

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

August 2016

ISSUE 73



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Colchester

CO2 7DB

01206 548196

services@essexblind.co.uk

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General Manager at **Read House**, Janet Plant:

23 The Esplanade,

Frinton-on-Sea,

Essex CO13 9AU

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Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 26th September 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.

Well the hot summer is here – and I expect we are already wishing it would be a bit cooler! The poor weather can't win. I have been fortunate in having my grandchildren staying and giving us all the excuse to play with the hosepipe to cool down – I may have looked too silly playing on my own.

I have received very few articles for this Spotlight so it will be shorter than usual. Maybe people are on holiday and that things will pick up in September. I have always been proud of the fact that this is a forum where everybody is welcome to contribute – so let us all know your thoughts, ideas and experiences. It would be particularly interesting to hear of successful holidays for visually impaired people.

Community Support Team



Helpline Number 01206 548196

Team Leader - Patricia Marshall

Hello everyone!

Is it hot enough for you?! The team have been very busy at the various Sight Centres, Eye Clinics and Home Visits, despite the heat! I have just returned from a visit to my eldest daughter and family in Brittany, where it seemed to be even hotter! I had a lovely week catching up on cuddles with my new grandson, Joakim, who is just 5 months old.

I hope you are all keeping well hydrated in this heat – drinking plenty of water – and also are not suffering too much with the glare of this lovely sunshine. There are lots of options available in the form of tinted overspecs, shades and hats to keep the glare away.

If any of you are going away, I wish you all a relaxing break. I hope you enjoy reading all the news in this edition of Spotlight.

Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey



At last, we seem to have had a bit of sunshine! By the time you read this the school holidays will be upon us and I will be away for two weeks. This year we are not having a holiday but have planned some fun days, including a trip on the London Eye, so I hope the weather stays fine for us.

We now have an entry phone system in operation at the Sight Centre. It's very simple to use and we have provided tactile markings and Braille. This provides additional security for both staff and visitors.

Professional Vision, Dolphin and Calibre Books came to the Sight Centre in June and held a demonstration day. This was one of the most successful events we have had and all the staff and volunteers were rushed off their feet. The next event will be our annual Exhibition on Wednesday 14th September which this year is being held at First Site in Colchester. More information about this is elsewhere in this newsletter.

Colchester Art Group - New Location

We are re-launching our Colchester Art Group in September at the Quaker Meeting House, 6 Church Street, Colchester. This is a far more accessible venue and more spacious than before. The class will take place on the first Tuesday of the month between 10am and 12.30pm with the first one being on Tuesday 6th September. This will again be led by Annie Fennymore and all abilities are welcome. Materials are provided and the cost is £5 per session.

If you would like to come along, please contact me for further details.

“Techy” Sessions

Do you have an Apple I-Pad, or I-Phone which you feel you do not use to its full capability? Michelle, our “I” guru is on hand to help most Tuesday mornings. If you would like to learn more about your device, then please call me and I can book a session for you with Michelle.

At this stage, it is only “I” products for which we can offer these sessions, but we can still offer demos of our other equipment on request.

Correspondence Reading/Form Filling at Home

As mentioned in the last issue of Spotlight, we will soon be able to offer a home-based service to those of you who cannot get into our Colchester Sight Centre. Our volunteers are fully DBS checked and are discrete and confidential. This should be available from September and is subject to location and availability of volunteers.

2017 Large Print Diaries and Calendars

Sorry, I know it's really early to be thinking about these already, however, we should be getting our first supply of calendars and diaries in September. Please contact the Sight Centre or come in and see us next month to get what you require.

That's about it for this issue. The Sight Centre is open as usual while I am away with staff and volunteers on hand to offer support and advice. I hope everyone has a lovely summer.

For more information on any of the above, please contact me (details below).

Regular Activities at Colchester Sight Centre



Tuesday:

10am-12noon

Coffee morning

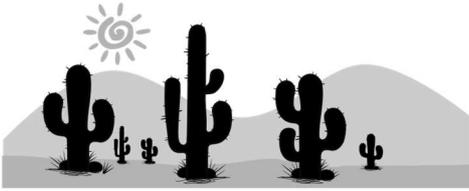


First Thursday of month: 10.00am until 12.00pm "Knitwits"
(August 4th, Sept 1st)

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

As I write this summer has finally arrived and we are having a mini heatwave after all the rain in June. How lovely to be able to sit outdoors on my days off and enjoy my garden. However, one of the joys of the English climate is its variety, so here are some ideas for those not so sunny days:

Book groups

I am very pleased to welcome some new members to our audio book groups. At Braintree we have Sue who joined us in April and at Brentwood we have four new faces; June, Patricia, Betty and Susan. I hope you all will enjoy the groups and your reading. If you would like to join either group or just come along to see what we do please contact me, Jill telephone 01206 548196

Maldon Social Group

We have a few people who are interested in starting a new social group in Maldon. We are going to meet at 10.30am at Maldon Sight Centre on Tuesday 2nd August to discuss ideas about the group. If you are under 70 or young at heart and would like to join us please come along. If you can't make this date please contact Jill for more information.

Exhibitions

We have 2 exhibitions to look forward to over the next couple of months. The first is in Chelmsford in partnership with Support 4 Sight and Essex Vision. It will be on Wednesday 24th August in Broomfield Village Hall, 158 Main Road, Broomfield, CM1 7AH from 10am to 3pm. Contact Support 4 Sight for more information Tel; 01799 523700.

Then we have our own annual exhibition which this year will be in Colchester at FirstSite, Lewis Gardens, Colchester CO1 1JH on Wednesday 14th September from 10am to 2pm. We have a broad range of exhibitors including Cobolt systems with a selection of talking watches, clocks and other products, the RNIB, Optima Low Vision magnifying glasses and several companies with electronic magnifiers, readers and computer software. We also have representatives from Calibre audio library, Vision Hotels and local organisations for visually impaired people. Entrance is free and everyone is welcome.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:
Braintree: 17th August and 21st September
Brentwood: 8th August and 12th September
Maldon: 2nd August, 6th September and 4th October
Chelmsford: Every Friday

Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders



Brightlingsea Clacton Harwich Manningtree

Hello. Hope you are all enjoying the fine weather and that you enjoyed the Football and Wimbledon – and maybe the ever changing political landscape?

Brightlingsea, Harwich and Manningtree

It was nice to visit these libraries over the last couple of months. Just to remind you that I will be there again with a selection of literature which may be of benefit to people living with sight loss. Additionally, I carry with me a small selection of equipment/aids which may be helpful.

Clacton

It was great to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday in June. Everyone looked very smart in their red, white and blue. Thank you to Richard and Lin for organising the music.

Thank you for Ed from Optelec for running a focus day early in July at Cadows. It was very informative.

It was very enjoyable and insightful to have John from Essex Sight to come and give us a talk – Living with Sight Loss. Just to remind you that John is a qualified counsellor so if any of you feel the need to talk to someone, we are here to help you. Thank you to Lin for sharing your dinner party mishap and Joyce, glad you found your keys!

John, as he promised, has found out the following regarding repeat prescriptions in the Clacton and Tendring area. From August, prescription requests will need to be taken to your GP rather than a chemist. John is going to enquire further regarding housebound patients or those with real difficulty getting to their surgery.

Forthcoming Event

On Thursday 25th August we welcome the charity – Hearing Helps Essex. They are coming along to Cadows to introduce themselves and talk about services they offer.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Brightlingsea: Wednesday 21st September

Harwich: Tuesday 9th August

Manningtree: Tuesday 27th September

Clacton: every Thursday

Hospital Sight Loss Advisor – Loredana Ivanus



for Mid Essex residents

As a Sight Loss Advisor, my primary role is to assist those who have been identified with a visual impairment by the Hospital Eye Clinic to access the extensive range of services offered by Essex Sight and other organisations.

I have been based at Broomfield Hospital since November and I am assisting anyone experiencing sight loss, or their relatives and carers, to access the support they may need when they need it.

Following your appointment with your eye consultant, you can ask to speak to the sight loss advisor. I will discuss with you any concerns you have in relation to your sight. You will be guided through the following areas to ensure you are aware of support and services available to you:

- **Registration of visual impairment**

The registration process, what it is, who it is for, and what happens after you have been registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

- **Financial help and concessions**

Welfare benefits to assist you with your care needs as well as travel and other concessions for you and a companion.

- **Support to maximize your independence**

Whether you have no vision or are making the most of the sight you have, Essex Sight has a range of equipment available to you such as - a big button telephone, talking clock, task lighting and bumpons for labelling items you can use every day, also information on how you gain emotional support.

- **Information the way you want it**

Accessing information such as your correspondence; requesting that utility bills, GP letters and hospital appointments can be sent to you in a format you can access, such as large print, audio CD, Braille, over the telephone or via email.

- **Other services**

You can also gain information about local and national organizations that can support you through practical services and by promoting your rights within the community so that you can continue living life as you wish whilst managing your changing circumstances.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am in the eye clinic at the following times:

Monday - all day

Wednesday and Thursday – PM

Alternatively, you can call or email me.

Loredana Ivanus

Sight Loss Advisor

Essex Sight

Email: loredana@essexsight.org.uk

Mobile: 07759 720551



Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant

At last, some summer sunshine and our residents can enjoy being out in the fresh air, enjoying the garden.

We recently had our annual summer fete on a glorious day. We had a really good turnout, with people sitting around enjoying the sunshine and listening to the music provided by our singing chef, Rob. We raised lots of money, all of which will be used for residents' entertainers, activities etc.

Last month the residents enjoyed a visit from local primary school children who spent the whole day with us, entertaining the residents with their singing, playing instruments and dancing. It is so lovely for the residents to be with a group of young children.

This month we are looking forward to our annual visit from Gemma's Farm – always an enjoyable day when our back garden becomes home to a menagerie! The residents will also enjoy a variety of entertainment provided at the annual Frinton Mission which takes place on Frinton greensward. There will be a tea dance and various concerts to enjoy with the local community.



Local News

Maureen Stevens

When I first became involved with EVAB, as it was then, Maureen Stevens worked in the Moulsham Street shop and in the charity's office. She then moved to Southend Blind Welfare Association. Sadly Maureen died earlier this year and this tribute was written by Mike Smith a former Chairman of the Association.

Maureen joined Southend Blind Welfare some 12 years ago, and set about expanding services for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Southend. The Resource Centre was relocated and enlarged, the clubs were expanded, more outings and holidays were organised and the desk at the Eye Clinic was set up at the hospital.

Later on an opportunity arose to buy a headquarters building in Hamlet Court Road and create a centre, where under one roof, information and support could be provided. Maureen was actively involved in setting this up and ensuring its success.

A Charity Shop was opened to raise funds for the new venture. The shop was very much Maureen's baby and she worked tirelessly to ensure its

success. She was very "hands on" and always had an eye for anything of value and it raised hundreds of thousands of pounds over the years.

Maureen was a character, whose loud voice was legendary, especially at the clubs, for which she had a very soft spot, knowing that for many of the members this was their only chance of getting out and socialising. She was loved by the members and she loved them back.

For those 12 years Southend Blind Welfare was her life. It was her family. She was so committed to her job, even when she was not well and having treatment, she carried on regardless. Behind Maureen's sometimes formidable façade was a very caring person, who spent much of her life helping others, and promoting the interests of those with a visual impairment. She was not good at accepting praise, and despite her apparent outgoing character, she was actually a very modest and private person, who very much shied away from the limelight.

She will be greatly missed, particularly by the members, and the volunteers, many of whom became her personal friends. On THEIR behalf I would like to say "thank you" to Maureen for her friendship over those years and for her outstanding contribution to Southend Blind Welfare

National News



Royal British Legion's handy van service

The Royal British Legion has launched a new handy van service called Poppy Calls which helps ex-Service people and their families with small household repairs and minor adaptations.

They have a dedicated and trusted team of experienced handypeople who are fully trained to carry out low-level maintenance in your home, including:

- Changing light bulbs and tap washers
- Putting up shelves, curtain rails and grab rails
- Fitting smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors

- Fitting and changing door locks and other security features
- Building access ramps and storage sheds to house Legion-provided Electrically Propelled Vehicles
- Installing care phones.

Call for free on **0800 032 0306** or email homesupportadmin@britishlegion.org.uk.

Get help with your tax from RNIB

Many people find tax matters confusing, but there is help available. RNIB has a team who support people with sight loss with income tax issues. The service, supported by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), provides information about tax allowances such as the Blind Person's Allowance and the Marriage Allowance, which can reduce your tax bill.

RNIB can help you to claim the tax allowances you are entitled to. In most cases claims can be taken over the phone, with no forms to complete.

RNIB can also help with general queries related to income tax, tax-free savings, VAT-free products and tax credits. The team can contact HMRC if you need help with resolving problems and to arrange help with completing tax forms and self assessment tax returns.

What is the Blind Person's Allowance?

People registered as blind or severely sight impaired can claim the Blind Person's Allowance. The allowance is £2,290. This can reduce tax by £458 this year. You can backdate the allowance to the previous 4 years. You can also transfer the allowance to your husband, wife or civil partner.

What is the Marriage Allowance?

The Government introduced the Marriage Allowance tax-break in 2015. It lets you and your partner share part of your tax-free Personal Allowance to help lower your overall tax bill. In 2016/17 you can transfer £1,100 of your Personal Allowance to your partner which can save up to £220 in tax.

To apply for the Marriage Allowance you need to be married or in a civil partnership. Both partners need to be born on or after 6 April 1935. One

partner needs to have an income of under £11,000, and the other partner must be a basic rate taxpayer.

How to contact RNIB's Tax Advice team

For help and information on income tax and HMRC-related issues you can call RNIB on 0345 330 4897 or 0151 702 5721 or email: tax@rnib.org.uk

You can find more information online, go to www.rnib.org.uk/tax

Holiday ideas

Have you booked a holiday for this year yet? If not here are some ideas for organisations that cater for visually impaired guests:

Vision Hotels

Vision Hotels operates exactly like a commercial business, but are a non-profit organisation and part of Action for Blind People. They have AA 3-star hotels in Teignmouth, Weston-Super-Mare and Windermere. The hotels work hard to ensure that they are accessible for all and particularly welcome visually impaired guests. There are excellent facilities for guide dogs. They also have lottery funding to offer free activities and excursions for people staying there. Telephone: 0845 603 0051 Website: www.visionhotels.co.uk email enquiries@visionhotels.co.uk

Torch Holidays

Torch Holidays are Christian holidays run by Torch Trust for people who experience sight loss. Most take place at Torch Trust's own Centre in West Sussex. There's a great diversity in Torch Holidays - book weeks to activity weeks, craft and music, walking and simply taking it easy in the summer sunshine. Each year they also seek to include at least one holiday at another location in Britain and one abroad. Telephone: 01858 438260 Website: www.torchtrust.org email info@torchtrust.org

Traveleyes

Traveleyes was founded in 2004 by the blind entrepreneur, Amar Latif as the world's first commercial tour operator providing independent travel for people who are blind or partially sighted. Whether you're travelling solo,

as a couple or with friends, you can join small and sociable groups on an exploration for all of the senses.

Blind travellers can simply choose a holiday from the fully accessible website or audio brochure, then just book, and go! Sighted travellers can join each holiday too. They help in making the world a more accessible place by guiding and describing the sights to blind travellers. In return, sighted travellers benefit from a discount of up to 50% on each holiday. Holiday destinations are worldwide and divided into: Discovery Tours, City Breaks, Activity Breaks, Sun, Sea & Sand and UK Breaks.

Telephone: 0113 887 4275 Website: www.traveleyes-international.com

Email: info@traveleyes-international.com

PHONE NUMBERS

Helpline	01206 548196
Jill Shakespear, Patricia Marshall, Carol Massey, Denise Sanders	01206 548196
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
Macular society helpline	0300 3030 111

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.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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.