

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

October 2016

ISSUE 74



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**Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 21st
November 2016**



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 request their own copy in large print format, on tape or memory stick or by email. Unfortunately we are unable to provide Braille copies.

Many of you will be very sorry to hear that Patricia Marshall, one of our Community workers, has had to leave the charity through ill-health. Patricia has done an enormous amount of work for the charity – particularly as an ECLO and also in doing many home visits to people who were newly diagnosed – and she will be truly missed. We all hope that she will soon be feeling much better.

Community Support Team



Helpline Number 01206 548196



COLCHESTER

Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey

So Autumn is officially here, but looking out the windows of the Sight Centre at a blue sky and people in short sleeves, it seems like summer is still here, at least for a while.

I hope everyone had a lovely summer, whether at home or away. I did not go away this year, but had some nice days out to London and the coast. The end of the summer holidays was spent getting my son ready for the transition to secondary school. I can't believe how much uniform and equipment I had to buy!

The Sight Centre has been quiet while people have been away on holiday, but is picking up again now. It's so nice when people come in for advice are really surprised at the amount of equipment and other aids we have available.

2017 Large Print Diaries and Calendars

We now have a good supply of these in stock in a variety of formats.

"Techy" Sessions

As mentioned in the August issue of Spotlight, we now have one of our experienced volunteers available to show you how to use your iPad or iPhone. Michelle is available every Tuesday between 10am and 12noon, by appointment only. Please call if you would like to book a session.

Correspondence Reading/Form Filling at Home

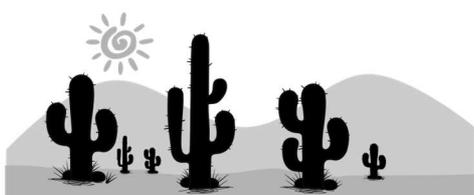
This service is now up-and-running. It is subject to location and the availability of volunteers. Please ask for more details.

Please be advised, we do not have customer parking at our Colchester Sight Centre, but there are good public car parks nearby with disabled parking. If you plan to visit the sight centre and need directions/information on parking, then please contact me.

Colchester Sight Centre Activities

Tuesdays	10am-12	Coffee Morning IPad/IPhone sessions (by appointment only)
Wednesdays	10am-12	Correspondence Reading
Monthly		
1 st Thursday	10am-12n	“Knitwits” (6 th Oct, 3 rd Nov)

News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



Braintree Brentwood
Chelmsford Maldon

A big thank you to everyone who took part in our very successful exhibition in Colchester last month. It is always exciting to catch up with all the latest equipment and this year it was good to have both Cobolt and the RNIB there to offer a range of smaller items.

Now I am looking forward to a well-earned holiday. This year we are off to tour Grand Canyon country and Las Vegas which should prove an interesting contrast.

Maldon Social Group

We launched our new Maldon group in September with an enjoyable walk from the library down to the Promenade Park. Everyone who took part wanted to do another walk so we are exploring the river in the other direction in October. We will try to get out when we can over the winter. If the weather is unsuitable we will have activities in Maldon library. If you would like to join us please come along. We meet at 1.30pm in the library on the day of the Sight Centre, see below for dates.

Book Groups

We have two flourishing audio book groups at our Brentwood and Braintree Sight Centres. Each month we have a selection of books to choose from on a common theme. Everyone enjoys discussing their books and trying out new ones which perhaps they wouldn't have chosen on their own. It is also nice to have the "blurb" – the short description on the back of the book – read out to help decide what to pick. We usually round each session off with short readings and poems on the current theme. Contact me if you would like to join either group.

Braintree Sight Centre closure

The Braintree Sight Centre will be closed and there will not be a book group in October. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. Normal service will resume on 16th November.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Braintree: 16th November

Brentwood: 10th October and 14th November

Maldon: 4th October, 1st November and 6th December

Chelmsford: Every Friday

Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders



Brightlingsea Clacton Harwich Manningtree

Hi Everyone

So the children/grandchildren have gone back to school. How did that happen so quickly? – but we still have summer weather which is great! And autumn is such a lovely season

By the time you read this edition of Spotlight, the 2nd equinox of the year would have been and gone – it was on Thursday 22nd September and day and night were of an almost equal duration in most locations.

Astronomically, the September equinox marks the end of the summer and the beginning of autumn in the Northern hemisphere.

The word Equinox comes from the Latin word Equinoxium.

Many cultures around the world hold festivals and celebrate the September equinox. For example, in China they celebrate with a Moon Festival and eat Mooncake filled with lotus, duck egg and fruit. In some parts of Southern California, a ceremony is held known as Hatash to honour the earth and seeds and acorns are given as presents.

Closer to home we celebrate with Harvest Festival What memories do you have of this occasion?

And with autumn comes the darker nights. Just to remind you that energy saving daylight bulbs are available at our sight centres and Colchester sight centre holds a good range of lamps.

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

Loredana is available at Broomfield Hospital Eye Clinic:

Monday - all day

Wednesday and Thursday – PM

Email: loredana@essexsight.org.uk

Mobile: 07759 720551



Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant

Another summer nearly at an end. Frinton seems to have been heaving with people for weeks on end - during the school holidays and now during the long Indian summer we seem to be enjoying. At present our residents are still enjoying the fine weather and being out in the garden.

Residents have enjoyed a number of outings and activities throughout the summer. Every year there is 'Frinton Mission' week on the greensward in August and residents went to some of the social events. They particularly enjoyed the tea dance. Residents were also taken to an afternoon at Frinton Summer Theatre, by kind invitation of the local Rotary Club, to see a performance about Laurel and Hardy.

We are facing some disruption to life in Read House over the coming weeks. We are currently having new boilers fitted, which hopefully will be completed before the weather turns as at present we have no heating facilities! We are then having new lighting installed and new carpets, as well as other general repairs. Read House was built in 1998 and this is the first major refurbishment we have carried out since then, although of course we routinely redecorate bedrooms as needed. The building is starting to look a little tired though in places so we are very much looking forward to seeing the finished result. We will do our best to keep the disruption to residents' lives to a minimum, so it is still business as usual.



Local News

Chelmsford Picture House

In November, Chelmsford Picture House (formerly Cramphorn theatre) will be showing the docudrama Notes on Blindness which follows the academic and author John Hull who lost his sight in the 1980s and began to record an audio diary of his experiences and document his journey into a world beyond sight.

The film will be audio described and is showing at 8pm on Thursday 10th November. Tickets are £6.10 and £5 for concessions. Box office 01245 606505.

This is just one of many audio described films that the theatre shows regularly.

National News



The Royal National College for the Blind

The UK's leading specialist residential college of further education for people with a visual impairment is based in Hereford and offers a range of courses at various levels to both students aged 16 to 25 and adult trainees aged 18 to 65. They are offering a Have a Go activity weekend on 22-23 October. This is free to all young people aged 13-17 with a visual impairment and gives you the chance to come and stay in the student halls of residence on campus, take part in fun activities and make new friends.

For more information call **01432 376 621** or email info@rnc.ac.uk

London Museums

Museum of London and the Museum of London Docklands

There are several audio described events at the Museum of London and the Museum of London Docklands which may interest you. The Museum of London is near Barbican tube station and the Docklands Museum is very near the West India Quay DLR station.

Trained guides at the Museum of London and the Museum of London Docklands are offering the following programme of audio described tours for blind and partially sighted visitors:

City and River gallery (1790 – 1840), audio-described tour, Wednesday 12 October, 14:00

World City gallery (1950s – Present), audio-described tour, Wednesday 19 October, 14:00

Sailortown gallery (riverside recreated street c. 1840, audio-described tour, Wednesday 9 November, 14:00

London Before London (Prehistoric 450,000 BC – AD50), audio-described tour, 16 November, 14:00

These events are free but booking is essential. For more details and to book your place call 020 7001 9844.

Wellcome Collection

Another museum that provides audio described tours is the Wellcome Collection. This is in Euston Road, beside Euston Square tube station. The knowledgeable Visitor Experience Assistants at the Wellcome Collection continue with their programme of accessible events for blind and partially sighted visitors. These include:

Bedlam: the asylum and beyond, audio-described tour, Thursday 13 October, 18:00

John Dee's Magical Writings, discussion with audio description, Saturday 29 October, 14:30

These events are free but booking is necessary. For more details and to book call the Wellcome Collection on 020 7611 2222.

British Museum

This is one of our largest and most visited museums in the country. The museum offers opportunities for blind and partially sighted visitors to handle artefacts and also offers large print, Braille and audio description of many exhibitions. The next three handling sessions are described below:

African rock art handling session

Saturday 22 October 2.30pm

In 2013 the British Museum's African rock art image project team began cataloguing digital photographs of rock art from across the continent. Through 3D printing technology, some of these incredible images are now available as tactile handling objects. By collecting digital images, the Museum is able to create a record of the rock art for research and engagement worldwide, as the works remain in situ across Africa.

The team will be leading this handling workshop for blind and partially sighted people to explore African rock art. The workshop will also focus on 3D printing techniques and materials and explore how the technology can make objects accessible. Places are free but very limited and booking is essential. To book your place email access@britishmuseum.org

South Africa: the art of a nation

The exhibition is on from 27 October 2016 to 26 February 2017.

From some of the earliest examples of human creativity to cutting-edge contemporary works, discover the fascinating history of South Africa through art. There will be a live audio description and handling session on Thursday 3 November, from 4pm to 6.15pm. This event includes a handling session with the curators and a live audio described tour of the exhibition with a trained audio describer. Exhibition tickets cost £10 for a disabled person, and a disabled person's assistant is free. Tickets are free for British Museum Members. To book your place, email access@britishmuseum.org. Your details will be passed onto our ticketing staff and they will contact you for payment.

The BP exhibition: Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds

This exhibition is on until 27 November 2016.

Submerged under the sea for over a thousand years, two lost cities of ancient Egypt were recently rediscovered. Their story is told for the first time in this blockbuster exhibition. To enhance your exhibition experience visit the hands on desk in the exhibition foyer. You can handle objects that will give you greater insight into the exhibition. The desk is open from 11.00 to 16.00. The exhibition also has multisensory family stops throughout.

An exhibition ticket is £13 for a disabled person, and a disabled person's assistant ticket is free.

If you would like more information about these exciting exhibitions contact Selene Burn who is the Access and Equality Manager by emailing her on access@britishmuseum.org

New Bank Notes

Have you handled one of the new five pound notes which came out in September? The RNIB had input into the design of the new notes and were able to advise the Bank of England on their size, what they should feel like, and how they would work best for people with sight loss.

The new notes are made of polymer, and will retain tiered sizing, include bold numerals and have a similar colours to the current paper notes. In addition, the new ten pound and twenty pound notes will include a tactile feature (created by a series of raised dots). The five pound note is distinguishable by not having this feature. The new ten pound note will be introduced in 2017.

Transport for London “Turn up and go” Service.

One of the things that disabled people value most is the ability to travel with the same freedom as everyone else. Last year saw a major change for London Overground, which started to match the ‘turn-up-and-go’ assistance service already offered by London Underground. This means that for anyone who needs help from station staff to travel, there is no need to book in advance. Customers can simply turn up at the station and

let a member of staff know what assistance they need. They can also arrange assistance at their destination and any interchanges. As with the Tube, London Overground has staff at every station whenever services are running. Last year, 10,685 people used the turn-up-and-go service. Customers who prefer to book in advance for help on the Overground can still do so, but the vast majority are now using the turn-up-and-go service.

Creative writing competition

Seeingear, the charity which provides free online library services is running a creative writing competition. The competition is open to anyone who is visually impaired, has dyslexia or a disability that makes it difficult to read printed books. There is an adult's and a children's competition with various prizes including assistive technology from Dolphin Computer Access, an annual Royal Society of Literature membership, book requests for their online accessible library plus all runners up will receive £50 each! Deadline for entries is 5th December 2016. For more information visit their website www.seeingear.org/creativewriting2016

OrCam MyEye

The OrCam MyEye is the latest device in assistive technology. It is able to turn any text into speech with a click of a button and uses artificial intelligence to recognise people's faces. One of our Directors, Allan Mabert has bought an OrCam MyEye and is quoted later in this piece.

Since being available to buy in the UK from the end of 2015, OrCam is currently being used by over 1,000 blind and partially sighted people worldwide including in the US, UK, Switzerland and Australia. Originally developed by Israeli computer science professor Amnon Shashua in 2010, it has helped blind and partially sighted people to live more confident and independent lives.

How does OrCam work?

The device uses a tiny camera that fits onto one arm of a normal pair of glasses. The back of the camera is positioned toward the ear (without blocking it) and a computerised voice "speaks" to the user about what the camera can "see". When the camera is directed at a page in a book, the camera "reads" the text.

The discreet OrCam camera and mini speaker is connected to a processing unit that fits in the user's pocket, and uses breakthrough artificial intelligence technology to convert visual information into spoken word.

The processing unit has just three buttons: a power button, volume adjuster to suit the individual's level of hearing and a trigger button to activate the text-to-voice reader.

What can OrCam do?

OrCam can read any text, on any surface, including newspapers, books, computer screens, restaurant menus, labels on supermarket products and street signs. There are two different types of OrCam devices - the OrCam MyReader, which allows the users to read any text, on any surface, including newspapers, books, computer screens, restaurant menus, labels on supermarket products and street signs and the OrCam MyEye which includes the MyReader's functionality as well having the ability to recognise and announce stored faces of individuals. MyEye can also identify consumer products and credit cards previously entered by the user, and even bank notes.

How much does it cost?

The price for the OrCam MyReader is £1,600 and the OrCam MyEye is £2,200.

Who is using it already?

Allan Mabert from Essex was diagnosed with Stargardt disease at birth. He has experienced deterioration in his vision to the point where now he can only perceive light. In his working career as London's first blind magistrate, Allan relied on equipment such as a flatbed scanner and the use of Braille, which was not practical in court. In recent months, Allan has started using OrCam MyReader and the result has dramatically improved his access to better mobility, psychological outlook, use of communications and overall independence.

OrCam now plays a vital part in Allan's daily life. "OrCam is an assistive device whose support is very convenient, discreet and simple to operate,"

explained Allan. "It relaxes you, makes you feel safer. You experience less tension. OrCam gives information, leading to self-reliance."

Michael Crossland, Specialist Optometrist at Moorfields Eye Hospital and Senior Research Associate at UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, notes the effectiveness and advantageous nature of OrCam's artificial vision technology, "I think that the OrCam MyEye device is a very exciting development in low vision rehabilitation for people with blindness and severe visual impairment.

"It is great to have a product which enables text-to-speech reading in a real world environment. I have also found it to be beneficial for people who have visual field loss, who may be able to see small letters but do not have a sufficiently wide visual field to read fluently."

Further information

- Every OrCam device is hand-delivered by a certified OrCam Trainer who teaches each new user how to incorporate the device's technology into daily life. OrCam Trainers throughout the UK provide demonstrations free of charge. Contact OrCam on freephone at 0800 358 5323 or visit the OrCam website for more information.

Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196
(Jill Shakespeare, Carol Massey, Denise Sanders)

Loredana Ivanus 07759 720551

Read House 01255 673654
(Janet Plant, General Manager,
Vanda Watling, Fundraiser)

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can 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.

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.

**For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.
Email: services@essexblind.co.uk**

**For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:
General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant: on 01255 673654
Email: janet@essexblind.co.uk**