

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

April 2016

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Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 23rd May 2016

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 available at the end. 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.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.



The Editor writes:

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.

We are pleased to welcome a new member to the Sight Office in Colchester. Denise Sanders is taking over Libby Turner's role in the east of the county and she has quickly settled in and is enjoying meeting volunteers and visually impaired people at the various Sight Centres. I do hope Denise will enjoy her work with Essex Sight – do say hello to her if you are visiting us.

I hope that you all enjoyed the Easter holiday – and didn't get blown away by Storm Katie. I managed to walk around the Rainham Marshes reserve with my mother in between the showers and the gales. This is a lovely place to visit and very flat and easy to walk around. It has the bonus of a decent café at the end of your walk.

Let's hope that winter is behind us now and we can look forward to some warmer days and the chance to sit in the sunshine.

Essex Sight Office



Helpline Number 01206 548196

Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey



COLCHESTER

As I write this, the sun is (almost) shining, the weather is mild and it does feel a bit more like Spring at last.

Our Gadget Day in February was very successful with lots of people dropping by, not only to see what is available, but to bring their own tablets, smart phones etc. along for advice and tips. Many thanks to our volunteers, especially Michelle who is a real techy when it comes to I-Phones and I-Pads and all the other "I" gadgets.

Forthcoming Demo Days

Our next event is on Tuesday 26th April when Guide Dogs will be coming to the Sight Centre. Come and meet both dogs and owners and learn about the excellent work Guide Dogs do.

On Tuesday 24th May Optelec will be in the Sight Centre to demonstrate their latest products, including the new Traveller HD which is a portable electronic magnifier. We currently have one of these in the Sight Centre for demonstration upon request.

We have several donated screen readers and Daisy players in the Sight Centre. If anyone is interested, please do contact me for an up-to-date list of what is available. It is nice to think that someone can benefit from this equipment in return for a modest donation to the charity.

Clubs and Activities

The knitting group has been very successful and we may make it twice monthly. We have also set up a new group at Clacton. More about that elsewhere in this newsletter.

The art group in Colchester is now picking up, but there are still spaces if anyone is interested. Annie, who runs the group, makes it very relaxed and informal while sharing her skills and knowledge with everyone. Thanks Annie, you're great!

George Turner (Libby Turner's son) is running the London Marathon for us in April this year. If you would like to sponsor him, then you can donate via our website, or at one of our Sight Centres.

Finally, welcome to Denise who is our newest member of staff. Denise will be at our regular Clacton, Manningtree, Brightlingsea, and Harwich Sight Centres as well as in the office at Colchester.

Regular Activities at Colchester Sight Centre



Tuesday: 10am-12noon Coffee morning



Wednesday: 10am until 12noon Correspondence reading



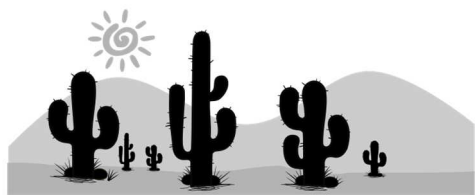
First Thursday of month: 10.30am until 12.30pm Knitwits
(7th April, 5th May)



Second Wednesday of month: 10am to 12.30 pm Art Class
(13th April, 11th May)

If you have any queries about activities at our Colchester Sight Centre please contact Carol Massey on 01206 548196 or Email: carol@essexsight.org.uk.

News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



Braintree Brentwood
Chelmsford Maldon

Finally Spring is here after what seemed like a long wet winter. I am looking forward to getting out in the garden more and setting up all my tubs and baskets. If you are a gardening fan we have sets of the Thrive gardening books for visually impaired gardeners. We have large print, audio and Braille copies all available for loan.

My sight centres continue to be busy and I had the pleasure of introducing our new member of staff Denise to some of you at Maldon and Chelmsford last month before she started in the Tending area. This month at Chelmsford Sight Centre we are welcoming the Guide Dogs organisation on Friday 15th April. Come along between 10.30 and 12.30 to meet them and find out more about their Guide dogs and services. You are welcome to stay for coffee and a chat too and I'm sure there will be a few of their dogs to meet.

Both the Braintree and Brentwood book groups had seasonal themes last month covering Spring and flowers and fruit themes. Many of the members also receive books from the RNIB talking book library and from Calibre so they are kept busy. If you receive books on memory sticks you may be interested in the new portable memory stick readers which are great for taking out into the garden or on holiday. We have demonstration models of 2 makes— one produced by Laplock; the mini Boombox at £46 and one by Kings the Sovereign Sonic at £32. Let me know if you would like to see one at your local centre.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Braintree: 20th April and 18th May

Brentwood: 11th April and 9th May

Maldon: 5th April, 3rd May and 7th June

Chelmsford: Every Friday

Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders



Brightlingsea Clacton Harwich Manningtree

My name is Denise Sanders and I am a member of the Community Support Team. I have taken over from Libby. Many of you have enquired after Libby and I am happy to say she is well and keeping very busy.

I am a qualified Occupational Therapist and hope to bring transferable skills to my new role as a member of the Community Support Team. I have previously worked with clients with learning disabilities and in Care of the Elderly. I am married and live in Tendring with my husband, teenage son and Phoebe, our golden retriever.

Brightlingsea

Thank you for the lovely librarians for all their help and guidance. It was a quiet day at the sight centre and in fact for the whole library. Hopefully the future warmer weather will bring more people into the library. Please feel free to drop into the Sight Centre and let me introduce myself. The next date is Wednesday 18th May.

Harwich

I am looking forward to a trip to Harwich on the 12th April and just to remind you that the Sight Centre is open between 10am and 1 pm at Harwich Library.

Manningtree

It was nice to visit Manningtree Library on the Tuesday 22nd March. What a lovely building and thank you to the lovely librarians for all their help. It was quite busy at the Sight Centre and nice to meet everyone.

Clacton

What a lovely setting for Clacton Sight Centre. CADOWS is amazing and the setting for a very lively group. Please let me know any activities/outside speakers you might like me to try and arrange.

Knitting

We do not have a set knitting group as such – just grab some wool and needles while at the same time drinking tea and eating a cake- multi-tasking at its best!

Easter Theme

The table took on an Easter theme, decorated with daffodils, ribbon and chicks. It will be nice to see the photos- especially of those wearing bonnets!

We shared some thoughts on Easter-around-the-world:

France: Forget about the Easter Bunny. Parents in France tell their children that Easter eggs come from Easter bells. Churches all over France keep their bells silent starting on Maundy Thursday and only ring them again on Easter Monday. As a way of explaining the bells' silence, the French say that the bells fly to Rome to meet the pope and then return to France on Easter, bringing with them painted eggs and chocolate.

Sweden: Another unusual Easter tradition – one that can get a person wondering if it's actually Halloween – is practiced in Sweden. Springing from the old belief that witches are active during Holy Week and that they get together with the Devil at a place call "Blakulla" on Maundy Thursday, Swede children dress up as Easter Witches and go around seeking treats from their neighbours.

Czech Republic – Painting Easter Eggs and ... whipping girls? Czech Republic has what can be certainly counted among the most unusual Easter traditions in the world. Czechs refer to Easter Monday as "Whipping Monday" because, on that day, it is customary for boys to slightly tap girls using willow twigs braided to form a whip known as "pomlázka". No harm is intended though. The practice is purely symbolic for it is believed that the twigs would bestow on those whipped lasting youth and wellbeing. To show their appreciation, the girls present the boys responsible for tapping them with Easter eggs.

Techo Teens

We welcome 3 teenagers on Thursday 31st April – Tom, Rosie and Brendan. They are popping in should anyone have any questions regarding technology with your phones, laptops, I pads etc. They look forward to helping.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Brightlingsea: Wednesday 18th May

Harwich: Tuesday 12th April

Manningtree: Tuesday 24th May

Clacton: every Thursday



Read House, Frinton on Sea

Janet Plant, General Manager, writes:

Over recent months we have had some work carried at Read House both internally and externally to continue to improve the surroundings for our residents. Several bedrooms have been redecorated, and all the corridor areas are currently undergoing a much needed facelift. As at home, it is not until you redecorate that you realise how shabby things can look! Our decorator has done a wonderful job, although it is a bit like painting the Forth Road Bridge!

Externally, our gardener has cleared away a lot of overgrown shrubs to the front of the building, to make a new, more convenient bin storage area and to improve the parking area. In the back garden he is currently clearing a much neglected area to make a new garden for residents to use. Hopefully we will have decent summer so that residents can enjoy the new facilities.

We have also recently upgraded our Read House website. Thanks to Michael Oakley, a good friend of the charity, our new website is (we think, anyway) much more attractive and informative and has more facilities to allow us to keep it up to date. The address is www.readhouse.org.

We recently had our Inspection by the Care Quality Commission and are now anxiously waiting for our report. We seem to have met all the standards required and are assured 'it is a good report' so fingers crossed! Once it is published you can find it on the CQC website www.cqc.org.uk and of course there is a link on our own website.



Essex News

Colchester UC Group

The Colchester UC Group is a self-help group for people with sight loss. We meet for lunch every other Wednesday at the Conservative Club in Maidenburgh Street, Colchester.

During each month other social activities are organised. At our meeting place we may have bingo or domino sessions, darts competitions or DVD horse racing nights. In the summer months we have had outings to Romford Greyhound Stadium, theatres and places of interest like Hampton Court Palace and the Tower of London.

If you would like to know more please contact Alan Kearsley on 01206 510870 or email him on kearsley138@ntlworld.com – he looks forward to hearing from you.

National News



The Science Museum

The Science Museum is holding a VIscovery day on Sunday the 10th April where events will be held for families with members who are visually impaired, partially sighted or blind. All events are free and are suitable for children aged 7 and over, with the exception of the adults only tour of the Information Age Gallery for any interested adults.

The day's events haven't been finalised yet, but they are looking to hold a touch tour and Audio Description of the Science Show 'Destination Space'; an immersive, interactive storytelling experience with a nautical theme; object handling of some of the objects in the Information Age Gallery and Adult Information Age Gallery tours.

Events will be individually bookable so that families get the most personal interactive experience possible. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact Imogen Small at imogen.small@sciencemuseum.ac.uk who will be organising the events.

Touch to See Book Clubs

I have received this message from Maria at Touch to See Book Clubs: I am getting in touch as I think some of your members may be interested in using our group resources in activity sessions. Perhaps even hold separate group sessions or use our group resources during sessions that are already running. Our books tell stories about pictures and are designed to be used by blind, partially sighted and sighted people. They are educational and inspirational. Art lovers in particular will enjoy the books. Many people have used our books as inspiration to develop their own works of art.

Our service is free by the way so no cost to your organisation/members. I really look forward to hearing from you. I can be contacted on 01635 299771 or look at our website www.livingpaintings.org

With best wishes

Maria Storesund

Thoughtfully Designed

As an established trusted supplier to RNIB for the last 20 years with products such as liquid level indicators and talking clocks and watches we are excited to share with you a new range of "Thoughtfully Designed" products that include our new talking kitchen scales, talking button clock and talking keychain which are featured in our new catalogue.

We continue to work with our trusted customers like RNIB but we can now introduce to you a new brand of "Thoughtfully Designed" products that we have developed with the help of our experienced team including Sandra Taylor who previously worked at RNIB for 20 years managing and designing products such as talking watches, large print scrabble and many more.

Priding ourselves on these values we believe simplicity is the key to our success with customers being at the heart of our product development. Visit our secure website for full product details and specifications.
www.thoughtfullydesigned.co.uk
Telephone number 01780 489100

RNIB Connect

RNIB has decided to create a wider and stronger community of blind and partially sighted people, called RNIB Connect. This new community will bring together members of RNIB, the Campaigns Network and Action Connect.

What does this mean for you?

As a member of RNIB, you will now join more than 24,000 other blind and partially sighted people, friends, families and supporters as a member of our new community, RNIB Connect. And – it's now free to join and take part in everything on offer!

Being part of RNIB Connect is the best way to keep in touch with things that are of interest and help to you. You will have the opportunity to connect with other people affected by sight loss either in person, by phone or online; take part in and create social activities close to you; give and receive help and support; contribute to and get regular updates on community news, events, topical discussions, services and products in your preferred format; campaign for change to make things better for people living with little or no sight; find out about opportunities to shape our work, including our services and campaigns and get help from a dedicated RNIB Connect support team.

What happens next?

Over the coming months and years we want to create a community that is vibrant, influential, engaging, welcoming and strong.

You can find out more about our new community and get involved by joining an RNIB Connect welcome event, either in person or on the phone. For details of your nearest event please call us on 0303 1234 555 or visit: rnib.org.uk/connect.

RNIB NHS Need it Toolkit

From this month the NHS including GP services are required to record their patients' accessible format needs on their records. This means that future letters and information sent to you should be in your preferred format. The RNIB have put together a toolkit to help you inform your GP of your requirements and monitor their response. If you would like more information the toolkit is available from the RNIB campaigns department: Email: campaigns@rnib.org.uk Telephone: 020 7391 2123.



PHONE NUMBERS

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Loredana Ivanus	07759 720551
Janet Plant, General Manager, Read House	01255 673654
Vanda Watling, Fundraiser	01255 673654
Essex Libraries	0845 603 7628
RNIB together with	
Action for Blind People helpline	0303 123 9999
Waltham Forest Low Vision Forum	020 8509 0812
Havering Macular	01708 448057
Sight Action(Havering)	01708 459220

Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

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!

Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

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Address.....

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Post Code.....

I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:
Essex Blind Charity
Read House, 23 The Esplanade
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 Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....
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Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Cassette Tape..... Memory Stick.....

Email.....

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.

Essex Sight Centres

Braintree

Braintree Library, Fairfield Road
Braintree CM7 3YL
3rd Wednesday of each month
10 am to 1pm

Colchester

40 Osborne Street
Colchester CO2 7ND
Open Monday to Friday
10 am to 2 pm

Brentwood

Brentwood Library, New Road
Brentwood CM14 4BP
2nd Monday of each month
10 am to 1 pm

Frinton on Sea

Read House, 23 The Esplanade
Frinton on Sea, CO13 9AU
Mon-Fri. 1pm to 4.30 pm
(by appointment – tel. 01255 673654)

Chelmsford

Chelmsford Library, Market Road
Chelmsford CM1 1LH
Every Friday
10 am to 2 pm

Clacton-on-Sea

CADOWs, Old Road
Clacton on Sea CO15 1HX
Every Thursday
1 pm to 3.30 pm

Maldon

Maldon Library
Carmelite House, White Horse Lane
Maldon, CM9 5FW
1st Tuesday of each month
10am to 1pm

We also hold regular sessions in Brightlingsea, Manningtree and Harwich libraries on alternate months, as well as other ad hoc sessions in other locations. Please contact the Essex Sight Office for details.

For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.

SPOTLIGHT CIRCULATION: 1000+

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.