



The Next Generation

Empowering Children & Youth with Sight Loss in
the Sarnia-Lambton Community



CNIB
NEXT
GENERATION



February 2025

Dear members of the Catherine Wilson Foundation,

Thank you so much for your many years of incredible support toward CNIB Programs. Your generous gift of \$5,000 has provided more opportunities for children and youth who are blind, low vision or deafblind in the Sarnia-Lambton area to thrive and reach their full potential.

Your dedication to children and youth with sight loss enables them to access our programs, building and developing crucial skills for maintaining their independence and putting them on a path to success. With your support of CNIB's commitment to "Our Kids Will Thrive," you've ensured children and youth in remote or rural areas like Sarnia aren't left behind.

Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, I'm thrilled to share that our CNIB Kids Inclusive and Accessible Education Project was a huge success! Your support has helped make significant strides to provide equal opportunities for all children and youth in Sarnia Lambton. We are proud to have served over **25 unique participants** in the area last year, **including children as young as only 5 years old!** As you'll find in the following pages, many young participants and educators learned about accessibility, spoke openly about the barriers faced by

those with disabilities, and brainstormed innovative ways to make their classrooms and schools more inclusive. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the programs enjoyed by Sarnia-Lambton participants.

Thank you for being so committed to CNIB's mission of breaking down barriers and improving the quality of life for the next generation of Canada's sight loss community. Your support helps children and youth who are blind or low vision to reach their full potential now and opens limitless opportunities for the future.

Sincerely,



Jenny Foster

Senior Manager, Foundation Partnerships
C: 647-828-4420
E: jenny.foster@cnib.ca

The Impact of Your Support

CNIB's evaluation team regularly assesses the impact our programs have through a Common Outcomes Survey Tool. Each youth sets their own goals depending on what they would like to achieve through CNIB programs. Outcomes are always evaluated according to participants' personal goals. Youth have told us that through their participation in CNIB programming, they have achieved the following:



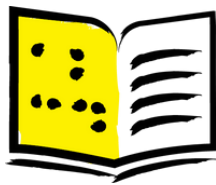
- **Youth learn new skills and abilities or improve existing skills and abilities**
- **Youth experience reduced stress or anxiety**
- **Youth spend time with friends, meet new people, and get involved in their community**
- **Youth receive support for their educational and employment goals**
- **Youth receive the help they need to maintain their independence**

Thanks to the Catherine Wilson Foundation, children and youth who are blind, low vision, or deafblind in Sarnia-Lambton have access to programming that develops their academic, career and life skills, helping them to thrive in all aspects of life that they may not have had before. Your dedication to expanding our services in a remote area like Sarnia-Lambton helps children and youth access our programs and experience the highlighted impact no matter where they reside.

You're Helping Our Kids Thrive

Thank you for supporting CNIB's commitment to "Our Kids Will Thrive." You're helping to ensure that children living with sight loss in Sarnia-Lambton receive the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to succeed. Investing in their education, independence and overall well-being will make a lasting impact on their future. With your support, we continue to break down barriers, create inclusive environments, and empower these children to reach their full potential, allowing them to thrive in every aspect of their lives.

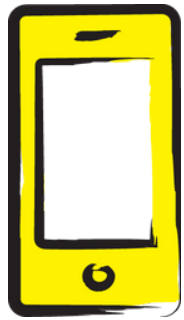
CNIB Literacy Braille Palooza



Braille Palooza, held at the CNIB London Hub, which also serves the Sarnia-Lambton community, was a joyous celebration of braille for children, youth, and their families. This vibrant event featured fun activities designed to engage and inspire, such as interactive workshops where participants could enhance their Braille skills while enjoying hands-on learning experiences. Families celebrated literacy with delicious cake and engaging games, fostering community and connection among everyone present. The event highlighted the importance of braille and created lasting memories and strengthened bonds within the community.



Sarnia-Lambton Learns About **CNIB Technology**



CNIB's Accessible Technology programs are designed to ensure that people who are blind, deafblind or low vision can fully participate in the digital world. From education to employment, technology plays a vital role in enhancing independence, communication, and access to information. Through a wide range of innovative programs, CNIB empowers Canadians with sight loss to harness the power of technology, opening doors to opportunities and enabling them to navigate daily life with confidence.



Technology programs are especially popular among participants in the Sarnia-Lambton community. Here are some of the programs young participants in Sarnia-Lambton engaged in thanks to your support:

Phone it Forward

CNIB's Phone It Forward program in Sarnia-Lambton provides accessible smartphones to individuals with sight loss, helping them stay connected with loved ones and access important services through accessible features like screen readers, magnification, and voice commands.

Tech Talk Tuesday

Tech Talk Tuesday offers a virtual platform for Sarnia-Lambton residents and beyond where they can learn about accessible technology, get expert guidance, and share their experiences, ensuring participants can confidently navigate their digital world.

CNIB SmartLife Programs and Drop-Ins

Whether Sarnia-Lambton residents would like to visit their nearest CNIB SmartLife Centre, the London Community Hub or would like a visit to their home, CNIB offers the Sarnia-Lambton community one-to-one accessible tech support. CNIB SmartLife provides the opportunity to explore and receive hands-on guidance on using accessible technology for daily tasks, from smartphones to smart home devices, fostering greater independence and inclusion.

Wireless Wednesday On Wireless Wednesday, CNIB offers Sarnia-Lambton residents free, interactive sessions to explore mobile device accessibility features, helping participants maximize the use of smartphones and tablets in their everyday lives.

Sarnia-Lambton Participates in **CNIB Come to Work**



Thanks to you, young people who are blind, low vision or deafblind in the Sarnia-Lambton area are equipped with the tools, confidence and skills to pursue and succeed in meaningful employment opportunities.

CNIB's Come to Work program connects job seekers aged 15 to 29 with blindness, deafblindness, or low vision to employers seeking untapped talent. With over 1,400 participants nationwide, including nearly 100 youth in Ontario, the program offers tailored support and specialized training. Unlike other vocational providers, CNIB's program is uniquely designed for individuals with sight loss.

Come to Work programs play a vital role in helping young people who are blind, low vision, or deafblind navigate the challenges of the job market. In 2024, participants in Sarnia-Lambton engaged in tailored workshops that covered essential skills like resume building, job interview preparation, and workplace communication. These skills help youth prepare for their first jobs and teach them about self-advocacy, which is crucial in overcoming barriers they might face due to their sight loss.



You empowered young participants in Sarnia-Lambton by helping them with:

- Resume Building and Interview Skills
- Job Placements and Work Experience
- Workplace Accommodations and Self-Advocacy
- Mentorship Opportunities

“I really like the feeling of being able to help somebody feel more confident in themselves. I encourage anyone to become a mentor for the Come to Work program.”

- Becki Zerr, Come to Work Mentor



Sarnia-Lambton Goes to Camp @ **CNIB Lake Joe**

For over 60 years, CNIB Lake Joe has offered enriching camp experiences for Canadians with sight loss, empowering them to shine and reach their full potential. Located on Lake Joseph in Muskoka, it is Canada's only fully accessible camp for people who are blind, deafblind, or low vision. Each year, hundreds of campers enjoy activities like swimming, sailing, canoeing and campfires.



For many children and youth, including those from Sarnia-Lambton, attending CNIB Lake Joe's camps is life-changing. With tailored programming, participants gain essential skills in a supportive, inclusive environment, often discovering new interests and their full potential for the first time.

Some of the impactful camp programs that children and youth in Sarnia-Lambton have participated in include:

Youth Leadership Development

Participants engage in activities that enhance leadership skills, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. Camps at CNIB Lake Joe like **Leadership Camp** provide invaluable experience that helps youth grow into confident, capable leaders both at camp and in their communities.

Sports and Recreation

Camps like **Pushing Limits for Active Youth (PLAY)** and **Camp Abilities** provide fun opportunities for children and youth with sight loss to explore new sports and get active. Participants learn or develop their skills in 5-a-side soccer, tennis, blind hockey, rock climbing, archery and watersports.

Outdoor Fun & Adventures

At CNIB Lake Joe, youth enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, canoeing, kayaking, swimming and so much more! These experiences help to build confidence and independence while embracing the ‘magic’ of camp just like their sighted peers.

Mobility & Orientation

Programs like **Buddy Dog Camp** are available to help children and youth with sight loss develop skills in mobility, and adaptive techniques. These sessions are integral to fostering greater independence and self-sufficiency in daily life.

And so much more!

CNIB Lake Joe also provides opportunities for those who are interested in Braille Literacy, children and their families to enjoy Summer Camp, and a variety of adult camps.

Beyond the skills and fun memories gained, you help children and youth with sight loss gain a sense of belonging and community at CNIB Lake Joe. Many participants feel a tremendous sense of comfort and relief from being around other people with lived experience. Thanks to you, children and youth from Sarnia get to feel seen and have access to an environment in which they can thrive.

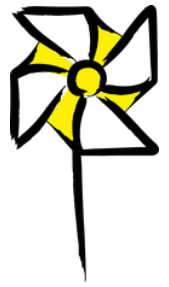


“At the very end of our first day at camp, [my son] whispered, **“Everyone here is just like me.”** I strongly believe, in that moment, he was giving himself permission to step away from the stresses he surrounds himself with and all of the variations of self-doubt he inundates himself with because of his lived experience.

Lake Joe allowed him to let go of all of that. Lake Joe allowed him to be the regular kid he’s discovering he actually is. I watched him take risks and push himself unlike any other time before because Lake Joe was the safe place he needed to make that happen.”

—Parent of Participant

CNIB Kids - Inclusive and Accessible Education Project



Inspiring Change in Classrooms Across Canada

CNIB Kids - Inclusive and Accessible Education project was designed to teach educators and students how to foster inclusion in the classroom for people who are blind or low vision. Thanks to your support, CNIB developed educational resources which helped to increase participants understanding of blindness, the importance of creating more accessible and inclusive schools and how to support people who are blind or low vision across the province.

School Presentations and Toolkits

With the help of donors like you, over **2000 students, parents and school staff** in **72 school boards** from across Ontario—including **Lambton Kent District School Board**—received CNIB presentations, all led by CNIB staff and volunteers with lived experience with sight loss and toolkits, which included the following:

- Information on how to make school communities inclusive for students who are blind or low vision, including a short video.
- Units and lesson plans on accessibility, inclusion, braille and more.
- Tips for recess, gym, class trips and more.
- A picture book with corresponding lesson plans that link to the Ontario curriculum.
- A booklist that includes characters who are blind or low vision for primary, junior and intermediate readers.

It is also worth noting that although these workshop presentations focused on the experience of people with sight loss, post-presentation, students discussed other disabilities they live with freely and without stigma. Bullying was an important topic of post-workshop discussion as well, with many students sharing their experience and ways to overcome bullying and build a more accessible school environment.



At the Viscount Alexander Public School presentation in Ottawa, it was shared:

“ I liked the slide show and all the artifacts they brought in. Allowing students to feel the Braille book at the end was useful for our ESL learners.”

Thank you!



Members of the Catherine Wilson Foundation, we cannot thank you enough for your generous support of children and youth who are blind, deafblind or low vision in the Sarnia-Lambton community. Your active commitment to ensuring all "Our Kids Thrive" means that every young person gets to the opportunity to build and develop the crucial skills to maintain their independence and unlock their full potential - no matter where they live. Because of you, children and youth with sight loss in Sarnia know that no barriers or obstacles can hinder their success.

Thank you for being a champion of change! Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or would like to discuss your impact further.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Foster', on a light yellow rectangular background.

Jenny Foster

Senior Manager, Foundation Partnerships

C: 647-828-4420

E: jenny.foster@cnib.ca

Web cnib.ca

Toll-free 1-800-563-2642



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