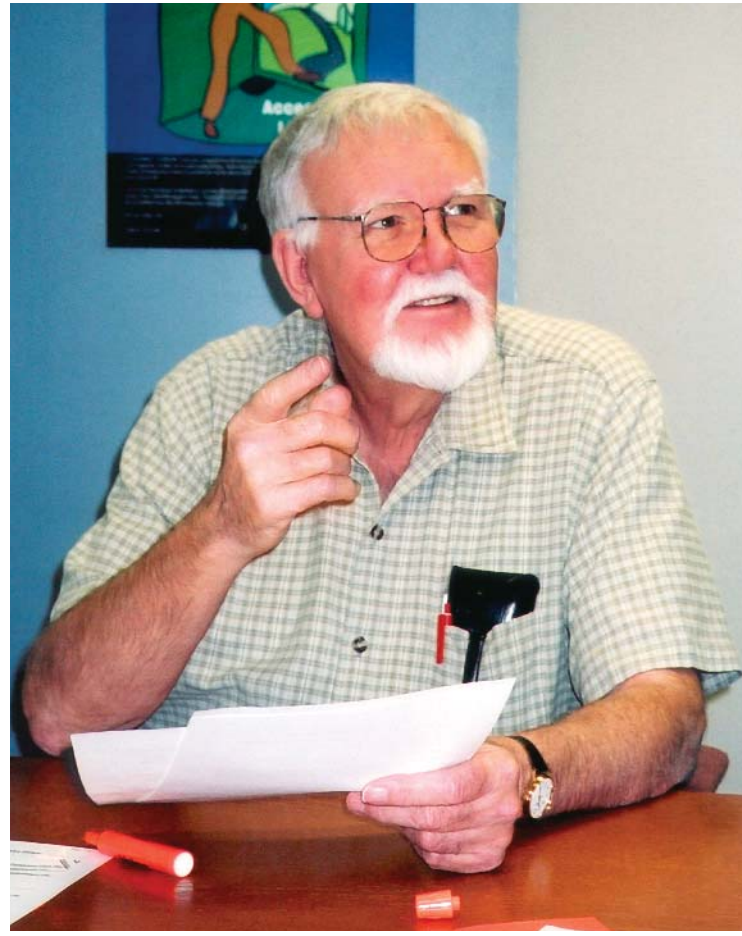
During 1999 I experienced my first full massage. It was a gift given to me and, after that experience, I knew I had found what I wanted to learn. With the help of the literacy program I enrolled at Algonquin College in Ottawa. The instructor at the CNIB literacy program helped to pave the way by providing positive feedback and the support I needed. Canadians who are deafblind are achieving higher levels of education. The most important aspects being that we acquire intervention; and that we had a good start of the basics through the literacy classes at CNIB. In the college program I attend lectures of two to three hours in length. I am studying anatomy, physiology, sociology, psychology, and nutrition. This is a 3-year program, however it will probably take me 5 or 6 years to complete. Intervenors are the key. And a solid beginning with the literacy program was the first important step. Learning is a matter of feeling and listening, through intervention services. Intervention will allow me to learn and become a massage therapist.

Penny Leclair - Ottawa



IAN McCOMB

LONDON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
ASL

Receptive:
ASL

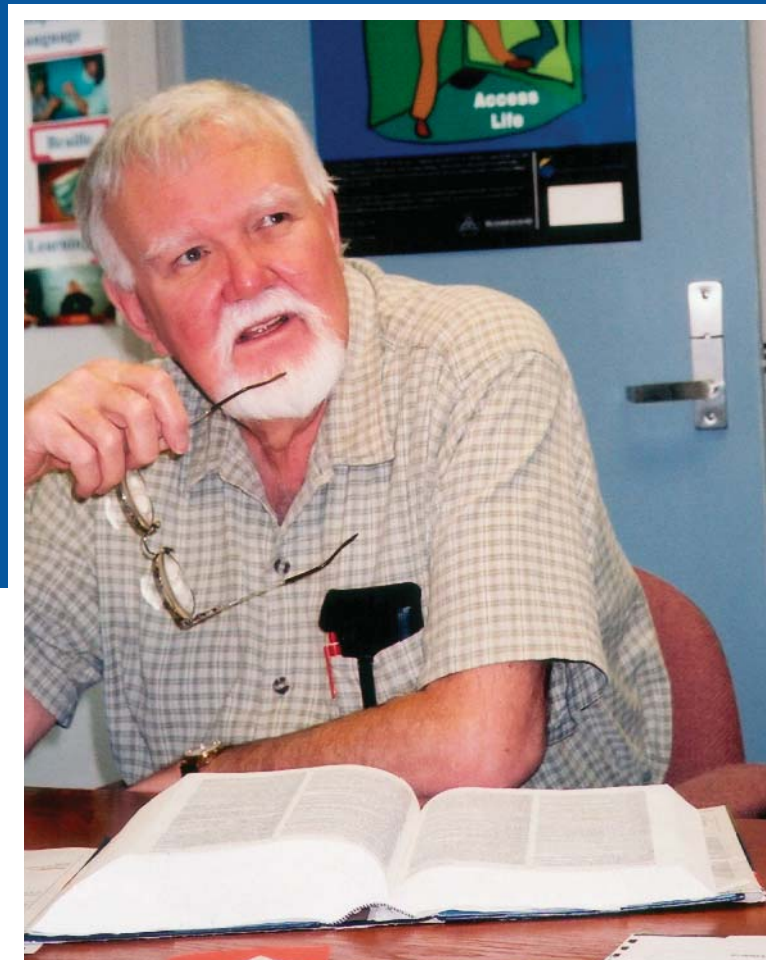
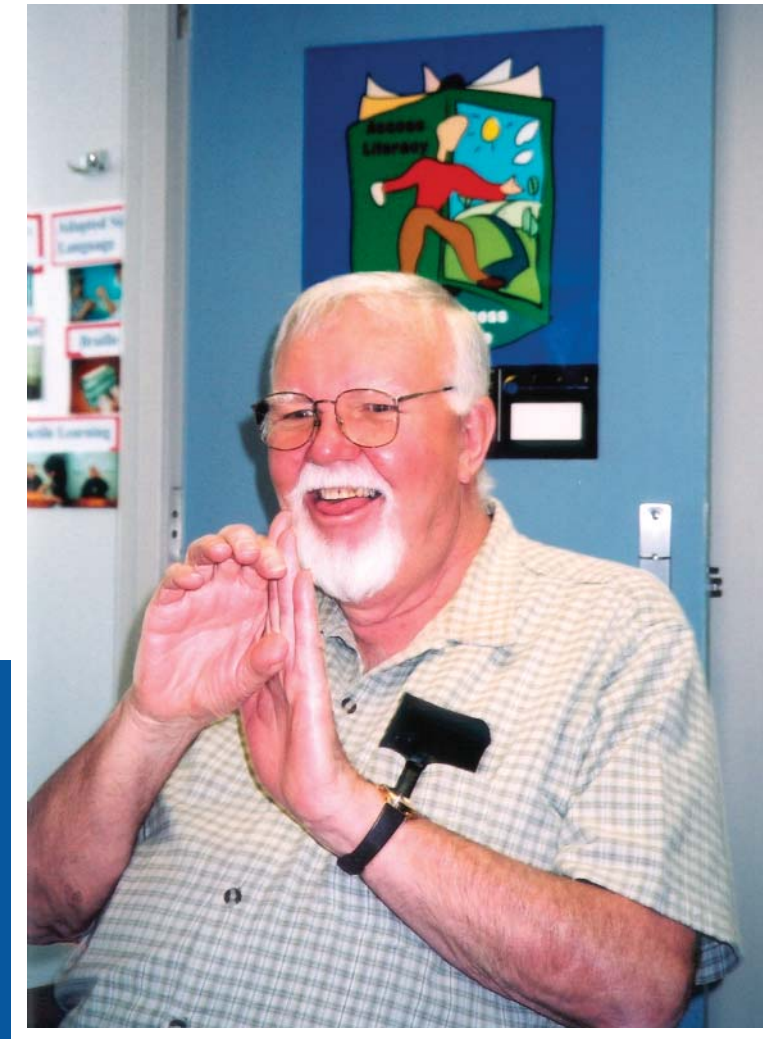
Hard Copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Husband & Father

CNSDB:
President London Chapter
Bingo Fundraiser Volunteer

Politics, Travel, Cooking



"Sometimes I think I am too old to learn, but I continue to come to literacy to improve my English skills"

"I need more writing skills and I feel the literacy program is helping me improve"

"I enjoy learning about computers in my literacy class... and I enjoy working with my literacy teacher"

"I learned by observing! I would watch how something was done and then I could do it. I learned very fast"

"I also learned from deaf adults. When I was out in the deaf community, I would learn a lot from older deaf people. They taught me many things, like how to drive and how to read maps, etc."

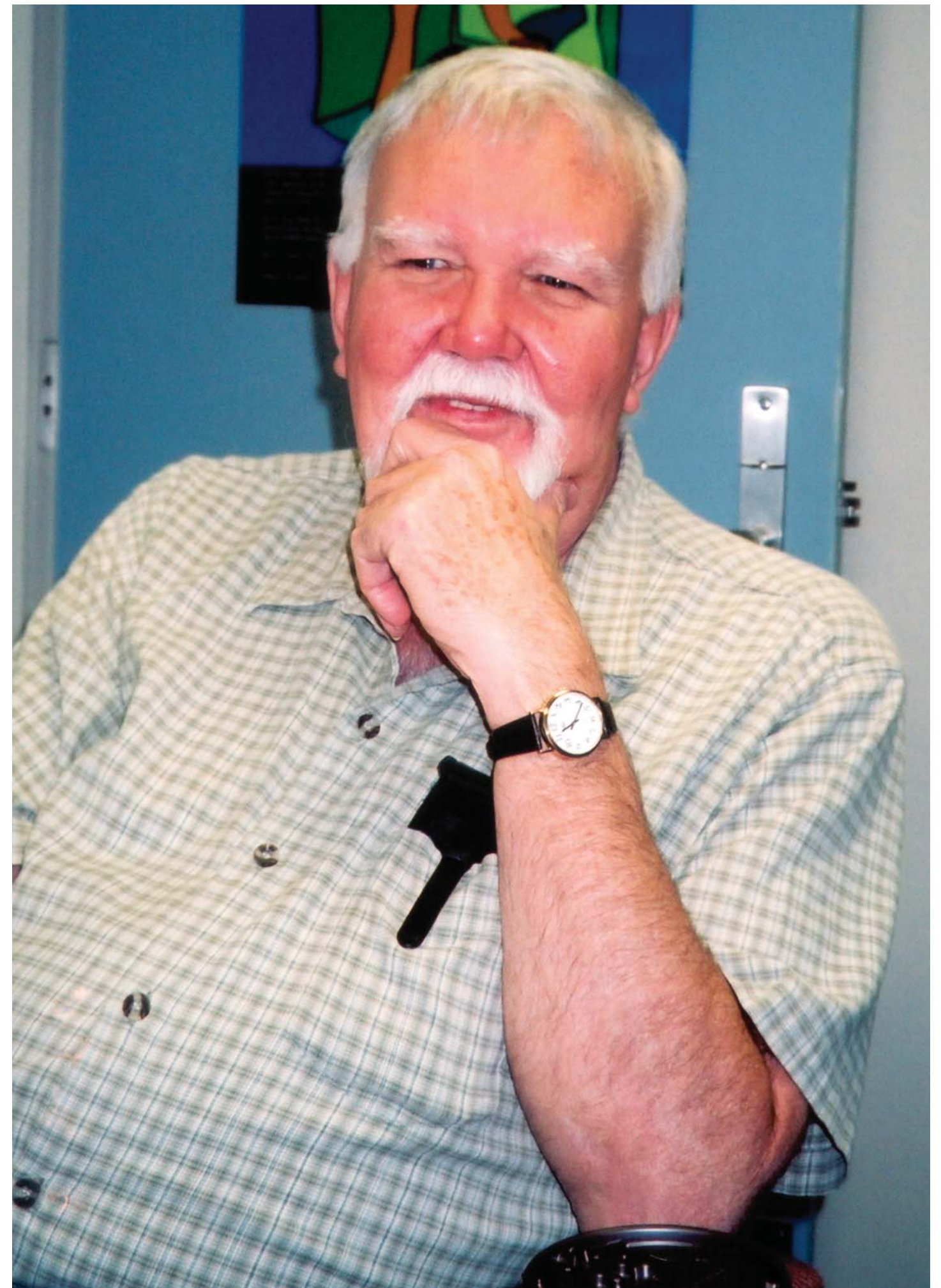
LEARNED BY OBSERVING

I started coming to the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults in 1992. I joined the literacy program to improve my English skills to help my hearing daughter with her homework. Learning to improve my English reading and writing skills has been a goal ever since.

Growing up, I did not learn much at school. I went to the Deaf school in Belleville. When I first started school, the hearing teachers knew sign language but did not explain things. They corrected our spelling and grammar, but did not tell us what the words meant. In 1941 WWII began and our deaf school was closed, since the army needed to use our building for their aircraft. The students were sent back home to attend regular schools in their area. I came to London and went to school with about 10 other deaf students. The teachers at that school did not sign. They spoke to us and forced us to try and speak. We were told to wear headphones but I am totally deaf, so it did not help me at all. I could feel some vibrations from it, but no sound or speech. The teachers spoke to me and I did not understand anything! I was not happy. This oral method was forced on us. When the war ended we were able to go back to the Belleville school, but the teachers did not sign. The oral method was now in use there.

My mother helped me learn English. I left school to look for a job. My mother would write a note for me to show to the foreman of the company. I could not read the note, but my mother told me it said I was interested in applying for a job, and that I was Deaf. I had no problem finding work. When I was 12 years old my older brother got me a summer job working with him at Jackson's Bread. I had various jobs from the age of 15 until I was hired by Fanshawe College as a Custodian. I worked at Fanshawe for 20 years until I retired. While I was employed at Fanshawe, my eyesight started to fail. I was very happy at all my jobs, but I was never happy at school. I did not learn anything at school. I learned by observing! I would watch how something was done and then I could do it. I learned very fast.

Ian McComb - London
(translated by instructor J. Tucker)



SUE GAUTHIER

OSHAWA



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Amplified Speech

Hard Copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Mother & Wife

Homemaker

Web site Design,
Reading, Writing, Camping



"The reason some people lose their sight and hearing is not due to genetic or hereditary factors... Sometimes deafblindness can be caused by domestic violence - as was in my case"

"Effective learning means not being afraid of making mistakes"

"Just because we are deafblind does not mean we are stupid"

"Don't ever give up - there are nice people out there"

"My new life will be a happy one from now on, thanks to all my new friends and my new family"

MY NEW LIFE

It is hard to put into words what the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults has done for me. If it wasn't for the literacy class I would not be here today. When I first started literacy class I had a very low self esteem, and I was a very angry, and hateful person. I was going through a lot of things then, and I had absolutely no family or friends that were there to help me. The people I knew always took and never helped me. When I met the literacy instructor and the Case Manager at DBS they saved my life in a lot of ways. I have learned that I am a good person, and I deserve to be happy for the first time in my whole life. If it wasn't for the literacy class helping me to succeed in my goals in life I would never be where I am today.

I got a lot of help since literacy class; I never knew about computers or really how to talk to people on it until I got my own computer. This is how I met the sweetest guy. The guy I met on the computer ended up being my friend and my husband. Now that I still have the literacy class, and a very special person in my life who I can trust and talk to I can do anything.

This is all about how much my life has changed. My life used to be pretty bad, until I met my husband, and my literacy instructor. These are the two people who deserve the best, because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for their caring, help, support to get me through the rough things that happened to me. It's real tough to forget some things, but my husband is a great help to me. He does not put me down for being blind and deaf. This is the tough one I have to deal with every day for the rest of my life. It's getting easier to accept when you have a nice guy like my husband. Now I have someone who cares about me and doesn't feel sorry for me. From now on the past is the past, and the future looks really good to me now. My beautiful daughter is real happy too. We are building a life as a family now, and that is so nice. I am going to be a very happy person.

Sue Gauthier - Oshawa



SHELLEY HEUSTON

LONDON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
ASL

Receptive:
Tactile ASL

Hard Copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Volunteer: CNIB & YMCA

Treasurer:
CNSDB London Chapter

Author: "Alphabet Book",
"Crossword Puzzle Book"
& "Seamus' Counting Book"



"I found to YMCA. I washed laundry. I like to folding towels and sheets. I am enjoy. I teach friend at work sign. I am good. I talked with friend at work sign. I met staff are very nice"

"Learning is important improve reading and math"

*"Literacy is reading books and learning computer.
If I not come to literacy, I be at home - alone & bored"*

"Literacy is exciting and interesting"

*"I read different book and made crossword puzzle.
I made Alphabet book for intervenor's son. I made number book ("Seamus' Counting Book"). I gave intervenor son number book"*



*"I love sports - Baseball and Hockey. My favorite teams Toronto Blue Jays and Maple Leafs!
Every day I read sports section newspaper see stats for Jays and Leafs. I have special equipment, CCTV - makes print newspaper big for me to see"*

PROUD OF MY WORK

I have Usher's Syndrome. That means I was born deaf and have retinitis pigmentosa (RP), or tunnel vision. I went to deaf schools and learned sign language there. I had more problems with my vision. When I was 22 I met a Case Manager from CNIB Deafblind Services. I learned about Usher's and about tactile sign language. I can't see sign language so I must feel it. I became a client of CNIB in 1982 and started to go to Lake Joseph camp every year.

I joined the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults 10 years ago. I was living in Chatham and took the train to London every week. My teacher picked me up at the station and brought me to CNIB for class. My first project was to make a Crossword Puzzle book. My teacher helped me finish the book and found a publisher to print it. I was very happy with the book and proud of my work. I gave copies to staff at CNIB. I went to a GOLD workshop and showed people my book. I also brought copies to camp and shared it with my friends who are deafblind. I decided to leave Chatham because there were no intervention or literacy services there. In 1991 my Case Manager, my intervenor, and my new literacy teacher helped me prepare for my move. In literacy I made two more books, for my intervenor's son. The first one was to help him learn the alphabet and has lots of pictures. The second book was for counting and includes ASL hand shapes for numbers. I enjoyed making these books.

Since 1999 I have been volunteering at the YMCA. I work in the laundry department, folding towels and sheets and stacking them on shelves. I've met lots of people there and have made one good friend. He is interested in sign language and I teach him signs so we can communicate better. I also volunteer at CNIB. Once a week, before literacy class, I empty all the recycling boxes in the building. I enjoy helping at YMCA and at CNIB. Last year I had fun teaching sign language to CNIB staff. One day I was very excited and happy that one of the staff tried to sign with me while I was recycling and I did not need to call an intervenor to interpret. I could chat with them all by myself, one on one!

Shelley Heuston - London
(translated by instructor J. Tucker)



RON DAVIDSON

HAMILTON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Amplified Speech

Hard copy:
Braille

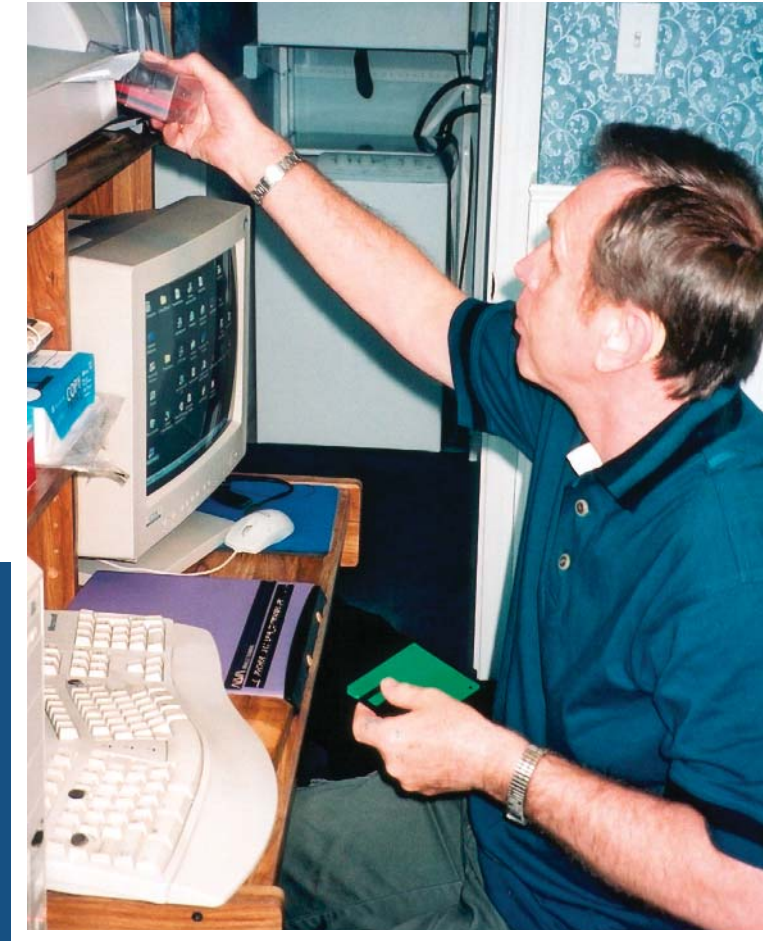
PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Grandfather & Homemaker

Committees: CCB Advocacy,
CNIB Client Services

CNSDB: 2nd Vice-President

Public speaking, Computer work



"Each time we step out to learn a new skill we are really taking another step towards independence"

"The computer has literally brought the world to my fingertips"

"Any device or technique that we acquire is available to be used as required"

"The computer plays a key role in my life, as it is an important communication tool. I can access all kinds of information using the computer"

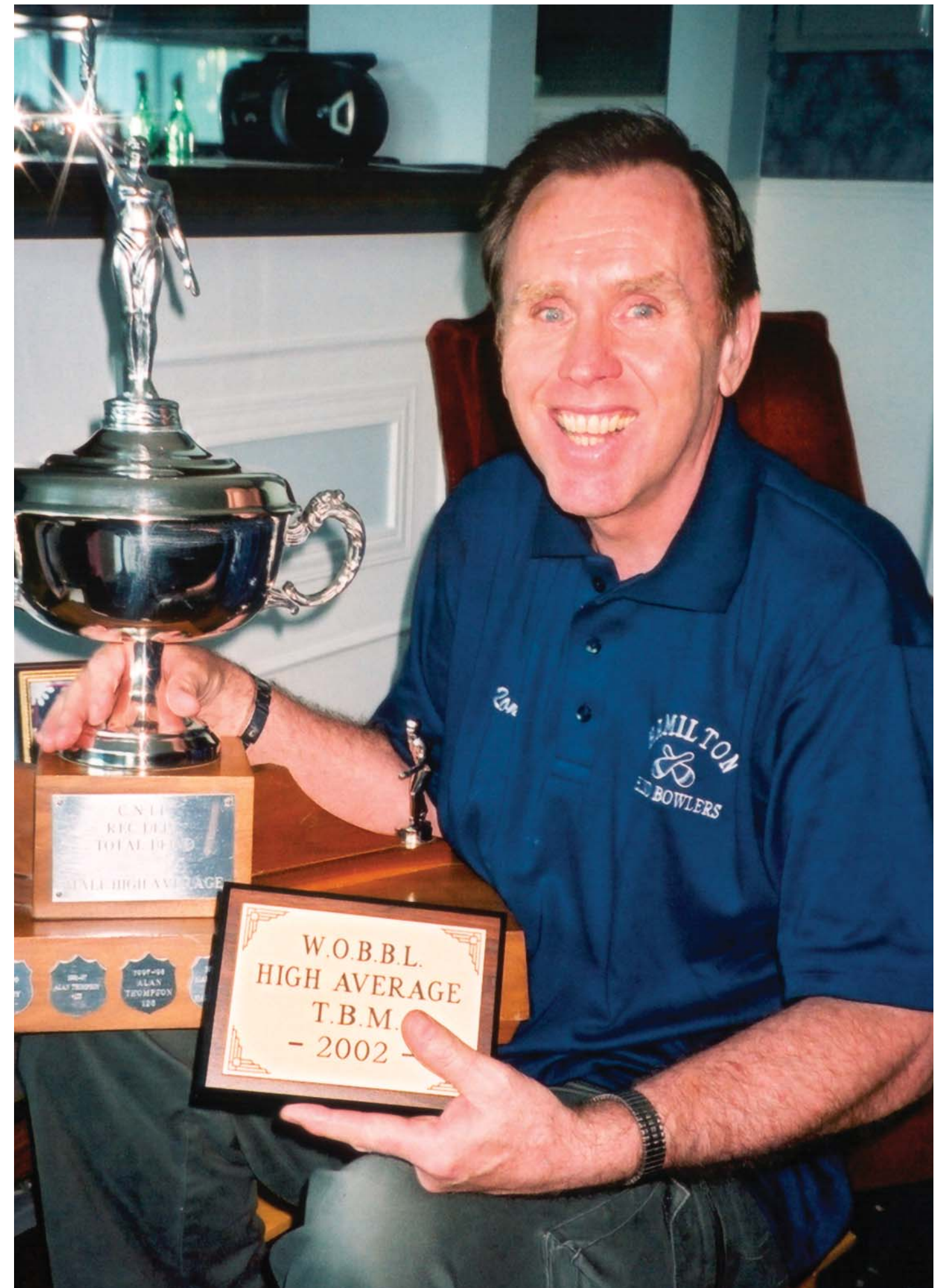
STEP TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

I live independently on my own. I have 3 grown children and 3 grandchildren. My guide dog is a black Labrador Retriever and she is a big help for my traveling purposes. I have little vision, mostly light perception, and some hearing, which is enhanced by the use of specialized hearing equipment. I am active in 5 and 10 pin bowling, and I participate in card tournaments. I belong to Toastmasters (a public speaking club), and I enjoy reading Braille novels. The computer plays a key role in my life, as it is an important communication tool. I can access all kinds of information using the computer. Over the years I have faced many barriers while trying to pursue educational and employment goals. Even when trying to take part in social and recreational events there were restrictions to deal with.

Prior to attending the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults I had grade 12 education. I had enrolled in software courses at a local community college but attending class was difficult as I could not access information like other students there, so I took courses via email. My goals in the literacy program were to improve public speaking and writing skills. The literacy program has enhanced my knowledge and given me a sense of direction. I joined Toastmasters and learned how to function in a group setting with an intervenor, who provided voice-over interpretation and technical assistance to facilitate my interaction in that environment. I not only improved my speaking and writing skills but also learned how to effectively utilize intervention.

It is important to learn many skills in order to be as independent as possible. Literacy classes are a step in the right direction, enabling us to improve communication skills and providing a feeling of self-satisfaction. During my 8 months in the literacy program I was able to accomplish many things. I fine-tuned my writing ability, giving me confidence to organize thoughts in text format. I also learned to be more effective when presenting information orally. I am always looking for new and different challenges. By being part of the literacy program I learned how to access many new interests. As a result, I am now able to better participate in the social and recreational activities that I thought were closed to me forever. While in the literacy program I was motivated to use my educational background in a more effective manner and I haven't looked back since.

Ron Davidson - Hamilton



ANNA LINDSAY

BELLEVILLE



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Lip Reading

Hard Copy:
Large Print

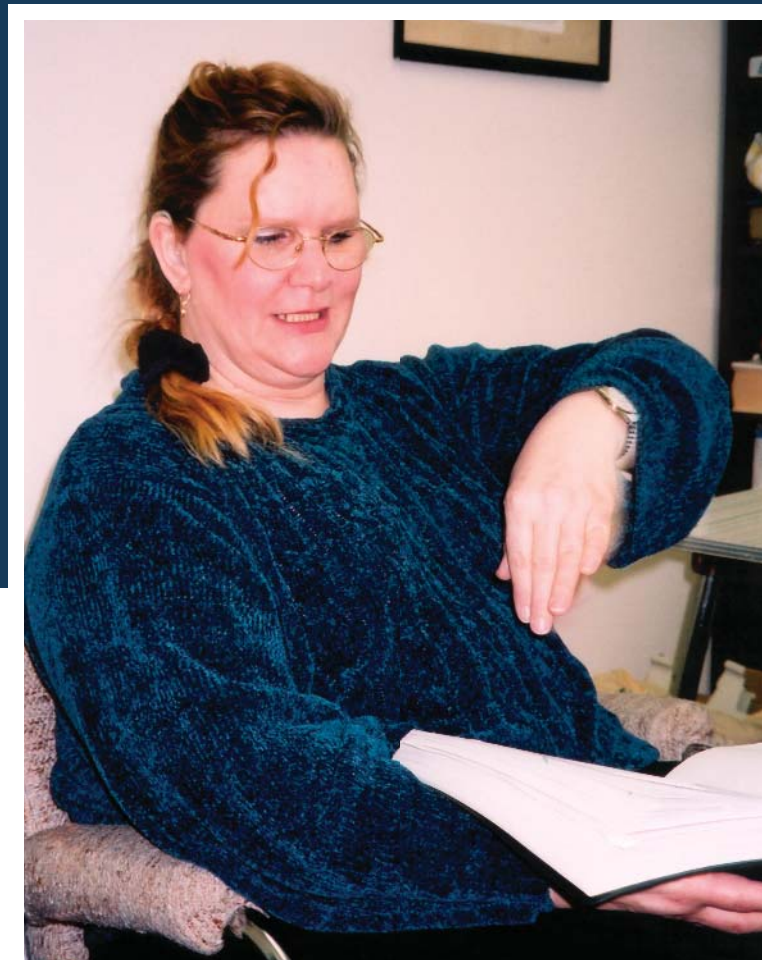
PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Grandmother & Homemaker

Volunteer at CNIB

Author of Cookbook

Writing, Storytelling, Cooking



"I joined the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults, and am pursuing my dream of writing a book! I'm thinking about calling it 'New & Old Recipes with Stories'... it's a cookbook of 40 recipes with related stories"

"The literacy program has broadened my horizons and helped me to accomplish much more than I realized I could"

"I always leave class feeling better about myself and go home with inspiration to reach my goals. I didn't think I could do any of this. Look at me now! I have my independence, self-esteem, and pride, but above all, I believe in myself. I'm on a roll!"

LOST AND FOUND DREAM

I thought my life was over and that I could never pursue my dreams when I found out I had Usher's Syndrome, a genetic condition of combined deafness and progressive vision loss. Then I found out about CNIB Deafblind Services, and the people who work with not only the blind but also the deafblind.

I didn't have symptoms at birth but when I was 30 Usher's began to show. Between the ages of 3 and 6, I had scarlet fever and red measles. My parents didn't know I had a hearing problem until I went to school. The teachers thought I had a learning disability. My parents thought I was a selective hearing child - hearing only what I wanted to hear. They took me to Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital. The doctors ran some tests, and I learned that I had to wear hearing aids. I was amazed at what I had been missing. The world has more noises than I anticipated. I didn't hear noises that most people took for granted. In my early years I learned to compensate in life for what I didn't have. When I went to high school I was self-conscious. I believed that I was the only person in school who had a hearing problem. As the years went by I began bumping into walls, knocking things over, and running into people. An ophthalmologist ran more tests and discovered I had Usher's Syndrome. Diagnosing it in the earliest stages is hard. That explained it!

It took me a long time to accept the fact that everything was deteriorating, with or without me doing anything about it. That's when CNIB Belleville / Ottawa became involved in my life. I joined the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults, and am pursuing my dream of writing a book! The literacy program has broadened my horizons and helped me to accomplish much more than I realized I could. My literacy instructor taught me that life is what we make it, and how we want to perceive it. I learned new ways to handle life's changes and how to accept them as they come. There is never a dull moment. We support each other in many ways. I always leave class feeling better about myself and go home with inspiration to reach my goals. I didn't think I could do any of this. Look at me now! I have my independence, self-esteem, and pride, but above all, I believe in myself. I'm on a roll!

Anna Lindsay - Belleville



MARY LAFFRENIER

BRAMPTON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Lip Reading

Hard copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Grandmother

Homemaker

College Graduate

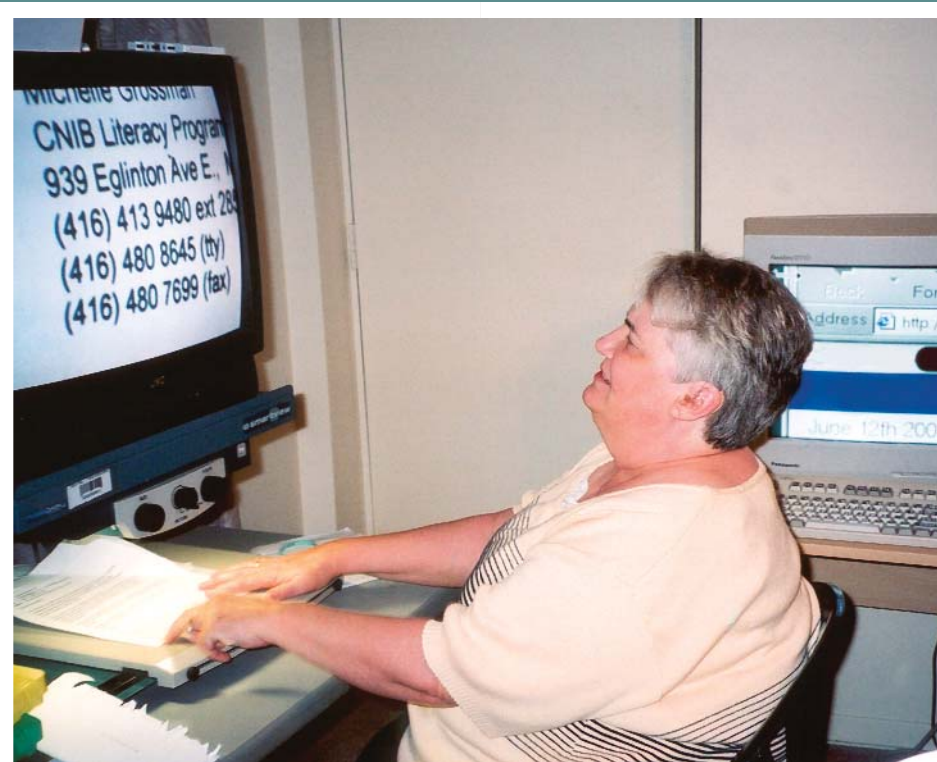
Volunteer at CNIB



"My life is an open book until someone closes the cover."

"When we have aspirations to get to the top, if we start walking now we should get there before we collect old age security"

"All I ever wanted was a little more than I'll ever get"



"The literacy program is where we can express ourselves at our own pace and have the freedom to achieve what we set out to do"

"If at first we don't succeed, try, try again"

NEW DIMENSION

Before I joined the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults my life was not very interesting. I felt I was getting nowhere very fast, since I did not have much going for me at the time. Since then life has taken on a new dimension! Before I started in the program, I was virtually a recluse. I never visited with people, and I could not communicate well with anyone.

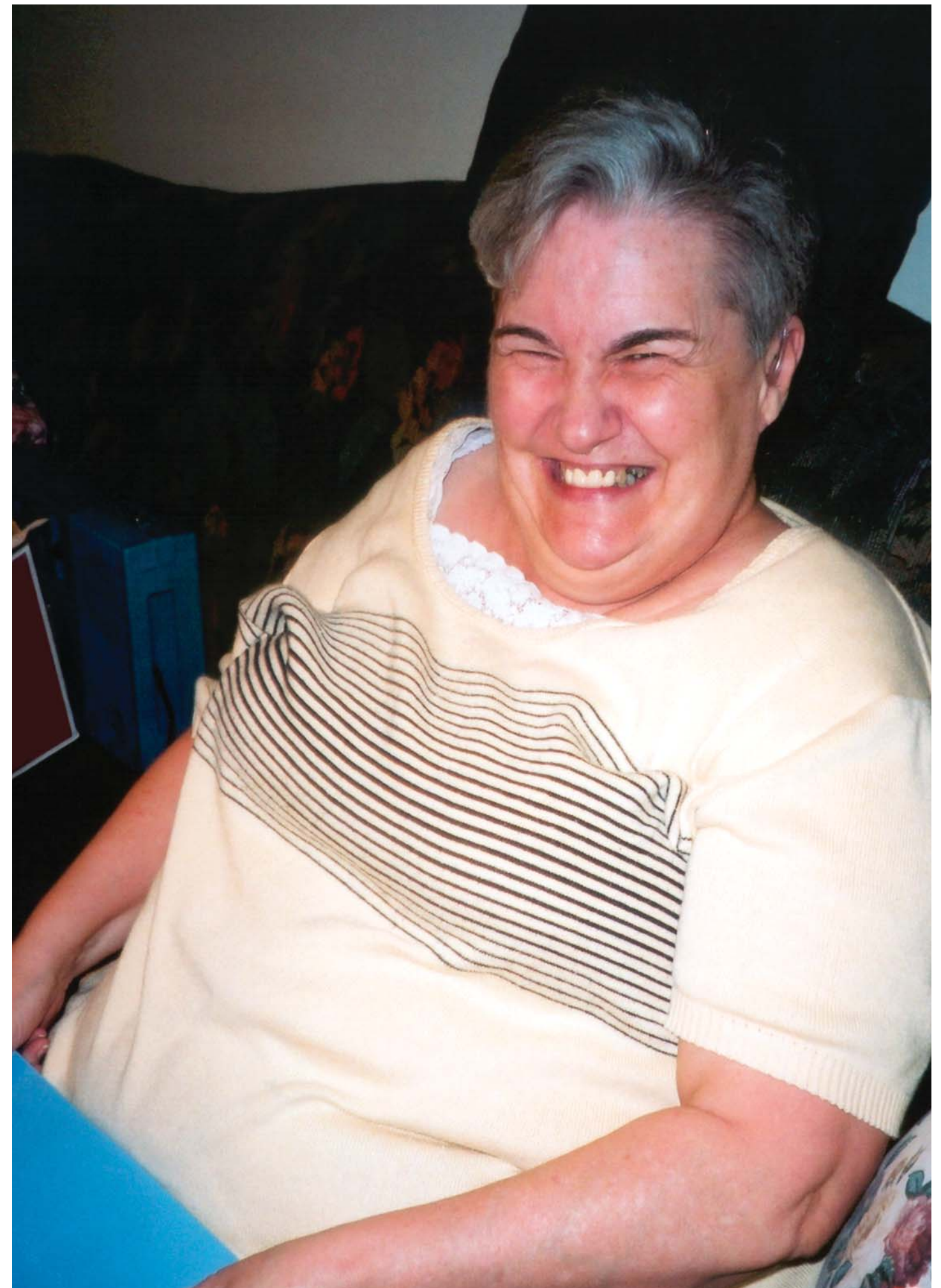
Then one day I was referred to Deafblind Services. My whole life changed for the better. I was interviewed by a Case Manager and she did a write up for me to be placed on their client list. At that time I already had a computer with all the trimmings, but I had no user skills. That is when I was introduced to the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults.

In the literacy program I had to learn all over again how to touch-type, how to write letters, how to send e-mail, and time management skills. Another thing is that I was out in the community with people, talking with them and socializing (which in my estimation is a very integral part of our daily life.)

Here I am now at the Halton-Peel district office revising some of my current goals. I want to continue with formal letter writing and some clerical skills so I can volunteer a couple days a week for the CNIB. I am looking forward to continuing with the literacy program and completing my goals and objectives.

Here is a piece of writing copied from an article by Malcolm Scully of The Sudbury Star newspaper: "Obtaining a Cambrian College diploma is one battle Mary Laffrenier will win. Getting a job in her field of expertise, social work, is a second battle she is determined to win. A third battle, against Usher's Syndrome, a disease gradually robbing her of both sight and hearing, is one she can't win. But she's determined not to let it get the best of her. The 50-year-old Sudbury grandmother is looking forward to her graduation. 'I wanted to go back to school so I could say to my children and grandchildren that I did it'".

Mary Laffrenier - Brampton



DOUG MILLIGAN

OTTAWA



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Amplified speech

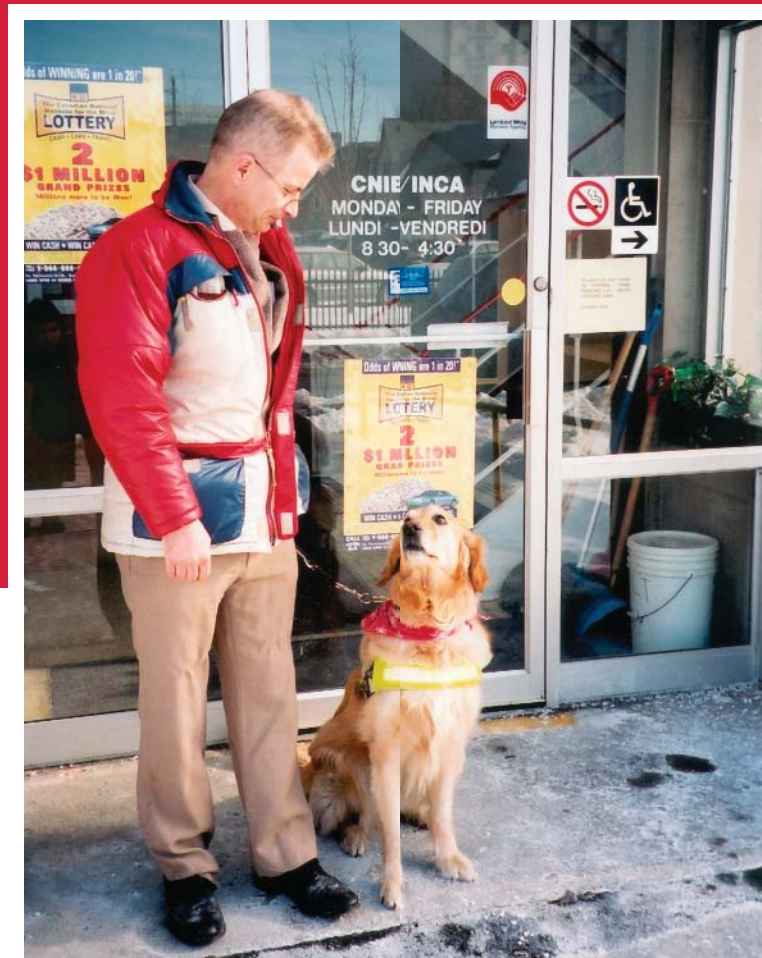
Hard copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Grandfather, Writer & Poet
Volunteer at CNIB & YMCA

Professional Goal:
Literacy Practitioner

Tandem Cycling,
Camping, Canoeing



"Literacy means Freedom of Choice in Life"

"It's never too late to start over and accomplish something in LIFE! Literacy has helped me more than anyone can imagine! It taught me I have the RIGHT to make CHOICES in LIFE!!!"

"I find the printed word too important for others to write on my behalf"

"Pity is just as bad for a person as shunning them into a corner"

"An illiterate person is not a free person... they are like a prisoner walking around the streets, feeling claustrophobic out in the open"

"At this point in my life I would have to compare myself to Springtime! I feel like a kid again; just tasting life and what it has to offer for the first time! I've not fully blossomed, more like the bud in early Spring rather than the flower of mid-summer that has already experienced the joy of the maturing process of becoming a beautiful flower! Much like the grass & the trees first showing signs of growth in early Spring. Knowing the grass will become green & trees will leaf out! Taking in knowledge is much like Springtime, in Nature there's warmth & beauty that cannot be described any other way!"

MAGICAL FEELING

I arrived in Ottawa in September 2000. Alone, and afraid of the unknown, I was determined to achieve my goal! My mind was on making a life for myself that included Respect and Dignity. It's been 18 months since that day I was so frightened and alone, beginning a new life in a room that I shared with my guide dog. I slept on the floor on a foam mattress for the next 6 weeks. The only form of entertainment was a radio, & a guide dog to talk to! I didn't even have a phone in case of emergency! That night I managed to get some sleep before daybreak. The next day I purchased a microwave at a thrift store, and soon started making my way to each and every place I had to learn to survive in Ottawa! My vision was at a point where I could only identify landmarks that were clear. My hearing wasn't much better than my sight! This was mostly due to the stress in my life. I was declared deafblind two years ago. Now at age 44, I was living alone in a big city with no family for 100 miles. Stress can create many different types of health problems. For me it brought on deafblindness.

The most magical feeling in the world is love! It's not just for the elite few, it's for me and it's for you! Anyone can experience these sensational feelings! First, you have to love yourself and know you're worthy of being loved because you are an equal! Achieving this level of self-esteem is the result of attending literacy class, for the past 3 years, in the CNIB Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults.

I've always dreamed of having that one great love someday! Love is much like the wondrous snowfalls of winter! Each snowflake being a different love, no two alike, but one just as beautiful as the other! True love is being me around that special someone. Buying flowers for no reason other than to say, "I love you", that's what love is supposed to be! Love comes at any age, and it's worth taking the risk to experience once again. It's sad to see a love melt away like a snowflake in early spring. Just knowing there will always be new snowfalls and loves to be enjoyed, if one allows oneself to, makes life awesome! That's what happened to me when I met my beautiful lady, my special snowflake in life!

Doug Milligan - Ottawa



JEAN HAINES

LONDON



PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

Expressive:
Speech

Receptive:
Lip Reading

Hard copy:
Large Print

PERSONAL INFO & INTERESTS

Senior Citizen, "Grand-Aunt"

Author: "The Jean Beatrice Haines Story"

Parties, Walking, Picnics,
Bingo, Chinese Checkers



"CNIB helps me with more words... I like to know more words... my literacy instructor helps me to read and write."

"I get nervous and sometimes I don't understand... CNIB helps me understand"

"In my literacy classes I learned the Two Hand Manual Alphabet so I can communicate with other people who are deafblind. I like the Two Hand Manual... it helps me understand"

"My book makes me so happy. I show it to everyone"

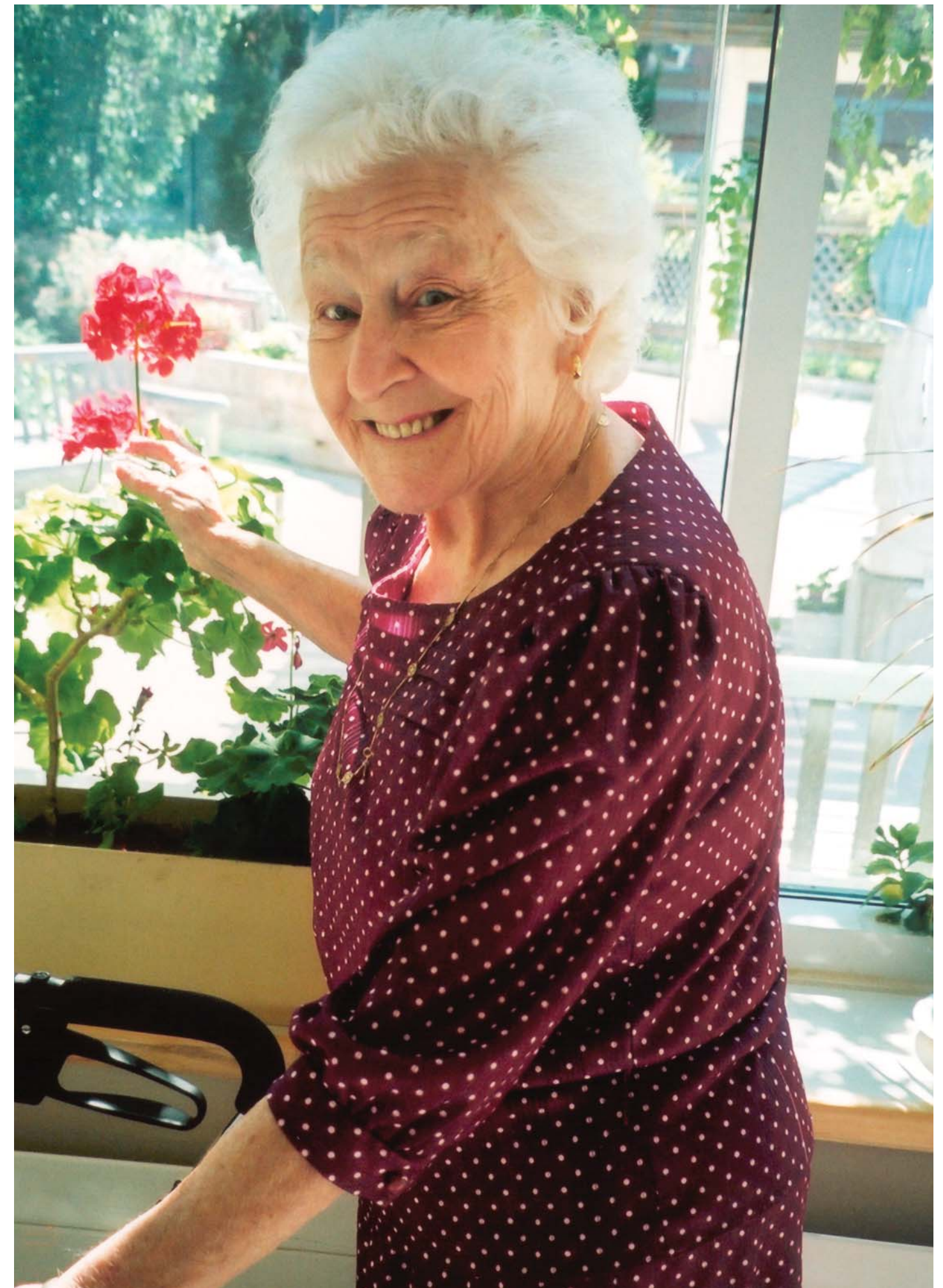
LIFE-LONG LEARNING

My name is Jean. People call me Jeannie. I was born in St. Paul's, Minnesota in 1916 and moved to London, Ontario when I was 5 months old. When I was 7 years old I got very sick with Scarlet Fever, and then I became deaf. I went to school in London. At school all the other kids could hear the teachers talking. Not me. After age 16 I did not go back to school. I stayed home with my family and helped my mom.

I have lived in London all my life. For 27 years I lived in a senior citizens apartment in Byron (one of the original tenants). I lived by myself and I loved my apartment. I loved playing cards and word search puzzles. I made friends in the building. 5 years ago I bought a TV for the deaf (close-captioned). I am a Catholic woman. I am an old maid and an aunt. I was an aunt for the first time when I was 14. Now I am a grand aunt. I am the last one left of my sisters. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I like to go for walks, go shopping, and go on picnics with family and friends. I like to play bingo and Chinese checkers and search a word (puzzles).

I cannot hear, so I watch people's lips to know what they say. I also do not see very well. I had an operation on my left eye. I can only see with my right eye. About 12 years ago I started coming to the CNIB. I get nervous and sometimes I don't understand. CNIB helps me understand. I receive intervention and literacy (Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults). I have literacy class once a week. My literacy instructor helps me to read and write. In my literacy classes I learned the Two Hand Manual Alphabet so I can communicate with other people who are deafblind. In 1997 I wrote a story about my life. It is called "The Jean Beatrice Haines Story". My book makes me so happy. I show it to everyone. I also like to read and write short stories, and use them to practice my Two Hand Manual. I like the Two Hand Manual... it helps me understand. I do crossword puzzles to learn different words and what they mean. I also like to learn geography. I love geography and learning about different places in the world!

Jean Haines - London



Instruction Methods:

Instruction is provided to the deafblind learner in their preferred method of communication. Some of the forms used by both learner and instructor include; visual and tactile sign language, residual hearing and speech, the two hand manual alphabet, fingerspelling, Braille, and large print notes. [A descriptive listing of communication methods can be found in the accompanying “Literacy Assessment Tools for Deafblind Learners” manual]

The classroom is equipped with computers and technical devices for the learners to use. Books and instruction materials are adapted by the instructor into Braille or large print to allow for learner accessibility.

Program Locations:

There are 4 main Ontario sites, which are located in Hamilton, London, Ottawa, and Toronto CNIB offices. Satellite LPDBA offices operate from additional locations in Ontario. The program is opened year round and offers flexible class time to meet the students needs and schedules.

Did You Know?

The leading cause of deafblindness is **Usher Syndrome**, an inherited condition characterized by deafness or hearing loss at birth combined with **retinitis pigmentosa (RP)**. RP is a deteriorating eye condition with night blindness and tunnel vision apparent usually by age 12. Usher syndrome accounts for approximately 65% of the Canadian deafblind population.

If you would like more information about the Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults, contact your local CNIB Deafblind Services office:

Hamilton 905-528-8555 Voice / TTY

London 519-685-8420 Voice / 519-685-8426 TTY

Ottawa 613-563-4021 Voice / 613-567-2937 TTY

Toronto 416-413-9480 Voice / 416-480-8645 TTY

Canadian National Institute for the Blind Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults (LPDBA)

Mission Statement:

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind Literacy Program for Deafblind Adults provides quality individualized literacy instruction to adults in Ontario in their preferred method of communication. Through increased knowledge the students have the opportunity to reach their goals, enhancing the link to their environment

The Program:

Supported by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, the Literacy Program has been in operation since 1987. It is the only English literacy program of its kind in the country that provides individual or small group instruction to adult learners who are deafblind.

The literacy program is available to individuals who are deafblind and 16 years of age or older. We also provide support to individuals who need assistance with transition to other programs or services.

The program is designed to help deafblind learners achieve personal goals of further training, employment and independence. Popular literacy topics include: communication skills, career development, employment opportunities and computer instruction.

Languages:

In Canada, our communication is based primarily on English and French. Most of the learners participating in the program are culturally deaf and their first language is American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a visual language, has no written form, and has a grammatical make up very different from English. It is a complete language unto itself. This presents challenges to the deafblind learner, as English and French are based on a written structure and spoken form. When a visual impairment such as Usher Syndrome is involved, learning becomes a more complex process.