

Essex Blind Charity

Spotlight

August 2010

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Editor: Susan Mann

Readership: Anyone with a visual impairment or anyone involved with the visually impaired of Essex and the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

Hello!

Welcome to the latest edition of Spotlight brought to you by Essex Blind Charity.

We hope you will find articles that are informative and of interest to you and that you will share these with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can then request their own copy either in large print format or on tape. Unfortunately we are unable to provide Braille copies.

I continue to receive articles from Clubs and individuals and various Companies – all helping to make this a lively forum for visually impaired people in the County and the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Havering, Waltham Forest and Barking and Dagenham.

This edition of Spotlight contains quite a lot about Essex Blind Charity – both information as well as points for discussion – and, as always, we value your input. If there is anything you want to tell us about or want to discuss, please get in touch – either with Sue Barrell in Colchester or with Janet Plant in Read House or with me, Susan Mann the editor of Spotlight.

On a personal note, my husband and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary earlier this month with friends and family and were left wondering where the time has gone! Can we really be that old, and have done so much? Our family love to look at the old photos and laugh at everyone's clothes – we delight in telling them that they will be laughing about themselves a few years from now!

Sue Barrell, EBC Development Manager

A Big Thank you from Sue

I recently celebrated a rather momentous birthday and was absolutely thrilled with all the presents and cards that I received from staff and volunteers of Essex Blind Charity. This was completely unexpected and very much appreciated. Thank you so much to everyone concerned. I am particularly looking forward to my 'driving experience' and will report back in due course – if I am still in one piece! My husband says he can't watch as it will be too frightening; he has no faith in me! I am sure it seems strange to people who are used to driving a car, but for someone like me who has never sat behind the wheel, this counts as a really

exciting experience. I also received a lovely necklace and vouchers, you are all so kind.

Resource centre news:

Braintree: The next meeting of the activity group is on Wednesday 25th August from 10.30am to 12.30pm, when we are having a games session. New members are always welcome. The keep fit has stopped for the summer but will resume at our September meeting.

Brentwood: Recent topics for our audio book group have been Travellers' Tales to get us in the holiday mood and Essex Treasures to appreciate what we have at home. One of the travel books highly recommended by Alistair, who read it, was "A Sense of the World" by Jason Roberts. It is the true story of a blind man who travelled all over the world on his own – quite an adventure when you consider he lived from 1786 to 1857. If anyone else would like to read it you can borrow it from Essex Libraries – it is available in large print and on tape and CD. The next Brentwood resource centre is on Monday 9th August from 10am - 1pm with the book group following from 1.30pm -2.30pm.

Chelmsford: Our apologies to those people who turned up expecting to find the Action for Blind People mobile vehicle in Market Square, Chelmsford in June. Unfortunately there was a last minute change of venue by the town centre management and we didn't have time to do signs or contact people about the change. We still had a good turnout on the vehicle and were able to help quite a few people.

Clacton: As usual we have been busy - with the addition of new people who have been referred by the Low Vision Clinic in Clacton. This shows how successful partnership working can be; and our thanks go to Mary Wright at the Hospital.

Jan reports that another art project has been finished of the Four Seasons, which looks great, and is being mounted onto plywood. Well done to all of the group. Two new members are joining our V.I.P. Art Group. Our thoughts are with Vivian, in our group, who is unwell.

Colchester- Upcoming demonstrations at Colchester Resource Centre include:

Professional Vision on 7th September – electronic magnifiers.

Visionaid Technologies on 5th October – electronic magnifiers and readers.

If you are unable to attend the monthly demonstrations, we do have a good selection of electronic aids held permanently at Colchester which we are happy to demonstrate on any Tuesday.

Harwich: Sue Rowen of Guide Dogs is coming to Harwich Library to give a talk on what it's like to have a guide dog. The talk will be on Thursday 9th August from 2pm to 4pm. Everyone is welcome. We now have equipment in the new cabinet and there are a lot of new products to be discovered in the latest RNIB catalogue. We are now aiming for September to be the official opening day for our Resource Centre in Harwich Library, the date to tie up with our regular monthly opening on Monday 13th September from 2pm to 4pm. Please contact us nearer the time for confirmation of the official opening.

Loughton: We had a very busy day on July 21st with the demonstration of equipment by Sight and Sound. As this was such a success, we hope to organize a demonstration by Optelec later in the year and will give details of this in the next Spotlight.

Manningtree: We are beginning to get a few people visiting us. We have also had enquiries about volunteering in this area. We gave out lots of leaflets when the Action for Blind vehicle came to Manningtree, and are hoping this will generate more interest.

Donations: Ron Banyard has kindly donated a talking personal organiser. This small machine can record telephone numbers and is used to make memos and notes as well as telling the date and time. The keyboard talks as you type. If you are interested in this please contact our Colchester office.

New Book: Jill Allen-King, MBE has just published her autobiography, entitled 'Just Jill'. It is available on DAISY CD from the RNIB's Talking Book Library, and in Braille from the RNIB's National Library Service. Braille and DAISY CD copies can also be purchased from the RNIB shop. Anyone who cannot use CDs can purchase a copy on audio cassette direct from Jill.

The publishers, Apex Publishing can be contacted on 01255 428 500. RNIB Library Services are on 0303 123 9999.

Jill Allen-King is on 01702 477 899.

Jill will be doing book-signings locally on Saturday 14 August at Southend, from 1pm to 3pm and on Saturday 11th September at Asda in Basildon (tbc).

Read House, Frinton on Sea

Janet Plant, General Manager, writes:

Our residents have enjoyed a number of outings recently for picnics and shopping expeditions, making the best of the fine weather. Otherwise, the residents really enjoy just being in the garden on fine days.

On August Bank Holiday Monday we will be holding what is now our annual barbecue for residents and their families and friends. This was such an enjoyable event last year, and this year it links in with our 90th anniversary celebrations so it will be extra special. We do ask that residents' families let us know if they will be coming so that we can finalise the catering arrangements.

While not wanting to wish the summer away, our programme of concerts for the next winter season is now ready, thanks to the efforts of Tony Barrett. The first concert is on Sunday 17th October featuring the Paul Anderson Trio with Lisa Cousins, and if you would like a copy of the programme please contact me.

And dare I mention Christmas cards this early? Our new selection will be available from September. This year we will have 2 designs by our own art class in Clacton on Sea. They are really striking so look out for them.

Essex Blind Charity

Our President, Sir John Read, has decided to step down from the role as he has been unwell recently and is feeling that he should make way for a younger person. We are all extremely grateful for all the support and interest shown by Sir John over many years and we wish him well for the future. Sir John's wife, Lady Dorothy Read, was the Chairman of the charity for many years when it was The Essex Voluntary Association for the Blind. She oversaw our move into the purpose-built Read House, which is named in her honour.

New Directors – we are very keen to appoint new Directors to the charity. Directors play a vital role in the running of the charity, which has two main aims – to maintain and run Read House and to develop services for the visually impaired within Essex. If you feel you have the time and the interest to join the Board and would like to find out more please contact Susan Mann, who would be delighted to talk to you. Maybe you know someone who would make an ideal Director – let us know as we would be happy to contact them. We need people from all walks of life to assist with the management of the charity. As Essex Blind Charity is a charitable company limited by guarantee there is no financial implications in being a Director, just a willingness to give a little time to support the aims of the charity.

Fund Raising

Vanda Watling, our fund-raiser, does an excellent job trying to drum up support for the charity in these very tricky financial times. She is always looking for new ways to raise money and new trusts and grant funding bodies to which she can apply. At the moment she is starting the process of applying for a lottery grant. One way in which we can all help is in remembering Essex Blind Charity in our wills, or by making a donation to the charity. Remember that any donation can be supplemented by the Government through Gift Aid, as long as the donor is a UK tax payer. Every donation, however big or small, helps the many visually impaired people in Essex – can we say a big thank you in advance, on their behalf?

We sent out Summer Draw tickets with the last issue of Spotlight. The Draw takes place on Saturday 28th August so could we ask you to return your counterfoil or any unsold tickets as soon as possible please.

AGM

The AGM of the Essex Blind Charity takes place on 27th October at the Witham Community Centre from 11am to 3pm. There will be more information in the next Spotlight, but I thought you would like advance warning so that you can put the date in your diary.

World Sight Day

As part of the World Sight Day celebrations on October 12th, Barking and Dagenham are holding an exhibition in the Barking Learning Centre – again, more information in the next Spotlight.

Essex News

Disability Equality Training

How can your organisation benefit from Disability Equality Training (DET)?

Although essential, DET is not simply about complying with legislation; it is about providing better customer care to all users of your services, and creating a better working environment for all staff and volunteers. It also raises your organisational profile and can aid recruitment, funding and commercial opportunities.

Our one day workshop equips participants with an understanding of the Social/ Medical Model debate and the principles of Independent Living, whilst gaining an overview of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

By the end of the training you will be able to answer the following questions:

What are the rights and entitlements for disabled people?

What is it that disables people in society?

What does the Disability Discrimination Act cover?

What is the correct language and terminology to use?

Participants will also get the opportunity to develop and share practical guidelines for best practice.

Next training date: Tuesday 5th October 10.30am - 4.00pm Ivan Peck House, Chelmsford.

This course is open to the private, public sectors (£80.00 p.p.) and voluntary sectors (£60.00 p.p.)

To book your place, or to find out more please contact ECDP on 01245 392303.

Sixties Weekend 2011, Eastbourne

Jill and Alvin Allen-King will be organising their eleventh Sixties Weekend at the Albany Lions Hotel, Eastbourne, from Friday January 14th till Monday 17th, 2011.

The cost for three nights will be £144 per person, to include Dinner, bed and breakfast, light buffet lunches, and afternoon tea on Saturday and Sunday, and a drinks Reception on Friday before dinner. A live sixties band will be staying for the week-end, for you to dance to, or just listen to. For those staying just 2 nights (Friday and Saturday), the cost will be £110 to leave after Sunday lunch. Children under 12 sharing with adults will be at half price.

There will be time for walking and shopping on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

We will have quizzes and time to share memories in the afternoons. If you can bring a musical instrument, why not join a jam session or two. There will also be plenty of time for karaoke.

The hotel is well-known for its excellent food, and staff who are well trained in how to assist blind people, and guide dogs are very welcome. There is a free-running area for the dogs just five minutes' walk away, and there is a grassy area fifty meters from the hotel. It should be noted that there are six steps, with a hand-rail at the front of the hotel, so it is not suitable for people who are unable to get out of their wheel-chairs. However, if you can get into the hotel, there is a talking lift to all four floors, and all amenities are on the ground floor.

Even if you are on your own, please come and make new friends.

To book, telephone the hotel on 01323 722 788.

For further information, please contact Jill Allen-King, M.B.E. on 01702 477 899.

Disability Cricket

There are currently 8 clubs in the Essex district which have a disability section. We also have five county squads for adults and juniors with visual impairments and those with learning and physical disabilities. Get involved!!! If you want to get involved with Disability Cricket then we can help. The clubs who currently are running a disability section are: Springfield CC, Belhus CC, Braintree CC, Brentwood CC, Frinton CC, Gidea Park and Romford CC, Saffron Waldon CC and South Loughton CC.

We also run five County squads for adults and juniors with Visual impairments and also for those with learning and physical disabilities.

They are:

The Essex Tigers Visually Impaired Cricket team (adult)

Junior Visually impaired Cricket team
Junior Learning disability Cricket team
Junior Physical disability Cricket team
Adult Physical and Learning disability
(playing in the BACD county championships)
Involvement can be anything from playing, coaching or just helping out.
For more information please contact Patrick Ward, Disability
Development Officer by e-mail at patrick.ward.essex@ecb.co.uk or by
telephone on 01245254047 07787 294980.

National News

The Despatch is Hatched

The UK-wide registered charity Infosound, in association with British Wireless for the Blind Fund, now produces a free, monthly audio compilation of information that could be of particular interest to blind and partially-sighted people. Called the Infosound Despatch and usually lasting for about an hour, the monthly selection of audio articles aims to cover a wide variety of different topics about living with sight loss - useful products, leisure, holidays, mobility, housing, employment, money, consumer issues and support services.

It's totally free and delivered on standard audio CD to listeners' homes every month - and it does not have to be returned. All the charity's other services are only available on their web site (www.infosound.org.uk), so the new monthly Despatch is specifically for vision-impaired people who do not have access to the Internet.

Anyone who would like the free monthly service is asked to phone the lo-call number 084 55 55 55 28 and leave their name, address and telephone number or to email: audio@infosound.org.uk.

Thrive wins gold at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Thrive has been awarded a Gold Medal and Best Urban Garden for The Unexpected Gardener, designed by Jo Thompson at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. This beautiful urban garden was designed for the more mature person who is reluctant to compromise on style or design and yet has less time and energy for gardening. An elegant combination of colourful yet low-maintenance plants and flowers and a range of practical features such as raised planting beds for easy

access, cleverly designed support structures and non-slip flooring helps show how age or disability need not mean an end to gardening. Nicci Carruthers, the Chief Executive of Thrive says' "I'm so proud that Thrive has got recognition from such a prestigious show, it's been such a fantastic team effort. We want this garden to inspire more people to connect with Thrive and to find out how we can help them".

London Olympics 2012

As you may be aware there are just 2 years to go to the opening of the London 2012 Olympic Games. As part of the 2 years to go celebrations the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games (LOCOG) are launching their 2012 volunteering programme for a number of specialist groups - including disabled people.

LOCOG want to stage an inspirational and memorable Games, where everyone is invited, can take part and get involved in the most exciting event in the world and for volunteers, this will be an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

RNIB and LOCOG have been working together to make this happen, opening up opportunities to all and we want blind and partially sighted people to be Games Makers and be the face of the Games.

If people are interested in finding out more about how you they take part, learn more about the roles available and how RNIB and LOCOG can support them in the application process, then they can phone 01733 375450 or email: volunteering@rnib.org.uk.

We will be on hand to give them advice and support with the application process. We will issue them with a special code which tracks their application. Every applicant will be expected to complete an application form and, if successful, attend a selection event. All applicants offered a Games Maker role must also attend three training events prior to the Games.

Further volunteering information on London 2012 Games Maker programme can also be found at: london2012.com/volunteering

Theatre

Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Drama, Comedy, Music and Dance: Autumn Season Announced

Every year the Mercury Theatre brings some of the best touring theatre productions, the finest up-and-coming new companies and a host of one night events to complement the Company's own home-grown productions. Among the highlights this season, audiences can look forward to star-studded comedies, an evening with legends from the worlds of music, sport and comedy, and the return of Hale & Pace (but not in the same show!).

In late August and early September, the ever popular Ian Dickens Productions return to the Mercury Theatre with two star-studded comedies: from Tuesday 31 August to Saturday 4 September they present 'Love's a Luxury' by Guy Paxton & Edward V. Hoile. Featuring former Emmerdale heart-throb Ben Freeman, David Callister and Giles Watling (Oswald in Bread), this glorious farce sees a flamboyant and successful theatrical director, Charles Penwick flee to the countryside to escape being henpecked by his wife. But Charles is in for some surprises!

This is followed by 'Murdered to Death' by Peter Gordon, directed by Giles Watling, from Monday 6 to Saturday 11 September. With a large cast of star names including Norman Pace (Hale & Pace, Jobs for the Boys, Dalziel & Pascoe); the legendary Victor Spinetti; Sandra Dickinson (Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy); Michelle Hardwick (The Royal) and Chloe Newsome (Coronation Street) this comedy thriller is packed full of whodunit twists and turns.

There is more comedy in the Main House from Monday 20 to Saturday 25 September with the stage adaptation of Keeping Up Appearances by Roy Clarke. Join Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced Bouquet!) and her dysfunctional family; sisters Rose and Daisy, brother-in-law Onslow, and neighbours Elizabeth and Emmet in this hilarious play starring Gareth Hale (Hale and Pace) as Onslow, Kim Hartman (Allo 'Allo) as Elizabeth, Steven Pinder (Doctors) as Emmet plus the brilliant Rachel Bell (The Darling Buds of May) as Hyacinth.

Box Office 01206 573948

Theatre Royal, Stratford East

Five Guys Named Moe

Underbelly Productions and Theatre Royal Stratford East, by arrangement with Cameron Mackintosh, present a brand new production of the smash hit West End and Broadway musical 'Five Guys Named Moe'.

Sizzling with dance, comedy and the irresistible music of jazz legend Louis Jordan, this 20th anniversary production stars the show's original creator Clarke Peters. The musical originally won an Olivier Award before going on to run for over 400 performances on Broadway.

The score of this award-winning show includes Early In The Morning , Choo , Choo, Ch'Boogie, Saturday Night Fish Fry and of course Five Guys Named Moe and features dazzling choreography and unforgettable comic performances.

Come join the party!

Clarke Peters is a West End superstar with performances including the title role in Trevor Nunn's production of the Gershwin classic Porgy and Bess and Billy Flynn in Chicago. Most recently Clarke has appeared as Lester Freamon in the phenomenally successful HBO TV series The Wire.

Call the box office on 0208 534 0310 for more information and tickets.

Contributions

Terri climbs Ben Nevis

If you enjoyed reading Terri Sawkins article in the last Spotlight then I am sure you will love this description of her climbing Ben Nevis. I have cut it into installments as I wanted you all to enjoy it and it is too long for one edition.

I had never planned to go up a mountain, it had not been on my list of 'Must Do's', and so when offered the chance of walking up Ben Nevis with a team of nine others, I was amazed at the thrill the prospect gave me of doing so. I suppose at this juncture I should point out that I am 38 years old, female and blind; yes, either I or the rest of the team were raving bonkers!

The first I knew about definitely becoming a member of the team was when I was told that Geoff Skinner had volunteered to accompany me to the top of the mountain. Naturally my first thought was ‘Hang on” who’s bringing me down then!” ... Slowly and by degrees, I met other members of the team and - yes I was right, they were all absolutely bonkers...I knew I would be okay.

Strangely enough, my nerves began to jangle when I realised that I would have to navigate my way round strange toilets and showers. Have you ever considered the concern people go through when waiting for me outside the toilet “What is she doing!...” I can tell you it is no fun groping around the cistern, walls and even the floor, wondering where they have hidden the flush this time! Anyhow, all this aside, I had plenty to think about. I had never seen a real mountain other than on television or pictures as a child. I remember thinking “Well Heidi seemed to manage it in the film Okay”... The other members of the team assured me there was a path to follow, little did I know at this time that only one of the nine had ever been up Ben Nevis before and so this was going to be new for most of us.

When we arrived at the Youth Hostel at the base of the mountain I was surprised to find that I had absolutely no feel of the mountain’s presence, unlike buildings, woods or even wide open spaces, the mountain for me just was not there.... However the excitement and feel of adventure was bubbling through my veins and I was already high on adrenalin. I knew now that the dominance of the mountain was purely visual. Dave Spicer, the only member of the team who had climbed ‘the hill’ before took my head in his hands and raised it to look at the top of the mountain but without the sense of perspective or visual memory to access, it was pure trepidation that made me gasp.

It had been about a month before the climb that I had decided that I was not going to ‘conquer’ Ben Nevis, but only to ‘share his space’. Some had found this too deep a concept to comprehend but I maintained this to the last. If I got scared or if the going got too tough, it was not imperative that I get to the top, it was the experience I wanted and not the challenge! However the time came to set out, we walked across the road, over the bridge across the mountain stream and straddled the stile which marked the beginning of the climb.... I suppose you may think me naive but I was taken by the fact that we just kept on going up!

It was stepped, steep and rocky. "Some path" I thought. The drains, which appeared to be two rocks with a gap between them, bothered me until I found out that the gap was usually only about 12 inches deep but I knew a missed footing could cause injury or complications. I was impressed by the care and skill of my 'partner in climb' Geoff, at no time did he appear to regret his decision to accompany me nor did I feel in danger or at risk. Not only did I have to hold his arm continuously to the top of the mountain but he also talked non stop in order to describe the terrain and when appropriate, the scenery.

It was about 500 feet from the bottom that I realised that I was causing a bit of a stir on the mountain, not just because I was using my white cane to check my footholds but because of the laughter other climbers were hearing from about 200 feet in each direction. One climber came up and asked if I had been drinking because I was laughing so much, but I assured him that it was purely enjoyment and exhilaration. The same climber saw us near the top when he was on his way down and commented on the fact that I was still laughing and exclaimed "That's what this mountain needs, more laughter".

The path to the top becomes increasingly difficult – but that's for the next edition of Spotlight!

The Goodmans Smart Talk set top box.

The Goodmans Smart Talk TV set top box announces all on-screen information, including programme guides and menus, using synthetic speech. This affordable set top box has been designed and developed in conjunction with RNIB to provide full access to Freeview® digital TV and radio services for blind and partially sighted people. It's easy to set up with your existing TV using the supplied SCART cable. Features include:

Fully talking Electronic Programme Guide (EPG)

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Ergonomic remote control with raised and well spaced buttons

Remote control button presses which are spoken to confirm your choice; and a dedicated button to stop the speech once you have the information you need.

Priced from £85.10.

To order or for more information, call us on 0303 123 9999, or shop online at www.rnib.org.uk/shop

PHONE NUMBERS

Helpline	0870 240 5418
Sue Barrell, Jill Shakespear, Jan Fallows	01206 563072
Janet Plant, General Manager, Read House	01255 673654
Vanda Watling, Fundraiser	01255 673654
Essex Libraries	0845 603 7628
RNIB helpline	0845 766 9999
RNIB Library Service/Shop	0303 123 9999
Action for Blind People	0800 915 4666
Thrive	0118 988 5688
Royal London Society for the Blind	020 7808 6170
Apex Publishing, Jackie Bright	01255 428500
Jill Allen-King	01702 477899
ECDP	01245 392303
Albany Lions Hotel, Eastbourne	01323 722788
Patrick Ward, Disabled cricket	01245 254047
Infosound	084 55 555528
LOCOG	01733 375450
Mercury Theatre, Colchester	01206 573948
Theatre Royal, Stratford East	020 8534 0310

CONTACTS:

The Editor, Susan Mann:

70 Harts Grove, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 0BN

020 8559 7379

susanmann9@yahoo.com

EBC Development Manager, Sue Barrell:

Unit 11

COLBEA

1 George Williams Way

Colchester

CO1 2JS

01206 563072

Helpline: 0870 240 5418

sue@essexblind.co.uk

General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant:

23 The Esplanade, Frinton-on-Sea,

Essex CO13 9AU

01255 673654

janet@essexblind.co.uk

Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 27th September 2010.

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However donations in time or money are always welcome. Please contact any of the above. Our Gift Aid form is attached. If you are a UK taxpayer this enables us to claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.



Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity
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The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

Thank you!

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I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 6th April 2000 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.

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Frinton on Sea
Essex CO13 9AU.

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Sandra Edwards at Read House, 23 The Esplanade, Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU.

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We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.