



True Visionaries

Written By Stephanie D'Angelo and Simona Panetta

We open our eyes each morning and look out the window, wave to our neighbours, read the paper and drive to work. None of this would be possible without sight, which for most of us, is something we don't give much thought to. However, what is merely a taken-for-granted sense to many, may affect the life of someone who is visually impaired.

But not for Domenic Condo, a 35-year-old man who has experienced life with poor vision ever since he was a child. Today, he is a well-respected businessman and talented recording studio owner/record producer who is determined to educate Canadians that the definition of "legally blind" doesn't include living in fear and putting aside your dreams.

"I've been in situations where some people say, 'I have no idea how you do this,'" says Condo, who continuously amazes his family and close friends when it comes to such things as diligently working a recording console. As the owner of Soundwerx Recording Studio, Condo has

signed talented bands to major recording contracts over the years. "I've loved music ever since I was 11, which was the first time I picked up a guitar," he says. His love of music carries on to his youngest brother, Mike, who is on tour with his highly acclaimed band, Hello Operator. Mike is also visually impaired. "This condition doesn't stop me from doing anything I want to do. And I want kids to know that you can do whatever you want ... you can't let that bring you down," says Condo. In Canada, 17,000 teens are legally blind, states the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)'s website.

Inspired by his own experience, Condo has teamed up with Jim Sanders, president and CEO of the CNIB, in an effort to raise awareness on blindness, and to offer 600,000 Canadians suffering from vision loss with the opportunity to live a high-quality lifestyle.

"People can change their own lives once they realize what they can do, rather than what they can't do," says Sanders, who has been working with the CNIB for decades.

"People will come in and say 'I can't read.' But what they might not know is that they can read in a different way," explains Sanders, who is blind.

Funding informative and inspirational commercials for the CNIB through his family-owned, award-winning hardwood flooring company, Weston Flooring Ltd., Condo helps to spread the message of hope, and the fact that nine out of ten people who walk through the door of CNIB still have some vision. "The best way I can explain it is, if you can see something at 100 feet away, I would need to be about 10 feet away to see it," says Condo. "So if you wave to me from across the street, I probably wouldn't wave back, and you would assume that I was rude, but it's really just because I didn't see you!" However, Condo is able to read a computer screen or novel up-close with his reading glasses.

"If people are educated about this, it opens up their mind a little more," explains Condo, who helps oversee Weston Flooring's major daily operations with his father, Sam and brother, Pat. "What I am trying to do, with the help of the CNIB, is to promote awareness, so that kids who are growing up with this have it a little easier," says Condo. "They should know that they can have whatever they want from life – nothing should get in the way."

With 51 CNIB locations across Canada, people who are partially or fully blind are able to access a leading centre that brings joy. "The CNIB doesn't place a definition on legally blind or blind because it affects people to a different extent. So, we no longer ask people to have a certain level of diminished sight," says the experienced president.

Sanders and his team are especially proud of the programs that the CNIB offers, such as the inspiring The Score Leadership Camp, which gives teens the chance to harness career development skills.

"It takes a lot of courage for someone to walk through the doors of the CNIB, but after you've met staff and volunteers and others who live with vision loss, you realize that there is more you can do with vision loss than you thought," says Sanders. © www.cnib.ca, www.westonflooring.com