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Thinking Outside the Booth: Canadian Hearing Services

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Founded in 1940, Canadian Hearing Services has a long history and many years of experience providing products, services and education that empower Deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians to overcome barriers to participation.

Since its inception, innovation, health care, and service excellence have always been at the core of Canadian Hearing Services vision: **to advance a barrier-free society for Deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians.**

Through the years, Canadian Hearing Services has played a significant role in supporting and meeting the needs of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing Canadians, whether that be providing audiological care in modern, state-of-the-art facilities located in clinics throughout Ontario or providing a vast range of professional services that help remove barriers to participation and improve quality of life for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Many Canadian Hearing Services' clients benefit from one or more or its services. For example, an individual who suspects hearing loss may visit Canadian Hearing Services for a hearing test but go home with much more support than they ever imagined receiving. Canadian Hearing Services offers a selection of services including hearing healthcare, counselling, employment services, education, and accessibility products and services.

Meet CHS Clients, Amy, Phyllis and Robyn

AMY'S STORY - BREAKING THROUGH BARRIERS TO BECOME EMPOWERED

When Amy contacted Canadian Hearing Services, she lived alone, struggled financially, had no family to lean on, and began finding daily life extremely overwhelming. Amy is 64 years old, Deaf, communicates in ASL and has limited knowledge of written English. She was born Deaf and was the only Deaf person in her family. Because her family never learned ASL, Amy struggled to communicate with them and could never develop a close bond with anyone in her family. This left

her alone with very little support.

"*When I first heard about Canadian Hearing Services, I was surprised, but extremely relieved and happy to learn that Canadian Hearing Services had Deaf staff who could communicate with me in ASL. For the first time I felt like the communication barriers were removed and I could finally ask for the support I needed,*" says Amy.

Amy was connected with General Support Services Counsellor, Danielle Hopper, whose goal was to develop a care plan that would provide Amy with the knowledge, confidence and independence she needed to manage everyday life events. Amy's first priority was to gain financial security. Danielle helped Amy apply for rent assistance and connected her with other community resources to help her save money, such as food banks, free used clothing, free lunches and more. However, for Amy to become more empowered, she needed to seek out these resources independently and communicate without barriers. Danielle showed Amy how to search for community resources, fill in forms and use Video Relay Services to make phone calls using ASL.

"*Amy has come a long way. She now knows how to access community supports for when she needs them in the future, can pay her bills on time, and can easily communicate by using Video Relay Services to make appointments and ask for the support she needs," says Danielle. "Amy was motivated to become more empowered, and being part of that process was an absolute pleasure and honour*."

"*I am so happy to finally be more independent and financially secure. I feel more confident and empowered, and more at ease knowing that Canadian Hearing Services is there for me when I need them,*" explains Amy.

PHYLLIS' STORY – ENJOYING LIFE TO ITS FULLEST

Untreated hearing loss has been linked to social isolation, loneliness and reduced quality of life. As people develop hearing loss, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to interact with others, often resulting in avoidance of social situations and potential withdrawal from family and friends.

Hearing loss does not have to have a negative impact on an individual's health, social connections or mental well-being. Canadian Hearing Services provides support to help individuals with hearing

loss improve communication, stay engaged in social activities and manage any stress around hearing loss.

Phyllis Salem, reached out to Canadian Hearing Services, and with the support of her Hearing Care Counsellor, Joyce Haynes, Phyllis could better cope with her hearing loss, turning what seemed like big obstacles into opportunities, leading to improved quality of life and well-being.

Before contacting Canadian Hearing Services, Phyllis had been struggling to adjust and cope with the challenges that come with hearing loss.

"*I tried to get assistance through other means in the past, but was unsuccessful, which left me feeling defeated, stressed, and thinking that hearing loss was something I just had to live with*," said Phyllis.

Through Canadian Hearing Services' Hearing Care Counselling Service, Phyllis expressed her challenges around hearing loss, what aspects of her hearing loss were causing her stress and anxiety, and her wishes and needs to continue to lead a fulfilling life and stay connected with others. Phyllis' Counsellor helped Phyllis find ways to manage stress, taught her how to respond to challenging listening situations, and practiced new communication strategies with her, until Phyllis felt confident communicating with others. Phyllis' counsellor also helped her address challenges around using the telephone, making the best use of her hearing aids, and helping Phyllis explore other communication options such as video chat with captioning.

"*Each client is unique. It is important to work with each client and their family to understand their unique needs, develop a plan together and personalize their care, so the client can reach their full potential in a manner that is right for them. If we focus only on the "hearing loss," the loss will be felt more, but if we focus on communication, we can gain the ability to remain engaged and make those important connections*." explains Joyce.

"*Phyllis' hearing loss was greatly impacting our lives and bringing many activities to a halt. However, through the help received from Canadian Hearing Services, Phyllis is more content, less overwhelmed and anxious, and together we remain active and social, enjoying life to it's fullest."* says Phyllis' husband, Frank.

ROBYN'S STORY – BREAKING DOWN COMMUNICATION BARRIERS AT WORK

Hearing loss can profoundly impact many areas of our lives - at home with family, in the community, at school or at work.

Hearing health and the ability to communicate effectively at work can impact how successful and satisfied we are with our employment. Ensuring the right support is in place to manage hearing loss and finding the right solutions can make a world of difference in breaking down communication barriers.

Robyn Gaisford, from Kingston, Ontario, is an in-home support worker for adults with physical and/or intellectual challenges. She assists them with their daily tasks, keeping them safe during the day and overnight and providing companionship and emotional support. Robyn is passionate about her work and dedicated to supporting her clients.

Robyn's hearing loss began in her late teens and has progressively worsened over the past decade. She explains,

"Over the years, my friends, family and colleagues noticed that I was not fully comprehending or engaged in conversations. Then my hearing loss began to impact my work. It affected how I communicated with clients and agency staff. It even limited the type of clients I could take on."

Robyn's hearing loss meant she often could not hear a client speaking as well as doorbells, telephones, bed alarms and even fire alarms. Since she also could not hear the bed alarm during her night shifts, she had to stay awake overnight to ensure her clients were safe and well looked after.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Robyn was determined to find a solution that would allow her to continue working. She contacted the Canadian Hearing Services where she was connected virtually with Nicki McShane, an Employment Services Consultant.

Nicki worked with Robyn to identify her unique challenges and needs. She arranged for an audiology consultation, helping her to explore different options for communication devices, and even helping her secure funding for the new devices.

"With so many services being closed during the pandemic, I was concerned I would not get the help I needed to continue to work. Instead, I was easily and conveniently connected virtually with a Canadian Hearing Services' Employment Consultant, who went above and beyond to help me overcome my challenges with hearing loss and make my employment future look so much brighter," explains Robyn.

With help from Canadian Hearing Services, Robyn is now the proud owner of new hearing aids and an alerting device that she uses in client's homes, ensuring her clients are safe during the day and night.

As an essential worker, Robyn continued working throughout the pandemic, providing much-needed community services. Her interaction with her verbal clients has improved significantly. Robyn's newest client, a soft-spoken man with dementia, is no longer frustrated that Robyn cannot hear him. He also benefits from Robyn's companionship, especially during the stay-at-home orders.

"The support I received from Canadian Hearing Services has not only improved my employment situation – it has allowed me to participate fully in all aspects of my life. Thank you Canadian Hearing Services!" said Robyn.

List of Services Available at Canadian Hearing Services

COUNSELLING SERVICES	EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	EDUCATION	ACCESSIBILITY PRODUCTS & SERVICES
Hearing Care Counselling for Ages 55+: Counselling services and supports to people aged 55 and over to help cope with hearing loss and improve communication.	**Employment Services for Job Seekers**: Support Deaf and hard of hearing individuals with their job search and help them succeed by working with them and their employer to put the right supports in place.	**Literacy & Basic Skills**: Instruction for Deaf adults to develop and apply communication, numeracy, and digital skills needed to secure and maintain employment, further education and increase personal independence.	**Interpreting Services**: On-site and video remote interpretation services to facilitate communication between Deaf people who use signed language (ASL/LSQ) and those who use a spoken language (English/French). Includes emergency services offered 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 365 days/year.
Connect Mental Health Counselling: Professional counselling services for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals 16 and over, who are living with mental health issues or other serious challenges.		**Language Instruction for Newcomers**: Programming for Deaf newcomers that provides opportunities to improve official language skills (ASL and written English) to support integration in Canada.	**Communication Devices**: CHS carries range of communication devices designed to improve communication, safety and independence.

General Support Services:
Collaborative case management for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals including accessing community services, assistance with life events, and support with self-advocacy.

Settlement Program for Newcomers to Canada:
Support for Deaf and hard of hearing newcomers in overcoming barriers specific to the newcomer experience, through direct service provided by a Settlement Counsellor in ASL.

American Sign Language (ASL) Classes:
Sign language classes provided by qualified Deaf instructors that teaches both ASL and Deaf culture. A range of courses, from beginner to advanced offered.

Support for combined vision and hearing loss:
Support for individuals with combined vision and hearing loss helping them interact successfully with other people and their environment.

Audiology:
Canadian Hearing Services' Audiology Program has modern, state-of-the-art facilities located in clinics throughout Ontario. Services are provided by an experienced team of communication health professionals, including audiologists, hearing instrument specialists and speech-language pathologists.