

# Diners in dark for a reason

Guests get taste of blind life during World Sight Day

BY MICHAEL POWER  
Staff Writer

Ever wonder what it's like to be blind, even for a short time?

Those who attended a luncheon on Thursday received a realistic taste of what it's really like.

The luncheon, at the Crossroads Restaurant in Stouffville, had the guests eat with their eyes covered, to simulate a condition millions of people around the world already live with, said Dave McComiskey, executive director of Christian Blind Mission Canada.

Everyone at the luncheon was blindfolded and had to function as if they had no vision. Those eating were equipped with blindfolds, along with aprons to keep themselves clean if eating without sight became difficult. The diners

included Mayor Wayne Emmerson, MP Lui Temelkovski and Sun-Tribune editor Jim Mason. Helpers (without blindfolds) were on hand to ensure the lunch went smoothly.

"It could be a little bit messy," said Mr. McComiskey, noting the food was chosen to be slightly tough without vision. "We're trying to make it an achievable goal, if a bit of a challenge."

The World Health Organization this year declared Oct. 11 World Sight Day and as a result Christian Blind Mission Canada took the opportunity to plan the luncheon.

"Our goal is to draw awareness to the problem of blindness around the world, particularly in the developing world," Mr. McComiskey said.

Around the world, more than one million children under the age of 15 are blind, with a blind child in the developing world given a 60 per cent chance of dying within one year of losing their sight, a representative of Christian Blind

Mission Canada said.

Many of these children afflicted with blindness live in poverty. In the developing world children can lose sight due to malnutrition, such as through a lack of Vitamin A.

Events such as natural disasters or famines can also increase rates of blindness.

Worldwide, 37 million people are totally blind, while 110 million are seriously visually impaired (with less than 10 per cent vision in their best eye).

Rather than as a fundraiser, the event was organized to raise awareness of how many people — especially children — are affected by blindness and visual impairment.

"It's just to understand, just for a moment, how loss of vision impacts your world," Mr. McComiskey said.

For more information on Christian Blind Mission Canada, visit their website at [www.cbmicanada.org](http://www.cbmicanada.org)



STAFF PHOTOS/JIM MASON

Oak Ridges-Markham MP Lui Temelkovski and his wife, Loretta, eat their lunch blindfolded on World Sight Day Thursday at Crossroads Restaurant in Stouffville.

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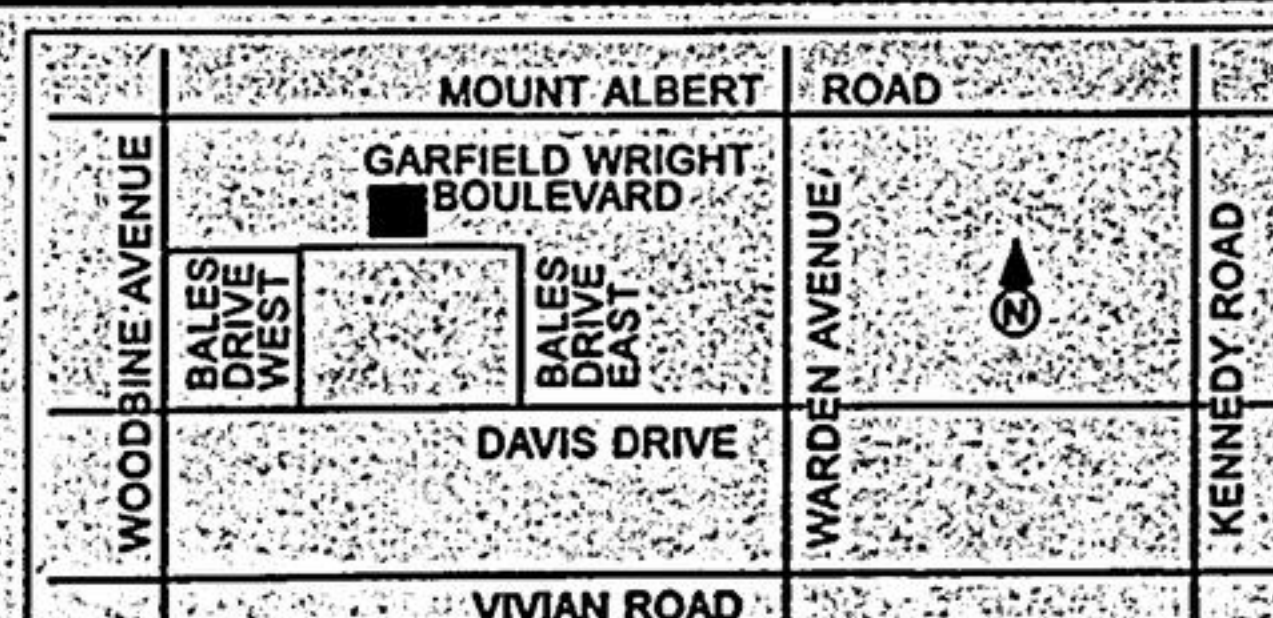
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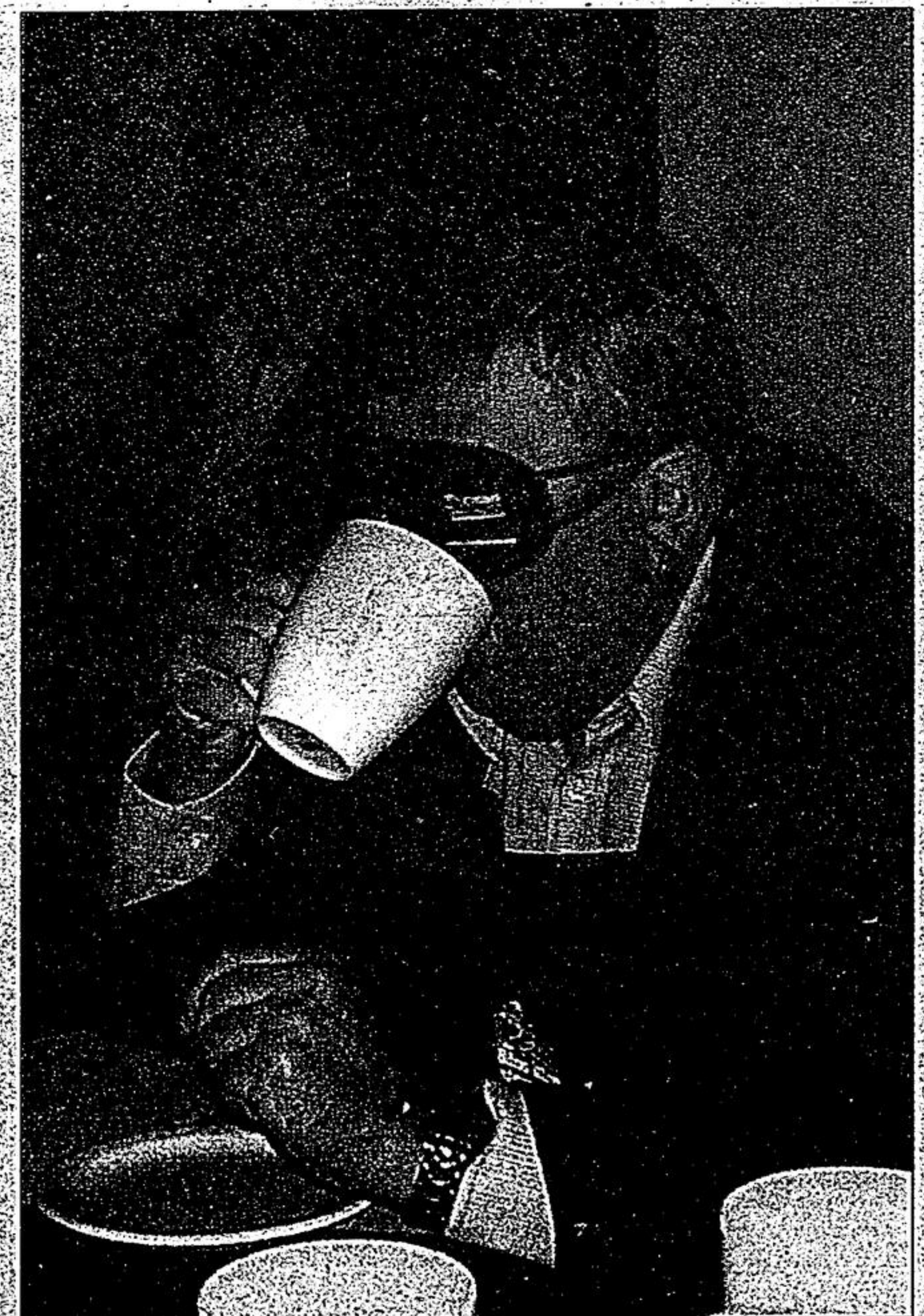
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Mayor Wayne Emmerson tries the soup as Lindsay O'Connor of Christian Blind Mission International looks on.



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