

Essex Blind Charity



Spotlight

December 2016

ISSUE 75



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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

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**Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 23rd
January 2017**



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.

This will be the 75th edition of Spotlight that I have edited and I have decided that it is time to pass the role onto somebody else. I have written a short article about my time with Spotlight. Jill Shakespear has been doing a lot of the behind the scenes work on Spotlight and I am really grateful that she has agreed to take over as editor. The new contact arrangements are on the contents page of the newsletter.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a bright and healthy New Year.

Farewell!

In 2002 I joined the Board of Trustees as an observer. I wanted to find out what the charity did and how I could perhaps help and support it. I had a lot to learn and I am eternally grateful to people like Bryan Gates (our recently deceased President) and the other Trustees as well as Janet Plant who all helped me get to grips with the role of trustee and the intricacies of the charity.

By November 2003 I decided that one thing that I could do was to edit the newsletter – Spotlight had been published in various guises over several years but had never become a regular means of passing on news and advice. We started at four times a year and then quickly moved to six

times a year. This edition in December 2016 is my 75th and I feel it is time to say goodbye to it and pass the editor's baton to Jill Shakespear. I shall carry on as Chairman of the charity and I look forward to reading the new Spotlight.

Much has changed since 2003 – the newsletter then was mostly about the clubs for visually impaired people living in Essex. Since then we have developed our services in the community and we now employ five members of staff who run sight centres in many parts of the county.

For many years, I was helped by Stuart Arnold, a member of my local club and then Trustee, who went through my rough drafts with a red pen and corrected any spellings or grammar mistakes. Stuart was partially sighted so it was quite a task for him, but we enjoyed our time putting together each edition. Sadly he died a few years ago and now Janet has the job of checking for blunders!

I have really enjoyed my time as editor and I have seen how much more information we can send out to our readers. Looking back, in 2003 there were few mentions of the internet and only two web addresses.

For fun I have reproduced a short piece from the first edition. Dr Peter Wilson was the Chairman before me and he had found this story in another magazine – hope you like it!

Susan Mann

The Meaning of Life

Dr Peter Wilson, the Chairman of EVAB (the name of the charity in 2003), found this story in a magazine and thought you would all enjoy it!

A professor stood before his philosophy class and proceeded to fill a very large mayonnaise jar with golf balls. "Is the jar full?" he asked the class – "YES" was the unanimous reply. He then poured a box of pebbles into the jar. The pebbles rolled into the holes around the golf balls. "Is the jar full now?" Again the reply "YES". He now produced a box of sand and he poured that into the jar. It filled in more of the spaces, "Is the Jar full now?" "YES" was again the reply. Finally the professor produced two glasses of wine and poured them into the jar! Everyone laughed.

The professor then said "I want you to think of the jar as your life. The golf balls are the important things - your family, your health, your children etc - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job or your car- The sand is everything else - the small stuff. If you put the sand in the jar first there would be no room for the golf balls or the pebbles. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time on the

small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important. Take care of the golf balls first - the things that really matter. The rest is just sand."

One of the students raised her hand "But what does the wine represent?" The professor smiled – "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there is always room for a couple of glasses of wine!"

Community Support Team



Helpline Number 01206 548196

Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey



So looking out of the Sight Centre windows, it seems that winter is well on its way and Christmas is just around the corner.

The Sight Centre has been getting busy of late, with more people coming in for advice and information. I am very grateful to the volunteers who give up their time to help us. They are a talented group too, with lots of experience and skills which we greatly value.

We still have some 2017 large print diaries and calendars available, together with a wide range of other items that would make ideal Christmas presents including games and gadgets. Please come and have a look around to see what is in stock.

Our coffee morning on Tuesday 20th December will be a special one with mulled wine and mince pies. All are welcome.

In 2017 we are planning to have more open days with various sight loss organisations coming in to demonstrate their latest equipment and

technology. February 21st 2017 is the first one when Professional Vision will be here. Keep reading Spotlight or look at our website to keep up-to-date with what is going on in the Sight Centre.

As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, I am happy to provide equipment demonstration on a 1:1 basis, however, please do contact me before hand to ensure that the equipment is available and/or charged up.

That's about all from me for now. I am off to do some Christmas shopping before it gets too crowded in the shops! I hope that you all have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

“Techy” Sessions

Michelle has undertaken a couple of “techy” sessions now and they have been very successful. She has extensive knowledge of Iphones and iPads which has been very useful. If you would like to book a 1:1 session, please call.

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.

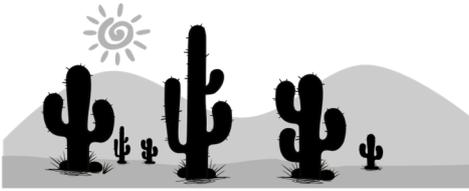
Colchester Sight Centre Activities

Tuesdays	10am-12	Coffee Morning IPad/IPhone sessions by appointment only
Wednesdays	10am-12	Correspondence Reading
1 st Thursday of each month	10am-12	“Knitwits”

Christmas and New Year Opening

Monday 19 th December:	10am-2pm
Tuesday 20 th December	10am-2pm
Wednesday 21 st December	10am-2pm
Thursday 22 nd December	10am-2pm
Friday 23 rd December to Monday 2 nd January	CLOSED
Tuesday 3 rd January	10am-2pm

News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



Braintree Brentwood
Chelmsford Maldon

We seem to have skipped autumn this year and jumped straight from summer to winter. I returned from holiday to be greeted by freezing weather, a flat car battery and a broken boiler! Luckily I was feeling refreshed and relaxed from the holiday so have weathered the storm. However this is a timely reminder to make sure you know where to get help if your heating breaks down – see the article in the national news section. I also seem to have lost a month and have come back just right for all the Christmas preparations. We are not doing Christmas Cards this year but we have a selection of calendars and diaries at all our centres and also gift ideas like playing cards and puzzle books. Pop in to your local centre for ideas.

Maldon Social Group

Our Maldon group enjoyed two walks and a very interesting visit to the Maldon Heritage Centre to see the tapestry before the winter weather closed in. We have now decided to stop for the winter and start again in the Spring when the weather improves. The Sight Centre will continue monthly as normal.

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Braintree: 21st December and 18th January
Brentwood: 12th December and 9th January
Maldon: 6th December and 2nd January

Chelmsford: Please note Chelmsford Sight Centre will be closed over Christmas on Friday 23rd and 30th December

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas time, Jill

Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders



Brightlingsea Clacton Harwich Manningtree

Brightlingsea, Harwich and Manningtree

It was lovely to visit these libraries over the last couple of months. Just to remind you that I will be at these libraries 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

We are celebrating with a Christmas Celebratory lunch on Thursday 15th December 2016. All welcome.

.... and talking of Christmas, here are some facts you may find interesting: -

Nearly 60 million Christmas trees are grown each year in Europe
The chances of a white Christmas are 1 in 10 in England and 1 in 6 for Scotland

Santa is known as Kriss Kringle in Germany and Pere Noel in France

Bestselling Christmas single – Bing Crosby's White Christmas

Since 1947 Oslo has sent a Christmas tree to London to thank us for our help in Second World War

1957 – the year of the first ever televised Queen's Christmas speech

£18,000,000,000 will be withdrawn from UK cash machines over Christmas

25 Million – the number of Christmas puddings we eat in the UK every year

83 Square km – the amount of wrapping paper sold in the UK every Christmas

and a fact we don't need to know - 957 the typical number of calories in an average Xmas dinner!

Upcoming dates for the Sight Centres are:

Brightlingsea: Wednesday 18th January

Harwich: Tuesday 13th December

Manningtree: Tuesday 24th January

Clacton: every Thursday

New Eye Clinic Liaison Officer – Christine Pratt



Hello, I would like to introduce myself as the new Eye Clinic Liaison and Community Support Officer at Essex Sight. I started at the beginning of October and am covering Clacton and Essex County hospital in Colchester which was Patricia Marshall's old patch. This is a new direction for me as I come from a background of supported housing. I'm really enjoying this new challenge and have already learned so much from colleagues and customers at the sight centres.

Hospital Eye Clinics

I completed my training to be an ECLO (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer) at the beginning of November in Birmingham and will be taking the exam to qualify in January. At the moment I am working in Essex County Hospital on Wednesdays and at Clacton Hospital on Mondays. Its early days still for me and I am busy getting to know the hospital staff from both sites to promote the service and reach as many patients as possible who would benefit from support coping with their degree of sight loss. The type of support I provide varies from initial emotional support when someone is newly diagnosed to advice about how to deal with practical tasks around the home that have become more difficult with reduced vision. I support not only the visually impaired but family members and carers as well. If you would like to know more about the ECLO service or are currently receiving treatment at Clacton or Colchester eye clinics and would like some advice or support relating to your eye condition please give me a call on 01206 548196 or 07770 750108.

Home Visiting

Part of my role is also to carry out home visits to offer advice and information about equipment that can help at home, although often simply replacing normal light bulbs with brighter daylight bulbs will greatly improve the home environment we can also demonstrate daylight task lamps and illuminated magnifiers so that people can see how much these help before they purchase anything. We have a variety of other aids at our sight centres which we can bring out to demonstrate if someone cannot physically travel.

People are sometimes referred to us by social services but you can ring us directly if you would like a visit at home or more information about this service on 01206 548196.



Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant

Once again Christmas is upon us and we are busy planning a variety of entertainment and activities for our residents. By the time you read this, we will have already held our Residents and Families Christmas Party, which is always an enjoyable event with music, dancing and food, and featuring the first performance of the Read House Christmas choir. We will have also held our Christmas Bazaar which raises funds for residents' amenities. We have a couple of school choirs coming in to sing Christmas carols over the next few weeks, as well as other entertainers, and after Christmas a trip to the panto. So a very busy time is planned. At the time of writing, our planned refurbishment is well under way. New lighting has been installed in most of the building and new flooring laid. We are very grateful to our residents for their patience while the work is being carried out, as there is a lot of disruption at present, but we are working around it and trying to keep life 'business as usual' for them. At this time of year, we like to pay tribute to our staff. Most of our staff have been with us a long time and I like to think we are a happy team. They all work very hard to provide a good life for our residents and the management team are very grateful to them all. We also value the various volunteers who help us in so many ways. Thank you to all of you. Merry Christmas from everyone at Read House.

Local News

Finding Your Feet

Essex Sight is working in partnership with ECL Sensory Service and other charities on the Finding Your Feet program. This free 2 day workshop is designed for anyone diagnosed with sight loss and their families/carers who are finding it hard to adjust. It will explore both practical and emotional support and will cover areas such as everyday living tasks, getting out and about, social support and services available locally and nationally. Workshops can be arranged in any area across Essex where there is demand. The next one will be in Chelmsford on 24th-25th January 2016. If you are interested in attending please contact Jill Shakespear.

NHS – your chance to tell of your experiences

The independent charity Healthwatch Essex is conducting a survey to find out and highlight the issues affecting sensory impaired people in terms of accessing and using health and social care services. They will then feedback recommendations for change and improvement to those who commission and deliver services.

This is your chance to tell about your experiences of accessing and using any kind of health and care service. This could include any service from GP's and dentists, to hospitals, specialist units and even emergency services. They'd also like to hear your experiences of using a personal budget.

Have you been asked by your service provider how you wish to receive information and what your needs might be? How easy/difficult is it to book and attend appointments? Do you receive the support you require? What would make things easier/better for you?

The survey is available online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/555sensory>

Healthwatch Essex also offer a confidential helpline to answer your health care service questions. This is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm on **0300 500 1895**

Pantomimes

The following theatres are offering audio described performances of their pantomimes

Colchester Mercury Theatre:

Dick Whittington, Saturday 7th January 2pm: Box office 01206 573948 or email: access@mercurytheatre.co.uk

Queens Theatre Hornchurch:

Cinderella, Thursday 12th January 1pm: Box office 01708 443333

Further afield to get you in the Christmas spirit the Geoffrye Museum in London is holding a free event- The Voices of Christmas Past on Monday 12th December at 2pm. Hear how people have celebrated Christmas over the centuries with extracts from diaries and literature from Pepys, Dickens and their documenting homes archive. Also enjoy some festive treats, handle Christmas objects and make your own gifts to take home. Ticket Office Number: 020 7739 9893

(The Geoffrye museum is a lovely little museum with a row of rooms set up in different period styles. It is easily accessible by bus no. 149 or 242 from Liverpool Street Station. I visited it earlier this year and loved it. Jill)



National News

Stay Well This Winter - Flu vaccination

Have you had your flu vaccination this winter? The free vaccine is offered to anyone aged 65 and over and to people with long-term health conditions including respiratory diseases, diabetes and stroke. If you are eligible contact your GP to arrange vaccination.

Keep warm this winter

Energy firms

By law, energy companies have to provide services for people with a disability, but you need to ask for them.

First make sure you're on the Priority Services Register. This means if you have a disability, are blind and partially sighted or are an older person, your energy provider gives you a priority service. If you get cut off or have any problems, you will be first in the queue.

You can also agree a password system. This means anybody who visits your home from your energy provider knows the password, which is useful as a security precaution if you can't read an ID badge.

Finally, remember to ask for your bills and information in an accessible format, whether that's braille, large print or otherwise. This will help you check your bills are accurate.

Government

You could get between £100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills if you were born on or before 5 May 1953. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'. Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get your money by Christmas.

You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you get the State Pension or another social security benefit. Other cold weather payments are also available if you are on a low income.

Recruitment opportunity for JustDifferent

JustDifferent is a small charity employing disabled people to visit schools and deliver workshops on disability and difference to children and young people. They are currently looking to recruit more disabled adults on a self-employed basis. No experience is necessary, full training will be given. If you would like more information contact JustDifferent on 01243 778 275 www.justdifferent.org

Bendrigg Trust Outdoor activities (Lake District)

Bendrigg Trust is an organisation based in the Lake District which specialises in providing access to outward bound activities for disabled people.

In particular, Bendrigg runs a project called Spirit of Adventure which specifically provides visually impaired adults with the opportunity to learn activities such as canoeing, caving, rock climbing and abseiling, and then to enjoy those sports through a series of expeditions which last from a weekend up to, in some cases, a week.

Bendrigg has just produced its program for 2017, which can be found on their website, www.bendrigg.org.uk or call 01539 723766.

Equipment

Synapptic - This Christmas, why not give technology a try?

Fancy pulling a phone out of your pocket and using it to read bus timetables or magnify food labels in the supermarket? Or using your tablet as a reading machine for your favourite book? It's all possible with Synapptic!

If you've not heard of Synapptic before, we're a Northeast company who designs innovative and intuitive technology for people with sight loss, which works on mainstream Android Phones and Tablets. Our mission is to keep things simple and encourage everyone to give technology a try, while bringing together the latest innovations to help make life easier for people with sight loss.

In fact we've recently won an Award for Excellence from the Macular Society, in the category of Best Technology Innovation, which recognises our commitment to innovation. What's more, we also pride ourselves on

our customer service and all our products come with a lifetime of free technical support, so our customers know they'll never be left on their own if they need some help.

We'd love to meet you at one of the many exhibitions and events we attend up and down the country. You can have a play with our Synapptic phones and tablets and see how long it takes before you can send texts, browse the internet and control your phone using voice recognition!

Please visit our website at www.Synapptic.com for more details.

You can also have a sneak preview of some of our soon-to-be-released features, including an all-new Eccentric Reading mode, where text can be scrolled automatically across the screen and you get to control the speed and size. In addition, a 'pinch and zoom' feature has been added to magnify text and images using the touchscreen, while improvements to the Reading Machine feature let you convert any printed text to speech, including menus and food labels, which can also be magnified onscreen. So come and give our Synapptic phones and tablets a try and you might discover that using technology is simpler than you first thought!

If you can't make it to one of our events, you could always request a trial version by calling us on 0191 909 7 909 or emailing at sales@Synapptic.com.

Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196
(Jill Shakespear, 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.....

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