

SightNews

Newsletter 120

Summer 2008

Sightnews is the newsletter of the Hertfordshire Society for the Blind

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10am to 3pm Mon to Thurs

CEO's Patch



Hello again everyone and welcome to our Summer Newsletter. I hope you all had a good Spring time. It's with a heavy heart I have to tell you that this will be my last CEO's Patch. I am writing this in the middle of May and will be leaving the Society at the end of May, so will be gone by the time you receive this edition.

I have enjoyed my three and half years with HSB immensely and it has been a pleasure to be the Society's CEO. I would like to think during my time here there has been progress and that I have played my part in moving the charity forward. Small charities like HSB really are the

back bone of the Voluntary sector and I feel help to keep the fabric of modern society together, although this is becoming more difficult.

All the staff and volunteers here work so hard in supporting people who have sight loss and I would like to thank them for their efforts in making the Society a vibrant and effective organisation. On my arrival I quickly realised the important responsibility of leading HSB and safe guarding its future. The staff and volunteers quickly made me feel at ease though and this made the task so much more enjoyable.

HSB can't do everything it would like, but I feel what it does has a vital impact on the lives of people in Hertfordshire who have a sight loss. It's work fills the gaps in support not provided by the Statutory Services and this is crucial.

So everyone involved in HSB should be very proud of their achievements and this is particular true of my staff team who have been tremendous and I feel their dedication is second to none.

You are not getting rid of me completely as I am going to

continue to help out with fundraising events in the future. I really do wish the Society all the very best in the years to come and I will give my support when I can.

So for the last time - goodbye for now. Tony



Interim CEO: Chris Greenhill

As the interim CEO I've had to 'hit the ground running' taking over Tony's role and continuing the excellent work he had been doing. Fortunately, the whole HSB team have been very supportive and friendly which has enabled me to understand the basics of what we do quite quickly. I have been struck by two things: how vital our services are and the breadth of our patch. Although I have worked in the charitable sector, I only had limited knowledge of visual impairment and the consequences of it before I started. My short time with

HSB has already extended my understanding considerably and the fact that our small organisation serves the whole of the county is truly impressive.

Whilst our current services continue to be needed and valued, there are also important new projects that are emerging and that require nurturing to fruition, so I am making sure that these are progressed as well as maintaining our established services.

We are already recruiting for a permanent CEO so my time with HSB may only be short but I sense already that it will be enjoyable and fulfilling!

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The Society welcomes two new members of staff replacing Tricia Steeden and Lorna Whitaker who both left in June.

Tricia is being replaced as Welfare Visitor for the west of the county, by Lorna Thiele



who comes to us from a background of 25 years of

community social care, giving support to people with mental health problems and other disabilities. She has worked for the voluntary, social and private care in Harrow, Brent and Maida Vale area. HSB is a new area of work for her and so far she is really enjoying the challenge!

Lorna Whitaker is being replaced by George Hatchman



as Resources Co-ordinator for the east of the county.

George has had a varied career, working for the Royal Mail for 41 years, starting as a Telegram Boy in the City of London and taking early retirement whilst working as the Sector Operations manager for Romford area. He comes to us from part-time employment as a Court Usher at Hertford Magistrates Court.

Both Lorna and George started work in May overlapping their predecessors, so many of you may have already met them. We welcome them to the Society and hope they enjoy working with us.

## Equipment & Information Outreach Service

The Equipment & Information Outreach Service funded by the Big Lottery has achieved its aim of 8 monthly Sight Information Points distributed around the county.

### Bernie's Patch

Hemel Hempstead SIP 1st Tuesday 10am – 12pm Hemel Hempstead Social Centre for the Blind, Boxmoor.

St. Albans SIP 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday 10am - 12pm Jubilee Centre, Church Street, St. Albans

Hitchin SIP 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 10am – 12pm Nightingale Day Centre, Nightingale Road, Hitchin. (Please call HSB to check times)

Watford SIP 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday 12pm – 2pm Watford Social Centre for the Blind, Cross Street, Watford

Low Vision Exhibition in partnership with Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service Tuesday 14 October 2008 10am – 3pm Plinston Hall, The Broadway, Letchworth Garden City

Low Vision Exhibition in partnership with Hertfordshire Libraries Tuesday 18 November 2008 Tring Library, 78 High Street, Tring 10am to 2pm

### George's Patch

Cheshunt SIP 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 10.30am – 12.30pm Wolsey Hall, Windmill Lane, Cheshunt

Royston SIP 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday 10am – 12pm Royston Library, Market Hill, Royston Town Centre

Stevenage SIP 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 10am – 12pm Stevenage Resource Centre, Chells Way, Stevenage

Ware Road SIP 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 10am – 12pm Ware Road Day Service, Ware Road, Hertford

Low Vision Exhibitions in partnership with Hertfordshire Libraries

Tuesday 30 September 2008 10am – 2pm Ware Library, 87 High Street, Ware

Do you enjoy Talking Books? Wednesday 12 November 2008 HCC Library Service invites you to meet award winning narrator Gordon Griffin between 10.30am and 1pm at Terrace Suite, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City. Entry will be by ticket only.

## Products & Suppliers

### Enhanced Vision Europe

Enhanced Vision is dedicated to creating innovative products that enable people with low vision, including Macular Degeneration and Glaucoma, to fully participate in life.

Our products are sold through partners and our own dedicated team of sales consultants throughout Europe and the United States.

For further information visit [www.enhancedvision.co.uk](http://www.enhancedvision.co.uk) or contact us on 0115 9442317. or email: [salesuk@enhancedvision.com](mailto:salesuk@enhancedvision.com)

### Professional Vision Services

PVS is a local company and we have a full range of products, including handheld portable CCTVs. Autofocus and Flat Screen CCTVs and Computer Solutions. We offer a personal, professional service in your own home and we are a full member of BHTA.

For a free, no obligation demonstration phone 01462-420751 Fax: 01462-420185: email: [sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk](mailto:sales@professional-vision-services.co.uk) or our website: [www.professional-vision-services.co.uk](http://www.professional-vision-services.co.uk)

## Have You Heard Of Talking Newspapers?

This article has been written by Linda Randall of the St. Albans & District Talking Newspaper about the service they offer, but she begins by explaining how the Talking Newspaper Service works and how you can access the service.

St. Albans & District Talking Newspaper is one of many of charitable Talking Newspaper organisations throughout the country which provide a local news service to people who are visually impaired. They are dependent on fundraising, grants & donations to pay for the service.

### How do they operate?

- Each talking newspaper operates in its own way and is staffed by volunteers.
- They all record onto cassette tapes or DVDs.
- The news items are taken from the local papers.
- The distribution to their Listeners can be weekly to monthly
- The service is completely free both in its production and the distribution by Royal Mail. There is no postage charge.

- The service is valued by its Listeners because it keeps them in touch with the local news and events in their community.

### **How do you qualify for your local Talking Newspaper?**

- To qualify, you need to be registered as blind or partially sighted. A signature by your GP or optician to say you are unable to read N12 print will also be accepted.

### **How do I find my local Talking Newspaper's contact details?**

- Hertfordshire Society for the Blind can give you the telephone number of your local Talking Newspaper.
- Hertfordshire County Council's web site lists most of the County's organisations.

### **How do I apply to be a Listener?**

- You can refer yourself
- A relative, friend or neighbour can refer you.
- Sensory Services at HCC can refer you with your permission.
- Any other professional can refer you on your behalf.

### **St Albans & District Talking Newspaper.**

St. Albans & District Talking Newspaper was established in 1974 and it supplies tapes to around 150 Listeners. It produces 48 cassette tapes each year and delivers them weekly in the first 4 weeks of each month.

The news is selected from the Herts. Advertiser & Review and read by teams of 4 people.

Each tape is colour coded and has a name, its own Editor and a signature tune. 2 tapes are 60 minutes long and 2 are 90 minutes long. One of the tapes is more like a magazine featuring events and interviews which are of local interest.

A master tape is produced from the digital recording and sufficient tapes are copied and checked for quality by another team of volunteers.

The tapes are then put into matching coloured plastic wallets with the Listener's address showing in the clear window on the side.

A sack of recorded tapes are taken to the Post Office and delivered by them to the Listeners by first class post in the same week.

When a Listener has finished with the tape, the tape is put back in the wallet, the address card is turned over to show the return address and put in the post. It is delivered to one of our 4 Distribution Secretaries who clean the tapes ready for the next month's recording. The process then begins again.

### **What area does it cover?**

St. Albans & District Talking Newspaper serves the areas of St. Albans, London Colney, Park Street, Sandridge, Wheathampstead, Harpenden, Markyate & Redbourn.

### **Who do you contact for more information?**

Linda Randall on 01582 832275. Linda will arrange a home visit to explain the service and make sure a new Listener is able to listen to the tapes using one of the following:-

- a) the Listener's own equipment
- b) a loaned cassette player
- c) a loaned pair of the appropriate earphones for those with a hearing impairment.

Do contact Linda if you are interested in the scheme.

As well as welcoming new Listeners, Talking Newspapers also need Volunteer Readers. For areas other than St. Albans the following contacts should prove useful:

Hertford & District TN  
Mrs. J. Flack 01992-304040

Bishop's Stortford TN  
Richard Barnett 01279-651270

Lea Valley TN  
Mrs. J. Hart 01992-893522

Welwyn/Hatfield TN  
Mrs. W. Blackburn 01438-717806

Stevenage & North Herts Talk Back  
Mrs. E. Wilkins 01438-313303

Dacorum Talking News  
Mrs. A. Mackie 01442-217918

Watford TN  
Mrs. Pankhurst 01923-249139

Radlett, Elstree, Borehamwood, Shenley, Potters Bar TN  
Mrs. J. Scott 01923-856935

For those interested in the national press contact:  
Talking Newspaper Association  
National Recording Centre  
Heathfield  
East Sussex TN21 8DB  
01435-866102

## Club Corner

Our apologies to Mrs. Joyce Moules of the Tuesday Blind Club in Stevenage for not mentioning the Club had changed their venue. The club now meets in Symonds Green Neighbourhood Centre, Filey Close, Stevenage. The Club still needs new members so do contact Mrs. Moules on 01438-316632.

The Thursday Club of Welwyn Garden City is also looking for new members. The Club meets on the second Thursday afternoon of the month. It is a social club and provides entertainment, games, annual outings etc. They arrange for members to be picked up by mini bus. The members are a friendly bunch and would love you to join them. Contact Vera Weedon on 01707-327370.

The Blind Bowlers of Welwyn Garden City are in urgent need of people willing to drive them over to Hatfield on Wednesday mornings to enable them to play their matches. If anyone is willing, or knows of anyone willing to help out, please contact Mary Edgar on 01992-554034. If any VI bowlers in Hertford would like to join the group. perhaps they could also contact Mary.

## Focus on Fundraising

### Supermarket Collections

Don't forget to pop and see us if you are at the following supermarkets in the next couple of months:

Tesco

Royston: Friday 15 August

Stevenage: Thursday 2 October

We will also be organising collections at other supermarkets in the second half of the year, so keep an eye on the website for details. If you can spare some time to help at a collection, let John know at the office; your help will be appreciated.

## Fundraising Events

### Barn Dance

Put a date in your diary now for the eagerly awaited HSB Barn Dance! This will be taking place at the Welwyn Civic Centre on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September and it will be extra special this year as we are having a live band! Tickets will be £10 including a supper. Please contact the office soon to book tickets as they are sure to go fast. See you there!

### 2007 Sponsored Walk

You may remember that we held a sponsored walk at Knebworth House in October 2007. This is to let you know that we finally raised just over £1,600, which, I think you will agree, is a magnificent effort by all concerned. Our thanks to all those who took part and helped at the event.

### Quiz Night

On a disappointing note, we had to cancel our Quiz Night in Sarratt on 13 June due to lack of interest. This sometimes happens, so better luck next time.

We have also, in consultation with the other charity involved, decided to postpone the charity cricket match planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> August until next year, so that an even better event can be organised.

### **Gift Aid**

There has been some concern that recent changes to income tax thresholds would affect the value of Gift Aid that charities are able to claim back from HM Revenue and Customs. The fear was that only 25p in the £ could be claimed back rather than the previous 28p in the £ - quite a loss of income. The Government have, thankfully,

introduced transitional relief until 2011, basically meaning they will 'top up' Gift Aid claims to the 28p in the £ level, so that is good news. Please don't forget to Gift Aid any donations you make to the Society if you can. You must be a UK tax payer and will help the Society greatly if you are able to do so. Please contact the office for more details and a Gift Aid form.

### **Don't forget!**

The Society is always grateful to receive financial support to maintain and grow its services and this can be achieved in a number of ways:

A Gift in your Will – by remembering the Society in your Will, you can help current and future generations of visually impaired people. Remember – your gift does not have to be large; small gifts can also help to make a difference. If you are considering making a will, why not contact the office for our Will and Legacy Information Pack.

Donations – if you wish to make a donation, this can be done at any time you are able to afford to do so (we also have an on-line donation service through our website) or by regular contributions via Standing Order.

It helps even further if you are able to Gift Aid your donation – it is always nice to get money back from the taxman!

Please contact us if you need any more information about supporting the Society.

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Congratulations are in order!

Hertfordshire Society for the Blind was delighted to receive notification from Mrs. Doreen Pearce of her engagement to Mr. Sydney Hammond, one of our more senior clients. They had very kindly asked their family and friends to donate money to the Society instead of giving them engagement presents which came to over £100. We found this a charming idea and would like to thank them both for their generous gift and wish them a very happy future together.

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### **Do you have a bus pass?**

Clients registered SI or SSI who use the buses regularly can apply to have a companion travel with them free. The client needs to speak to the local council, which issues the bus passes, who will then put a letter C on the pass which stands for "Companion".

## **Shop Window**

HSB ex-demo: Telesensory Aladdin – Rainbow colour CCTV. Sale £ 700 or best offer.

Tieman Clearview Bright CCTV. 3 yrs. old, mint condition. New £2,300. Sale £450 ono. Contact Irfan Abrihim on 07739-074113.

Penguin Magnalink New: 2002 Cost: £1,400 Sale £600. Contact Maurice Jackson 01442-824000

Magnalink Colour CCTV in good condition. Sale £350. Contact Mrs. J. Ewart 01799-500524.

Magnalink B&W CCTV in good condition. Sale £500. Contact Lis Barratt 01992-588145

It's that time of year again – don't forget to order your Large Print Diary, Pocket Diary and/or Calendar for 2009. We can't order them until we know how many are required so please do get in touch and we can get moving.

## Volunteers in Focus

### Obituary:

Lindsey Wheeler, our Hospital Eye Clinic Volunteer Co-ordinator writes:

In March this year, a much valued volunteer of HSB passed away. David Best had volunteered for us in the Eye Clinic at the QEII hospital for 10 years. His help and support was very much appreciated by the doctors and staff whom I know considered him a friend. It would be impossible to count the number of visually impaired patients he has supported over the years with advice, information and kind concern.

David was a lovely man, a true gentleman, who will be missed for a long time by all who knew him.

### Employment Campaign

On a different note, Terry Knight, one of our Home Visitor volunteers, is looking for help in supporting a nation-wide campaign to increase the number of blind and partially-sighted people in employment. The campaign is being organised by Philip Connolly, RNIB's employment campaigner.

Terry writes: "It is a disturbing fact that two in every three visually impaired people of working age do not have a job. This figure, which is completely unacceptable, has remained at a high level for many years. The campaign's success will depend on the active involvement of visually impaired people who have a keen interest in employment matters and either:

Have never been employed because of their visual impairment; Have been able to hold down a job or career despite their visual impairment; Or have lost their job or career because of their visual impairment."

If you are interested, please contact Terry at 46 Swinburne Avenue, Hitchin, SG5 2RL and he will send you a response form to fill in.

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### Golden Wedding Gift

Congratulations to one of our volunteers, David Clift, and his wife Maureen on their Golden Wedding. They asked family and friends to donate to the Society any money they would have spent on anniversary gifts. These gifts came to nearly £500 with Gift Aid. Many thanks to you both!

## NICE Update

Tom Bremridge, CEO of The Macular Degeneration Society reports:

“Lucentis has been approved for use for recently developed wet Macular Degeneration except in cases where sight has deteriorated to the extent that the treatment is unlikely to be effective. There must be evidence of recent disease progression and there must be no permanent structural damage to the macula.

The NHS will pay for the first 14 injections after which the manufacturer (Novartis) will reimburse the NHS for the cost of further injections. Macugen is not recommended for use.

The dosing regime is for 3 injections to be given over 3 months and then for the consultant to monitor progress and give further injections as required over a two year period. Those who have had the injections report that the procedure is painless. We are now waiting to hear when provision of the treatment will become mandatory for the NHS.”



Farewell and  
many thanks  
to Tony

In the 3½ years that Tony was with us at HSB he presided over a period of significant change for the Society. He brought a dynamic and confident style of leadership to his job, plus a wicked sense of humour, (he needed this as an Arsenal supporter!) which ensured that a group of individuals became a strong and united team.

Tony's energy and enthusiasm brought about an expansion of services for the visually impaired of Hertfordshire by expanding the Society's contacts and persuading other organisations to take an interest in our work.

Tony and John made a good team, a fact which was particularly evident during the Quiz Nights, not only the official ones but also those nights which took place at John's local.

Cheers Tony, thanks for everything and don't forget you said you'd stay in touch as a volunteer for fund raising!