

# SightNews

Newsletter 121

Winter 2008

Sightnews is the newsletter of the Hertfordshire Society for the Blind

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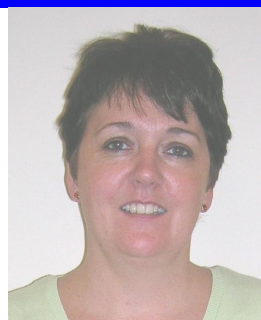
website: [www.hertsblind.com](http://www.hertsblind.com)

#### Office hours:

10am to 4pm

Monday to Thursday

## CEO's Patch



Hello Everyone

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter. We hope you had a good summer, although the British weather has not been up to its usual high standard.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself; I am Maria Moore and I am the new CEO at Herts. Society for the Blind. I took over from Chris Greenhill at the end of August and as Chris put it 'hit the ground running' or galloping, I am not sure which. Chris had continued to develop the links and service offered by the society, building on the hard work and dedication for over three years by Tony Edwards. This is a really busy time of year and there has been so much to catch up on my head is still spinning.

Unfortunately Lorna Thiele, who was recruited to replace Tricia Steeden, has left the Society, which resulted in us having to recruit again. I am glad to say that we now have a new welfare worker, called Claire Mackenzie, in post. The Society has also recruited a Club Co-ordinator, Christine Wheeler, but she will tell you more about herself later.

It has been really easy to settle in here as everyone has been so helpful and welcoming. It has made the whole 'starting a new job' experience a lot less stressful.

I won't bore you with too much detail, but I thought it would be a good idea to give you a little bit of background history about me. I am 42 years old and from Staffordshire originally, moving to Hertfordshire in November 2007, so the area is still quite new to me and getting around the County can be challenging. I have Sat Nav which is great, until it decides to direct you up a one way street the wrong way. I live with my partner, Allan, in Stevenage. I have two grown up children who still live in Staffordshire. I have worked in the voluntary, statutory and the private sector for over 20 years.

During my short time here, what has struck me the most is the size of the county HSB covers,

the value and quality of the service offered by a small team of paid staff, and the dedicated and committed volunteers. The services offered are vital for the people who are, at times, isolated due to their visual impairment. Hertfordshire Society for the Blind, as well as all other third sector organisations, continues to face challenges and I am really looking forward to helping the charity to continue to grow and develop the service we offer to blind and partially sighted people in Hertfordshire, their families and carers.

You can contact me at the office on 01992-588145; on mobile 07824-363368 or email [maria.moore@hertsblind.com](mailto:maria.moore@hertsblind.com).

Best Wishes, Maria

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If you have received this newsletter by mistake, or no longer want to receive our future newsletters can you contact: Lis Barratt on [lis.barratt@hertsblind.com](mailto:lis.barratt@hertsblind.com) or 01992 588147 and we will amend our records

Also please do not just throw this newsletter away. RECYCLE it by taking it to your local GP surgery, dentist, hairdressers or any other place where people may be able to find out more about HSB.

## Focus on Fundraising

### Supermarket Collections

We have been active with our supermarket 'tinshakes' since the last Newsletter and have raised the following amounts from our collections:

£367.70 – Watford Tesco, 18<sup>th</sup> July.

£318.18 – Royston Tesco, 15<sup>th</sup> August

£167.74 – St Albans Morrisons, 15<sup>th</sup> September

£171.72 – Stevenage Tesco, 2<sup>nd</sup> October

By the time you read this, we will also have collected at London Colney Sainsburys on 21<sup>st</sup> November. Do pop over and say hello if you are at the following supermarkets where we are holding 'tinshakes' next month:

- Hertford Tesco: Friday 5th December
- Baldock Tesco: Friday 12th December
- Royston Tesco: Tuesday 16 December

If you can spare some time to help at a collection, let John know at the office; your help will be appreciated. Don't forget you get the chance to wear a silly Father Christmas hat when helping at these collections!

### Fundraising Events

#### Barn Dance

We held our Barn Dance complete with live band and caller on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September. Although not as many people turned up as we would have hoped, a good time was had by all those that did attend. Having a live band made for a good atmosphere and added to the enjoyment.

#### Quiz Night

The Society was involved in a Quiz Night on 25<sup>th</sup> October organised by a group including one of our volunteers, Frances Jones, who ran the quiz for the benefit of ourselves and the Macular Society. Owing to the fact that the event was well supported and a generous anonymous donation, both Societies benefited to the tune of £600 each! Many thanks to Frances and her group of friends.

#### Donations

We have received many kind donations from clients and supporters over the course of the year and we thank everyone who has done so most sincerely for their invaluable support. This has included some very thoughtful donations, including money donated in lieu of flowers for loved ones who have passed away or, on a more happy note, donations instead of presents for important events such as wedding anniversaries.

All donations, given for whatever reason, are gratefully accepted and put to use in providing the Society's services.

Don't forget, if you do donate to the Society, please Gift Aid it if you can. Please contact us if you need any more information about supporting the Society.

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We would like to welcome **Claire Mackenzie** who has recently joined the Society to work in Tricia Steeden's old patch. She comes from a background of organising community outreach events for children at her local church and has just completed fundraising events for The Motor Neurone Disease Society in the south Hertfordshire area. She is married with two daughters at primary school and says she is: "very much looking forward to meeting everyone in the Society in due course".

Claire can be contacted on the office phone 01992-588145 her mobile 07825 992950 or email [claire.mackenzie@hertsblind.com](mailto:claire.mackenzie@hertsblind.com)

## Equipment & Information Outreach Service

### Bernie's Patch

The Outreach Programme in the west of the county has been very busy since the last newsletter. As well as two local library events, we have had two big exhibitions of low vision equipment; one in Wheathamstead. which 96 of you attended, and another one in Letchworth where 160 of you came along to see what was on offer. These Exhibitions are a great way of seeing the latest gadgets on the market without having to travel into London or up to Birmingham and also to find out about other support and services available in your local area. We will be setting up a few for next year too, so keep a lookout in your post for our big yellow flyers coming through your door.

As normal, we will be running our Sight Information Points on a monthly basis. These are drop in sessions, so there is no need to make an appointment. We try to change the range of equipment we have on a regular basis and are always looking for new ideas. So if you have come across something you think would be helpful to others, let us know. In the West of the county the Information points are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in the Month –  
Boxmoor Social Centre for the  
Blind, Alston Road Hemel  
Hempstead

10.00 –12.00. This is a joint  
session along with the Hearing  
Advisory Service.

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in the Month - St  
Albans. Please call for details  
01992 588145

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday in the month -  
Nightingale Road Day Centre,  
Nightingale Road, Hitchin. 10.30-  
12.30

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in the Month – Watford  
Social Centre for the Blind, Cross  
Street, Watford. 10.00-12.00

A nice cup of tea is always on  
offer. See you there, Bernie

### George's Patch

I would first like to take this  
opportunity to thank you all for the  
help and guidance given to me  
since I started with the Society.  
First on my list must be Lorna  
Whitaker, for without her guidance  
and support in my first few hectic  
weeks, I would have been  
completely lost. I still have a long  
way to go before I reach the level  
of Lorna's outstanding work.  
However, with a lot of patience,  
Lorna was able to get me, I  
believe, to an acceptable  
performance level at least.

I must then give my thanks to the  
rest of the Team at Leahoe House,  
with a special mention for Bernie  
Prizeman, who has kept an eye on  
me since Lorna's departure.

Finally and most importantly, I wish  
to thank the Volunteers and clients  
of the Society at the various Sight  
Information Points (SIP's) and  
Events for their help,  
encouragement and expertise,  
which have been very much  
appreciated over the past few  
months. You have also made me  
feel most welcome and I look  
forward to working with, and for,  
you all in the future.

Apart from the monthly SIP's,  
which continue to be well attended  
on most occasions, we have  
carried out a couple of "one off"  
events in the east of the County.  
The Ware Library Event in  
association with Hertfordshire  
Library Services was well attended  
on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and visitors  
included five local opticians who  
came along to see what the  
Society was about and what we  
had to offer their clients beyond  
their own services.

I very much enjoyed my visits to  
the Bishop's Stortford and Potter's  
Bar VIP Club's, where again I was  
made to feel most welcome. The  
Keep Fit session at Potters Bar  
was one I will remember for quite  
some time, the first real exercise I  
had done in years.

## Club Corner



Hi, I'm Christine Wheeler the new Clubs' Co-ordinator. I joined HSB in September,

As this Newsletter goes to print The Talking Books Event, again in association with Hertfordshire Library Services, will be taking place. It promises to be an interesting morning with Gordon Griffin, one of your favourite narrators, reading a selection of passages from books live on stage at Campus West, Welwyn Garden City. More about that in the next Newsletter.

Regular Sight Information Points (SIP's) in the east and north of the county are:

Cheshunt S.I.P.

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

**Please note:** The SIP on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December will **NOT** go ahead.

Royston S.I.P.

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday 10.00am – Noon.  
Royston Library, Market Hill,  
Royston

Stevenage S.I.P.

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 10am – 12.00pm  
Stevenage Resource Centre, Chells  
Way, Stevenage

Ware Road, Hertford S.I.P.

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 10.00am - 12.00pm  
Ware Road Day Service, Ware  
Road, Hertford.

**Please note:** the December SIP at this venue will **NOT** take place as the Day Service is closed on the 24<sup>th</sup> December.

I'm new to HSB and my role is new too. I am trying to visit all the clubs by Christmas which is quite a challenge. I have already been welcomed at about 10 clubs so far and I am amazed by the fantastic work and commitment the club organisers and volunteers put into each club. These clubs are vital to the members that use them. It is great to see everyone enjoying themselves and I will have to go on a diet by Christmas as I am being encouraged to eat cakes and biscuits at nearly every club.

So that you know a little about me; I have worked for a bank in the International and Corporate sections for 31 years and have been a Borough Councillor for 4 years. I have a husband, Ian, son Carlton, 16, and daughter Pippa, 14, and most importantly an eating-machine called Tigger who is a black Labrador. Both my children were born with an opacity of the cornea in one eye and my son has had cataracts removed and lens implants two years ago. I also help at the Digswell Place Riding for the Disabled once a week which is my relaxation.

I look forward to meeting everyone and thank all the HSB staff and volunteers for helping me enjoy my first two months.

I can be contacted by leaving a message in the office on 01992-588145, phoning my mobile number 07825-543888 or emailing me on [christine.wheeler@hertsblind.com](mailto:christine.wheeler@hertsblind.com)

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Audrey Mackie from the Hemel Hempstead Centre for the Blind tells us:

“The holiday to Bradbury Hotel, near Worthing - was so enjoyed this year by everyone, that we are booking again for next year. The seven day holiday starts on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The cost is £365 for the hotel - which is a reduced rate for an early booking. The bus transport to the hotel and return to Hemel Railway Station will be £50. Insurance around £15. There are several outings arranged as well as evening entertainment.” If you are interested please contact Audrey on 01442-217918 or email [secretary@dtnhemel.org.co](mailto:secretary@dtnhemel.org.co)

### **Wireless for the Blind Fund**

The above organisation has provided radios with a cassette player for visually impaired people for many years now. With the changes in technology in recent years the radios now have

CD players instead, although they will issue both kinds of radio for a while. However, the cassette players will eventually be phased out completely and only radios with CDs will be issued.

Various other organisations supplying audio tapes are having to consider changing to CDs as tapes are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

If you receive the Dacorum Talking Newspaper you can choose whether you want to continue to receive your newspaper on tape or CD - just put a note in your cassette pouch when returning your tape.

The Radlett area Talking Newspaper are also having to consider alternatives to tapes for their distributors. If you live in that area and want to know about their plans please contact David Clout on 01923-854403 or email him on [dclout@herts.atl.org.uk](mailto:dclout@herts.atl.org.uk)

HSB will also have to consider possible changes in the future and so we would be very grateful for views on this subject. Unfortunately, if we have to change to CDs we will have to acquire expensive equipment for the changeover, but if more people play CDs than tapes these days we will have to seriously consider the matter. Phone: 01992-588145

## 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 944 2317 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)”

## Shop Window

HSB ex-demo: Telesensory Aladdin – Rainbow colour CCTV. Sale £400 or best offer.

Penguin Magnalink: New 2002. Cost: £1,400 Sale £450. Contact Maurice Jackson 01442-824000.

Foci Strix portable electronic magnifier: 1 year old. Open to offers Contact: Ann Chapman on 07707-928284.

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

Braille Oxford English Dictionary Comes in 16 volumes. Contact Chris Lewis on 01279-657558.

Don't forget our Diaries £5, Pocket Diaries £4 and Calendars £3.50.

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### Crocheted baby shawls

One of our volunteers, Eve Parker, has crocheted baby shawls for the Society to help raise funds. The shawls are beautifully made and approx. 3 foot square each. We have three of them; two white and one white with blue trim. Eve has suggested asking £8.99 each for them and this seems good value to us! So if you have a baby in the family and would like to acquire one of these unique garments, please call us at the office.

## **Pioneering treatment for Dry Macular Degeneration**

Mrs. Doreen Cox of Welwyn Garden City, saw an article in the Daily Mail newspaper about a pioneering treatment for Dry Macular Degeneration at Moorfields Hospital. Mrs. Cox had been registered blind for 6 years and attended Moorfields on a regular basis.

Mrs. Cox wrote to Moorfields asking about the treatment and offering herself as a 'guinea pig' for their clinical trials. This led to an appointment with Mr. Wilkins, the Consultant at Moorfields, which she had to pay for, but then she had the good news that she had been accepted for the first operation of this kind in the country.

Although Mrs. Cox had to wait a year for her free operation, when it took place it only lasted 40 minutes under local anaesthetic.

The operation, performed by Mr. Wilkins, involved having a tiny telescope attached to a lens implant inserted into the eye affected by dry macular degeneration.

The operation has been a great success for Mrs. Cox. Where before she could only see a blur, now she can see faces, read, albeit slowly one letter at a time, but her distance vision is greatly improved and she can see right to the end of her garden!

We would like to thank Mrs. Cox for sharing her experience with us. While we have to remember the operation is still at the clinical trial stage, its success for her gives hope to others in the future.

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## **Eccentric Viewing**

“In conditions such as Age Related Macular Degeneration, there is a breakdown of the cells in the macular region of the retina with a subsequent loss of central sharp detail vision. Unfortunately, the macula lies on the principal axis of the eye and so, whenever an object is viewed, the brain will align the axis so that the image will fall onto the poorly functioning macula. Eccentric Viewing techniques encourage the sufferer to experiment with conscious control over which part of the visual field they will 'see' and how to use the off axis vision to view the desired object. To utilise the off axis vision the brain needs to be 'fooled' into directing the principal axis of the eye away from the object to be seen but in

such a direction that the image of the target object falls onto a part of the retina that is still functioning". (Colloptics)

Frances Jones, one of our volunteers, has gone on a course to learn how to help people use Eccentric Viewing on a daily basis. The method is not simple nor suitable for everyone but has improved many people's chances of reading material they thought they would not be able to see again.

Frances is hoping to contact people who are interested in this new method and feel they would like to make the effort to learn a new way of looking at things. If you would like to learn more about it please contact Frances on the office number 01992-588145 and we will pass your message on to her so she can contact you.

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### **Retinitis Pigmentosa**

For those of you with RP and access to a computer the following Internet Support Groups may be helpful:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/retinitispigmentosa>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RP-Friends/>

### **St. Dunstan's Charity for Ex-Servicemen and Women**

St. Dunstan's is a national charity, founded in 1915. Its objective is to provide training, rehabilitation and lifelong after-care for ex-Service men and women who have lost their sight and to help them to overcome the difficulties they experience related to their loss of sight.

There are two conditions that must be fulfilled to be eligible for their help:

Service in the Armed Forces: All applicants must have served in the UK armed forces, or Polish forces under British command, or the Merchant Navy during WW2.

#### Ophthalmic Criteria:

St. Dunstan's has its own criteria. As a guide this means having a visual acuity in both eyes of roughly halfway between being able to count fingers at arm's length and read the largest line on an eye chart.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of their services they can be contacted at 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD or on Tel: 0800-389-7979 Fax: 020-7262-6199 or email: [admissions@st-dunstans.org.uk](mailto:admissions@st-dunstans.org.uk)

## “Soccer Sight”

Soccer Sight is an RNIB initiative to bring quality football commentary to blind and partially sighted people at every professional football club in the UK. Initially the project was set up with a national competition to find quality commentators to deliver the service at selected football clubs. The successful entrants were trained alongside professional BBC broadcasters and presenters. These training sessions now run on a regular basis across the country to provide volunteer commentators at all the Soccer Sight clubs.

New radio transmission equipment and headsets have been installed at 18 clubs across the country including Watford. Watford was already providing commentary for their visually impaired supporters by plug in headphones in the East Stand. This system was in place for over 50 years at Watford as part of the Watford Hospital radio broadcast. By having radio headsets for the fans this means they are no longer limited to just one area of the ground.

If you are a football fan and are interested in learning more about the RNIB project contact [eleonor.ellison@rnib.org.uk](mailto:eleonor.ellison@rnib.org.uk) or phone 01273-262221.

## Three Rivers District

Three Rivers District Council are bringing out their newspaper “The Three Rivers Times” in large print, audio and Braille. For a copy of this paper contact Kevin Snow on 01923-727255, minicom 01923-727303 email [kevin.snow@threerivers.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.snow@threerivers.gov.uk) or [www.threerivers.gov.uk/Default.aspx/Web/ThreeRiversTimes1](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/Default.aspx/Web/ThreeRiversTimes1)

The Council has also produced a “Safety Advice for the Elderly” magazine full of useful contacts and advice to help keep safe. This is available in large print, audio and CD. If you would like a copy of this please contact Phillipa Scott on 01923-727356 or email

[phillipa.scott@threerivers.gov.uk](mailto:phillipa.scott@threerivers.gov.uk)

### Insight Radio:

RNIB programmes for the visually impaired.

Currently Insight Radio can only be listened to on Digital Radio, the Internet or Sky. Insight can be listened to on Sky channel 0188; Freesat channel 777 or on [www.insightradio.co.uk](http://www.insightradio.co.uk).

Run by the RNIB, the programmes cover all the issues of interest to visually impaired people.

## Congratulations!

The Society was pleased to receive the following letter from Martin Miles and would like to add our congratulations to those of the family.

“Hi there, I’ve got a bit of news that I thought that you might like to put in SightLine. My son, Daniel Miles, lives in Stevenage and is totally blind and has had a lot of dealings with the Society over the past few years.

Daniel has just completed a three year Bachelor of Arts course at Middlesex University studying Creative Writing & Media. He graduated on 10 July with a First Class Honours degree. This was a great achievement, especially as Daniel had to travel to Oakwood near Cockfosters two or three times every week for lectures and had to cope with lots of technical problems with his laptop and special equipment along the way.

My wife and I and the whole of the family are very proud of him and we think that this deserves a mention in SightLine. It proves that with effort and determination in the world of education, a blind person can be the equal of somebody who is sighted. Well done Daniel, a brilliant achievement”.



## **Christmas Greetings and A Happy New Year to all our readers.**

The Society will be closed from the 24<sup>th</sup> of December until 5<sup>th</sup> January giving all the staff a well earned rest. We will return to work on the 5<sup>th</sup>, bright eyed and bushy tailed ready for the challenge of the new year!



**Contacting HSB**

**Address:**

**Leahoe House, County Hall,  
Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DZ**

**Sightline: 01992-588145**

**email: [hertsblind@keme.co.uk](mailto:hertsblind@keme.co.uk)**

**website: [www.hertsblind.com](http://www.hertsblind.com)**

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