



**B**ALANCE  
for Blind Adults  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023-2024**

| [info@balancefba.org](mailto:info@balancefba.org)

# Table of Contents

Message from the Board Chair and CEO . . . . .	3
Vision, Mission and Values . . . . .	5
Impact . . . . .	6
Assistive Technology Program . . . . .	7
Pre-Employment Program . . . . .	8
Groups and Events . . . . .	9
Canadian National Exhibition Goose Up . . . . .	10
BALANCE Info Fair . . . . .	11
Low Vision Speaker Series. . . . .	12
Living Blind Podcast . . . . .	13
Because of BALANCE Campaign 2023 . . . . .	14
Volunteers Make a Difference. . . . .	15
Funding Partners. . . . .	16
Community Partners . . . . .	17
Thanks to staff, contractors, & apprentices . . .	18
Board of Directors . . . . .	20
Condensed Financial statement . . . . .	21
2023-2024 Donors . . . . .	23
Connect with us!. . . . .	28

# Message from the Board Chair and the CEO

The past year has been a particularly good one for BALANCE for Blind Adults. The ability to stay strong through the pandemic has made it possible for us to emerge from this stressful time a more effective organization, one that responds to the diverse needs of our clients, and makes it possible for us to provide services in new and unique ways.

In the past 8 years, we have grown our service users by 91%! The number of individuals served was 181 in 2023-24, and we had an additional 22 people who came to groups without requesting individual lessons or support. We also brought back our in-person groups and increased the variety of options (see page 06 for more information).

Technology is today's great key to independence for all of us, including people who are blind. This year, we grew our number of AT Apprenticeships to 5, enabling more tech training to more people in great need. This is an example of how we will support our service expansion priority of more service to more people in 2024-25.

And our United Way funded Pre-employment training program graduated 27 people and trained over 40 staff in 6 community employment services. Moreover, this year we were able to create 16 self-guided video learning units for this program!

All of the above programs and services, and so much more, attracted a record amount, over \$150,000 in donations, sponsorships, and grants in 2023.

The increase in revenue has also assisted us to meet the operational requirements of our new (2022) strategic priority of remote service expansion, about which you will hear more in 2024-25! We would like to thank all of our supporters for helping to create the "Bold Future" outlined in our current strategic plan.

Onwards and Upwards!



**Deborah Gold**

*Chief Executive Officer*

**Keith Gordon**

*Board Chair*





# Vision Mission and Values

*“An open world for persons who are blind or living with sight loss.”*

## Our Values

**Collaboration** is the Value that underpins all we do:

Our work at BALANCE for Blind Adults is based in a collaborative approach and philosophy. We collaborate with our clients in their learning and rehabilitation; we collaborate with each other as we deliver services; we collaborate with our community partners, donors and funders, to develop programs and services that are grounded in our 5 Core Values:



BALANCE provides customized training and support to facilitate optimal independence and community engagement for persons who are blind or living with sight loss and who often have complex needs.

# Impact

Unique  
Individuals  
Served

**174**

New Intakes

**49**

Total Client Visits

**1503**

Group Sessions

**195**

Group  
Participants

**69**



# Assistive Technology Apprenticeship Program

Launched in late 2020, the (AT) Apprenticeship Program is designed to enhance technology skills and provide a paid employment experience for individuals with visual disabilities, while increasing the variety of teachers to meet the diverse needs of our adult learners. By March of 2024, the program had 5 apprentices and 4 graduates. This initiative has significantly improved job prospects for people with visual disabilities. In addition to developing technical skills, the ATAP helps apprentices build their own and the client's confidence with using a variety of different technologies.

We extend our gratitude to our sponsors: HumanWare, CIBC Foundation, and Industrial Alliance Financial, for their invaluable support in making this program possible.



# Pre-employment Program (PEP)

Blind and partially sighted job seekers face unique challenges in their search for meaningful employment. That's why BALANCE, with funding support from the United Way of Greater Toronto, launched an innovative Pre-employment Program (PEP) in 2023. Designed to build the capacity and workplace confidence of adults with visual disabilities, we are so proud of the graduates who have moved through the program this past year. With our PEP workshop being offered via Zoom, we are now looking to expand the initiative and serve jobseekers beyond the City of Toronto. As a part of our inclusivity and accessibility efforts, we also provided five employment agencies with inclusivity training and provided advocacy with six organizations. The Pre-employment Program is truly an innovative initiative working that is changing lives!

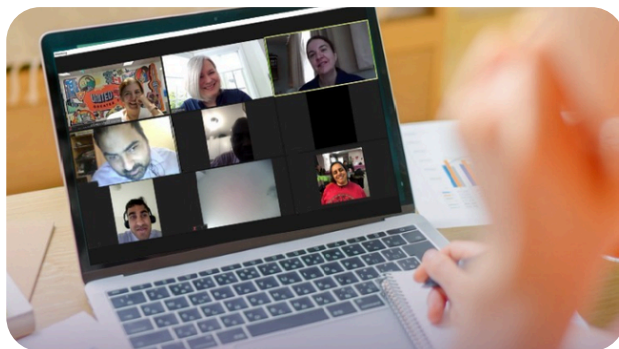
"I'm excited. It's the first time in [years] I'll be getting a real paycheque - and it feels good".  
Summer 2023 PEP graduate

## Tom Dekker Assistive Technology Achievement Awards

We are honored to announce this year's recipients of the Tom Dekker Assistive Technology (AT) Award. This award recognizes BALANCE AT participants who show strong motivation, dedication, and determination in using assistive technology. Selected by the entire AT team, including our dedicated apprentices, this year's recipients were:

**Candise Arima**, who is partially sighted and has shown remarkable determination learning to use tools like Zoom magnification, Speak on touch, Hover text, Read aloud, and Be My Eyes.

**Saba Webb**, who is blind and has embraced AT, learning to use Windows 11 with the NVDA screen reader after being introduced to the iPhone. Her determination is outstanding.



THANK YOU TO UNITED WAY GREATER TORONTO



# Groups and Events

In 2023-24, we successfully organized 14 in-person and online groups, courses, and workshops. This year, BALANCE has provided opportunities to participate in-person or online group wellness activities such as Strength and Stability, Think outside the Ring – Boxing workshop, Evening Stress and Resilience Management and our Sharing Space Support Group. Another key goal of BALANCE is to deliver high-quality services in alignment with our one-to-one programs, aimed at enhancing clients' skills. This commitment is evident through workshops like Introduction to Spoken Word, and the Musical Theatre Movement Workshop.

Thank you to our partners in providing these groups: Vibe Arts, Toronto News Girls – Savoy Howe, Davenport-Perth Community Neighborhood Centre and BALANCE Counsellors. We would also like to recognize 4 Villages and West Neighborhood House for providing a safe and inclusive space to facilitate these workshops.





# Canadian National Exhibition Goose Up

*“BoB the Goose gains more independence as he gets his white cane to get to the Ex”*

The Canadian National Exhibition 2023 paid tribute to a Toronto icon: the Canada Goose. Eight GTA organizations for individuals with diverse abilities creatively transformed the white 6-ft tall fiberglass goose structure, into magnificent pieces of art. BALANCE was thrilled to be chosen to partake in this incredible project again in the summer of 2023.

BoB (stands for Because of BALANCE) is a 6 foot purple, grey and white goose who wears glasses and uses a white cane for enhanced independence. In addition, BoB carries his tablet everywhere because his Assistive Tech lessons have helped him learn how to use it to access information about his flock’s activities and whereabouts. BoB always wears his glasses and wears his heart (the BALANCE “B” heart of course) on his sleeve, for all to see how much he loves the services we provide.

If you know someone like BoB who is living with sight loss and wanting to build more independence or get out into the community, have them contact BALANCE for Blind Adults. Just tell them BoB sent you!



# BALANCE INFO Fair



After over four years, the BALANCE Community Info Fair made its much-anticipated return, providing a unique in-person opportunity in a wonderful new space for individuals with visual disabilities to connect with each other, product vendors, and service providers. Held on September 29, 2023, at the Toronto Public Library - North York, the event was a significant success.



Twenty-nine exhibitors showcased a diverse range of products and services designed to support individuals with visual disabilities. The fair attracted 70 attendees, fostering a dynamic and interactive environment. In addition, 6 special talks were conducted, providing valuable insights and information on various topics pertinent to the community. Our Fair Sponsor, Accessible Media Inc. (AMI), broadcasted live from the event, interviewing a selection of exhibitors; this significantly increased engagement and visibility.



The return of the Info Fair was indeed a resounding success. It created a unique platform for networking and resource-sharing among individuals with visual disabilities. The positive turnout and enthusiastic participation underscore the importance of such events in our community. We look forward to future events to continue to build on this success.

# Low Vision Speaker Series

Our first annual Low Vision Speaker Series presented by Eye Recommend was a huge success. With over 170 optometrists and low vision specialists in attendance at our no-cost, three-part virtual event, taking place in April and May, we knew this would become an important event for BALANCE. Along with our sponsors, we were pleased to invite Dr. Keith Gordon, Dr. Ana Juricic, and Dr. Tammy LaBreche as speakers, discussing Charles Bonnet Syndrome, wearable digital technology, and driving with bioptics.

Each talk was well attended and 95% of optometrists and other low vision professionals in attendance stated they had not heard of BALANCE before. Thus, goal achieved—we raised so much awareness! In addition to awareness, this important new event series raised a total of \$13,100 to support our programs and services.

Connecting with vision care professionals is a key to unlocking the door to our supports for optometry patients with visual disabilities. Please look out for the Low Vision Speaker Series coming with new topics and new speakers annually in May!



# Living Blind Podcast



9

EPIISODES

5,903

PLAYS

32%

AVERAGE LISTENERS FROM CANADA



# Because of BALANCE Campaign 2023

Our 5th annual Because of BALANCE campaign was another resounding success! Together, 33 clients, volunteers, staff, and board members shared their stories of how BALANCE has changed their lives. And together we collectively raised \$40,000 to support BALANCE's incredible programs and services. We remain grateful to our anonymous matching donor who matched EVERY single donation this year! We hope you'll join us again.

# Volunteers Make a Difference!



BALANCE for Blind Adults is fortunate to have a strong team of volunteers who provide service on a regular basis to our organization. This past fiscal year, we had 16 dedicated volunteers assist in a range of roles. To celebrate our volunteers who selflessly provide support to BALANCE for Blind Adults, we are introducing our first ever Volunteer of the Year award for outstanding service and contributions to our organization. The first recipient of this award is Debbie Byrane! Debbie has played an important part in delivering services to our clients in a variety of ways, including actively participating in our Because of BALANCE Campaign each fall, and, assisting our clients at the weekly musical movement program. In addition, she has shown commitment and creativity with her annual knitting fundraiser project. Thank you for all that you have done for our clients through these many ways of volunteering your time and creativity to our organization! This award is so very well deserved. Congratulations Debbie.

# Funding Partners

## Grants:

*The George Lunan Foundation*

*EKATA Foundation*

*iA Financial*

*EnAbling Change Program - Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility*

*United Way Greater Toronto*

*CIBC Foundation*

*YPI - Youth and Philanthropy Initiative*

*LiUNA Local 183*

*Toronto Foundation*

---

## Corporate:

Humanware™



abbvie



eSight®



Optelec

# Community Partners

Thank you to all of our 2023 - 2024  
community partners.

4 Villages Community Health Centre  
ABC Life Literacy  
Access Employment  
Accessible Media  
AEBC  
Bachelor of Social Work Program  
**Brands for Canada\***  
CCB National  
CCB Toronto Visionaries  
Centre for Independent Living Toronto  
CILT  
City of Toronto  
CNIB- Come to Work Program  
Common Boots Theatre  
CommunitiCare Health  
Community Workers  
COSTI  
**CultureLink Settlement and Community Services\***  
Davenport-Perth CHC  
Fighting Blindness Canada (FBC)  
George Brown College Department of Accesible Learning Services  
Humber College department of Social & Community Services

**Jumpstart refugee Access Employment\***  
**March of Dimes, Skilling Up\***  
**SD Free Self Defense-Chris James\***  
St. Stephen's Community House  
Storefront Humber  
Toronto Metropolitan University,  
**Toronto New Girls\***  
Toronto Public Health  
**University of Toronto, Blueprint Career Services\***  
**University of Toronto, Department of Computer Science\***  
University of Toronto, Occupational Therapy  
University of Toronto, School of Continuing Studies  
Vibe Arts  
Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario  
Volunteer Toronto  
West Neighbourhood House  
West Toronto Ontario Health Team  
Woodgreen Housing Help Centre  
**York U Accessibility Office W Ross MacDonald\***



# Thanks to: *Staff*

**Dr. Deborah Gold** *Executive Director*

**Doug Poirier** *Assistive Technology Lead*

**Ronashelle Coro** *Office and Communications Coordinator*

**Bill Phung** *Certified Orientation and Mobility/ Data Specialist*

**Cristina Lopes** *Program Coordinator and Community Engagement Services Specialist*

**Christina Peruzzi** *Pre-Employment Program Coordinator*

**Olivia Pietrzyk** *Adaptive Daily Living Skills Instructor*

**Kiana Raesdana** *Orientation and Mobility Instructor*

**Windy Ho-Li** *Assistive Technology Instructor*

**Meredith Poirier** *Summer Youth Office Assistant*



# Staff Continued

## ***Contractors:***

**Naomi Hazlett** *Podcast Host*

**Jeffrey Rainey** *Podcast Producer*

**Lisa Derencinovic** *Counsellor*

**Melanie Marsden** *Counsellor*

**Anita Lurnitus** *Volunteer Coordinator*

## ***Students:***

**Sujin Lee Nursing** *Placement Student*

## ***Marketing and Fundraising:***

**Beverley Murray** *Grant Writer*

**Deanna Carruthers** *Development Officer*

**Amanda Race** *Grant Writer*

**Sandy Feldman** *Website Developer*

**Margrett Weldon** *Client Satisfaction Surveyor*

## ***AT Apprentices:***

Diana Horani

Kim Harbroe

Laurisa White

Victoria Hernandez

Joseph Sidarose

Jay Risman

# Board of Directors



Keith Gordon *Board Chair*

Robin Dafoe *Vice-Chair*

Michelle McQuigge *Past Chair*

Marcus M. Song *Treasurer*

Virginia Duff *Secretary*

Jeevan Bains *Board Member*

Alex Bulmer *Board Member*

Martin Courcelles *Board Member*

Gillian Davis *Board Member*

Ana Juricic *Board Member*

Jue Li *Board Member*

Lizna Husnani-Puchta *Board Member*

Stephen Ricci *Board Member*

Bob Stark *Board Member*

Meenakshi Venkatesan *Board Member*

Wayne Yeung *Board Member*

# Condensed Financial Statement

## BALANCE FOR BLIND ADULTS

### Summary Balance Sheet

March 31	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current assets		
Cash	50,556	14,663
Investments	511,609	475,880
Accounts receivable and prepaid expenses	19,920	14,323
	<b>582,085</b>	504,866
Capital assets	-	5,314
	<b>582,085</b>	510,180
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	72,836	36,613
Due to Ontario Health	61,120	61,120
Deferred revenue	76,663	47,005
	<b>210,619</b>	144,738
Deferred capital contribution	-	5,314
	<b>210,619</b>	150,052
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
General fund	356,319	345,281
Colin Haines fund	15,147	14,847
	<b>371,466</b>	360,128
	<b>582,085</b>	510,180

The accompanying note is an integral part of these summary financial statements



# Condensed Financial Statement

## BALANCE FOR BLIND ADULTS

### Summary Statement of Revenues and Expenses

Year ended March 31	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Revenues</b>		
Ministry of Health program funding	574,852	547,478
Donations and fundraising	77,584	93,279
Investment and sundry income	21,574	6,180
Other grants/projects	144,128	59,360
	<b>818,138</b>	<b>706,297</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Salaries and employee benefits	484,003	426,519
Occupancy	28,994	46,162
Professional fees	75,846	76,795
General and operating	28,378	23,220
Communication	29,621	25,650
Training centre and other funded expenses	2,519	6,472
Fundraising	-	489
Other grants/projects	147,224	58,922
Other expenses	10,215	22,701
	<b>806,800</b>	<b>686,930</b>
<b>Excess of revenues over expenses for the year</b>	<b>11,338</b>	<b>19,367</b>

The accompanying note is an integral part of these summary financial statements

# 2023-2024 Donors

**“Our heartfelt thanks to our 2023-2024 donors”**

Adam Growe  
Adela Mall  
Agathaa Garcia-Wright  
Akeem Sulaimon  
Allan Lacap  
Amanda Yao  
Amelia Ortiz  
Ana Juricic  
Anar Samji  
Andrew and Dani Salomon  
Angela Galli  
Anita Lournitus  
Anna Gold  
Anna Kan  
Anna Rago  
Anna Zyblock  
Anne Fair  
Anne Musgrave  
Anne Stokes  
Ari Goldkind

Audrey Vermeer  
Barbara Bulmer  
Beryl Grant-Duffus  
Betty Gindi  
Beverley Murray  
Bob Biggs  
Carolyn James Horton  
Carolyn Stark  
Cassandra Brown  
Catherine Tardif  
Chester Lee  
Christina Peruzzi  
Clarence Baker  
Collin Jarvis  
Daliah Chapnik  
Daniella Levy-Pinto  
David Bryane  
David Cohen  
David Gotlib

# 2023-2024 Donors

**“Our heartfelt thanks to our 2023-2024 donors”**

Deanna Carruthers

Deanna Choi

Debbie Bryane

Debra Horsfield

Deepshikha Guleria

Diane Juzkow

Dina McCaw

Donnabelle Dihan

Dorothy de Val

Doug Poirier

Doyin Obiki

Edith Ho

Elaine Tamura

Eleanor Ballett

Eleanor Lobo-Lee

Elisa Cardilli

Ellen Yamasaki

Enemona Itodo

Erica Yao

Euselda Altamirano

Firoz Kara

Frances Lau

Francesca Eluomma

Gaby Sedra

Gil Dodick

Ginny Duff

Glendon Singleton-Wood

Graham Brown

Harsimran Rattan

Harvinder and Seema Puri

Heather Harrison

Heino Nielsen

Howard Gotlib

Ian Bryane

Ilya K.

Isaac Berman

Ivan Cheuk

Ivan Tom

Jagjit Singh

James Brazill

# 2023-2024 Donors

**“Our heartfelt thanks to our 2023-2024 donors”**

James Riley  
Janet Sweatman  
Janine Mckeown  
Jann Migel Asilo  
Jeannine Allot  
Jeevan Bains  
Jeffrey Rainey  
Jennifer Abbott  
Jennifer Wentworth  
Jeremy Gibbens  
Jessica Thompson  
Jessica Vorstermans  
Jill Rich  
Joel Gold  
John and Barbara Gambles  
John McCleary  
John Tomasino  
Joseph Hanna  
Julia Foster  
Keddy Williams

Keith Gordon  
Kerstin Lueck  
Kristin Chong  
Larissa Gonsalves  
Laurie Brager  
Leeann Thompson  
Lesley Inglis  
Lisa Hamather  
Lorne Berman  
Maddie Bennett  
Madhuri Rajani  
Madiha Master  
Magdalene Li  
Manan Pandit  
Margaret Keenan  
Margaret Nott  
Margaret Williams  
Maria Buzdon  
Maricel Malimban  
Mark Stubbings



# 2023-2024 Donors

**“Our heartfelt thanks to our 2023-2024 donors”**

Marrienne Bridge  
Martin Copeland  
Mary Ann Oughtred  
Matthew Silver  
Melanie Archambault  
Michael Shiu  
Michelle Chong  
Michelle Grasso  
Micky Fraterman-Oostra  
Mihika Kelkar  
Mireille El Mounzer  
Mireille Moun  
Murli Iyer  
Nancy Slater  
Naomi King  
Nick Svab  
Olamiposi Olawole  
Olohigbe Iruobe  
Oluwabukola Agbede  
Onyi Okenu

Pamela Isaak  
Paul Grossman  
Peter Hanna  
Poonam Gawri  
Puneet Kaur  
Quan Gan  
Rachel Berman  
Rahul Kaul  
Richard Choi  
Rita Taricani  
Robert Hall  
Roberta Clough  
Robin Dafoe  
Rocchina Morra  
Rolando Sy  
Rustom Satchu  
Ryle Gonsalves  
Saidat Lawal  
Sam Bucovetsky  
Sandhya Anugopal

# 2023-2024 Donors

**“Our heartfelt thanks to our 2023-2024 donors”**

Sandra Gold  
Sandy Feldman  
Sandy Lee  
Seye Ologunja  
Shirley O'Donnell  
Simran Kaur  
Sisi L.  
Steve Pinto  
Sue Traynor  
Susan Bedford  
Susan Eason  
Teresa Horner-Quiroz  
Theodore Greenberg  
Tiffany Antosz  
Vanessa Bourget  
Viktoria Khan  
Wendy Hymes  
William Fearn  
William Stark  
Zaid Rawni

Zehra Seyhun  
Plus many anonymous  
donors!

## Connect with us!



**416-236-1796**



**info@balancefba.org**



**balancefba.org**



**@balanceforblindadults**



**@balanceforblindadults**



**@BALANCE for Blind Adults**



**@balancefba**



**BALANCE for Blind Adults**