

# Focus on blind in October

OCTOBER IS Blind Awareness Month and many organisations and individuals around the world will focus on education to raise awareness on the accomplishments of those who are blind or visually impaired, and advocate for resources and laws to enable people with visual impairments to live fully productive lives and contribute equally to their communities.

To commemorate this month, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues its advocacy efforts to work towards eliminating discrimination against people living with disabilities. People who are blind are protected by the Equal Opportunity Act under the status ground of "disability." The act prohibits discrimination against people on grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, origin, marital status, religion and disability in the categories of education, employment, provision of goods and services and provision of accommodation.

As the leading state advocate on equality, the EOC occupies a critical role in our society's progression including advocating for every Trinidadian/Tobagonian so that they have the equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

It is not uncommon for people who are blind or have low vision to function independently with the same range of abilities as anyone else, once provided with appropriate training and equipment. Thus, they deserve an equal opportunity to employment, education, goods and services and accommodation, while being treated with respect and dignity.

## Activities for Blind Awareness Month



## 'The Equal Opportunity Act...ensures equality for all including one of the most vulnerable groups in society, people living with disabilities'

- Representatives from the EOC will present at a town hall meeting hosted by the Council for the Development and Enhancement of the Family (CODE-F). This meeting will take place at 5 pm on October 11 at the Point Fortin Borough Corporation Town Hall. The format will take the structure of a panel discussion covering the topic, "Living with visual impairment/blindness and the attending challenges including discrimination."

The EOC will also set up an information kiosk where people can play games for prizes and ask questions about the rights, which are protected by the Equal Opportunity Act.

- The EOC will also embark on a social media campaign, sharing information capsules about caring and respecting people who are blind or visually impaired.

- Representatives from the EOC will appear on Talk City 91.1 fm on the Holy Spirit Project on October 28 at 11 am to raise awareness on the rights of people who are blind and encourage them to lodge a complaint if they have been discriminated against while accessing the four categories covered by the act.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are at least 2.2 billion people globally who suffer from some form of visual impairment or blindness, inclusive of those who simply wear corrective lenses.

In commemoration of Blind Awareness Month, the WHO has stated, "Everyone, if they live long enough, will experience at least one eye condition in their lifetime." It is therefore important that the citizenry take advantage of Blind Awareness Month when it rolls around yearly in the month of October, because it brings a heightened focus on the blind and visually impaired community and the realities of adjusting to living with loss of sight.

The Equal Opportunity Act is an essential piece of legislation because it ensures equality for all including one of the most vulnerable groups in society, people living with disabilities.

If you have been discriminated against based on your disability or any of the status grounds mentioned in this column, you can lodge a complaint at the EOC. Visit our website [www.equalopportunity.gov.tt](http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt) for more information.