

# Lions Clubs Awareness Campaign - Vision

## Ontario Blind Golf (OBG), aka Ontario Visually Impaired Golfers (OVIG)

<https://OntarioBlindGolf.ca>

### **3 Pillars**

- **Awareness:** OBG wants to make Lions Clubs around Ontario more aware of blind golf, and the blind individuals, their coaches and volunteers that make it happen. A compelling story.
- **Grow the Sport:** Where there is a need, there is a Lion. Lions know people who are blind and families with blind persons. OBG hopes that the Lions will help us get more of the blind community to come out, come out with some Lions, join the sport and feel the energy. It is inspirational.
- **Support/Stability:** This is all about scale. Ongoing support from Lions clubs all over Ontario puts OBG in a position to do some more outreach and implement a public awareness campaign for Spring, 2023. Ontario is Canada's largest province, let's be the leaders for disabled sport.

OBG, is all about serving an under represented segment of the Canadian public. Persons with disabilities that are too often forgotten. Now more than ever OBG needs help. With COVID, and the fact we lost our premier corporate sponsor for our annual fundraising event the Colin Kressler Charity tournament. We need to get our accounts back to pre-COVID levels. That would be a difference maker in so many ways.

OBG knows that a lot of persons with disabilities struggle financially. 62% of blind persons are not employed, and for the 38% that do have an income, on average it is 45% less than the pre-tax median income of the average Canadian. That is a harsh reality. Lions know this too well. It is the reason why our goal as a charity is to subsidize the events to the best of our abilities. Without us, and the Lions, they don't, or can't, come out and take part in an incredible experience.

The importance of these events can't be understated. The ability to lobby governments and organizations to impact real change in the blind golf community can't be understated. OBG wants to have a longer-term relationship with the MDA Lions, and we are open to discussing naming conventions and rights for our events.

Lions like service projects, and here is a grass roots level approach that supports blind people in the community take part in events all around Ontario. We are hoping with the support of the Lions, to grow the events in Northern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, and the GTA. Lions Governors, and the MDA Cabinet have the power to impact change. The time is now, as we need to plan for our events, and most importantly, our future.

The events for 2023 will be confirmed in early February, 2023. Each of the blind golf events cost between \$1,500 – \$3,000 depending on the location, and the number of blind golfers along with their coaches. This year, in addition to our Ontario Blind Golf Provincial Championships, we hope to host 10+ events. More if we are able to.

## **Important Bullets:**

- Blind golf has been “around” since the 1950's, and Ontario Blind Golf has been part of that journey for well over 60+ years.
- Blind golf follows all of the traditional rules of golf, except the golfer plays with a Coach, who helps him or her set-up on the tee, or address the ball, and lines them up, and players are allowed to ground their club in the sand. Without a Coach there is no blind golf. Same applies to our volunteer Board, and all of the volunteers that make each of the events special.
- There are 3 site categories that were established by the IBGA (International Blind Golf Association) in the late 1990's. Ranging from B3, blind golfers with 5-10% of their vision, B2, blind golfers with 0-5% of their vision, and the ever inspirational, B1 blind golfer with 0% vision.
- In 1987, our name was changed to OVIG, to incorporate and reflect the fact it includes “visually impaired” golfers. However, we are in the process of reverting back to Ontario Blind Golf. Not only to align with other blind golf organizations around North America, but to align with the international organizations as well.
- OBG is a registered Canadian Charity, and is the only blind golf charity that welcomes any person who has a CNIB card to participate in all of our events, despite some events being more competitive in nature. Where there may be some restrictions due to International Blind Golf Association rules, but every golfer can play in every event assuming we have the funds and the space to accommodate them.
- Each member is asked to pay a nominal membership fee, and pays just \$25 per round for the golf cart, and the coach. Both play in rounds that are social, but for competitive rounds like the Ontario Blind Golf Provincial Championships it is only the blind golfer player, supported by the coach.
- This is not just a numbers game, in fact, if anything it is about experiences and the magic that happens when persons with disabilities experience the joy and awe of sport.
- About promoting integrity and sportsmanship, socialization and relationship building, helping our members and the blind community have the confidence, and perseverance to keep the dream alive.
- Our focus in the 2023/2024 seasons will be on women golfers who are blind, and youth who are blind. This is a demographic OBG will gladly serve, and our numbers here have to become more representative of the blind community at large, and the province.
- District A16 will be hosting an event on May 27<sup>th</sup> with 60 golfers including blind golfers, their coaches, and participating Lions and their families and friends that want to be part of it. David Burnett, President of the Aurora Lions Club will be hosting the event at Oliver's Nest in Oakwood, Ontario just outside of Lindsay. It would be ideal to replicate this idea across Ontario.
- Bottom line, we are trying to raise \$30,000+ this year to put us in a better position to serve the blind community. Please help our blind community do what we can for blind sports.