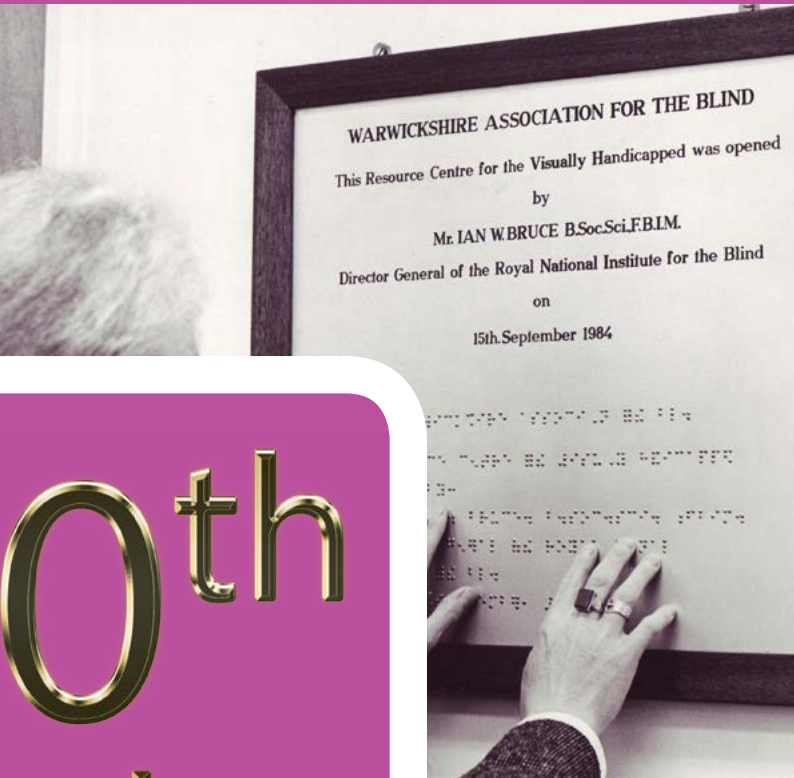


Warwickshire Vision

Spring 2021



Celebrating 110 years of supporting blind and partially-sighted people across Warwickshire.



110th
Birthday
Edition



Supporting people living with sight loss since 1911

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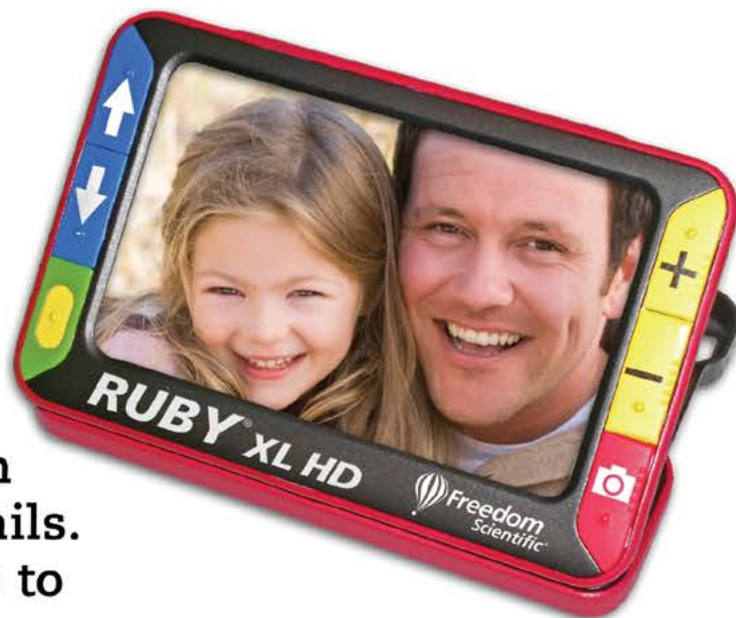
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Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are expressed to Rosalie Visick, Vicky Sartain and all contributors to the magazine. We also thank Kenilworth Talking News Association for producing the digital audio version of Warwickshire Vision.

Editorial

by Phil Arkell - CEO

In June, we celebrate our 110th Birthday! Over the decades, we are proud to have supported tens of thousands of people in so many different ways – we have come a long way since Mrs Simpson cycled across the county making home visits and teaching Braille but I think none of us would have thought that we would spend an entire year delivering services through the internet and telephone with almost no face-to-face contact.

As we move forwards we are pleased to say that not only are we expanding our support centre network, with a grant from the Lottery, but thanks to a very generous legacy gift, we will also be increasing the number of hours we dedicate to people newly diagnosed with sight loss at the eye clinics. These, and many more initiatives are the result of our strategy review of last year which focused upon reaching more people living with sight loss across the county and delivering a seamless holistic service from the point of diagnosis, through VI rehabilitation to our social clubs and activities.

As part of the celebration, we are inviting you to take on the '110 challenge' during June. That may be, for those who enjoy exercise, to do a sponsored walk, cycle or swim



of 110 miles (or whatever you can manage) or you could host an event, create something for sale or make a donation. What is important is that we have some fun and raise the profile of WVS so that more people can benefit from our support.

Speaking of challenges, David Adams (one of our Trustees) and his guide dog Jimbo, have developed the Everest Challenge. They will climb Marston Hill 197 times over the coming months - the equivalent height of Everest. WVS is one of the three beneficiary charities so, if you are able, please give generously via the link on our website

It has been a long hard year for many of us. Here's hoping that we have a joyous summer. We look forward to meeting you all again soon.

News Round-Up

WVS Celebrates 110 Years!

by Louise Jellley

110th Birthday Edition

On June 2nd 2021 Warwickshire Vision Support will celebrate its 110th birthday. The charity has survived two world wars, multiple conflicts and four influenza pandemics, including COVID 19!

As WVS has evolved, so has science, technology and engineering.

1927 saw the first vaccine for tuberculosis being created, in 1936 the first programmable computer was invented, 1954 was the year of the first organ transplant and 1969 was memorable for the first human stepping foot on the moon.

In 1983 the first laser eye surgery was carried out for vision correction. Now some 38 years later, gene therapy and stem cell treatments are being explored.

Today, Warwickshire Vision Support is a beacon of hope for anyone who is blind or visually impaired in Warwickshire. We currently reach out to over 3000 people across the county and regularly engage with over 500 on a monthly basis.

As we celebrate our birthday this year, we will all be looking forward to the re-opening of our face-to-face services including our support centres, social clubs, befriending services and hospital advice desks. In addition, we have the planned expansion of 7 new support centres across Warwickshire, demonstrating our commitment to reaching even more people in need across the whole county.

A legacy donation left to us in 2019 will enable us to future-proof our services and provide a strong sustainable charity for many more years to come.

The next couple of pages provide a snap shot of our history over the decades, and a section for details of how you can celebrate with us, raise some money and have some fun.

110 Years of WVS



1911 Opening Re-enactment, 2011



Home Workers Demo, 1956

1911-1921

Warwickshire Association for the Blind (WAB) was formed at a meeting of the Midland Counties Union for the Blind held at Leamington Town Hall on 2nd June 1911. By 1917, there were 92 blind men, 126 blind women and 9 blind children living in Warwickshire. In 1918 WAB became registered in the Approved Societies and Agencies for the Blind.

1921-1931

On 1st September 1925 Miss Simpson, WAB's first home teacher, was appointed. She travelled around Warwickshire by bicycle and train, carrying out 635 visits in her first 6 months. As of 1929 she was doing 100 visits per month. In addition, she taught Braille, Music and Raffia.

1931-1941

WAB entered an agreement with a shop in Warwick Street, Leamington, for the sale of articles made by blind home workers. In 1940-41, approximately 100 blind evacuees passed through the hands of the

Association, of whom 60 remained in the area.

1941-1951

By the war's end, 624 people were registered blind with 102 of them being in employment. WAB ran social centres in Leamington, Rugby, Shirley, Sutton Coldfield and Tamworth.

1951-1961

In 1953, WAB owned 26 Talking Book machines for loan across the county. The 1950s saw the explosion of holiday camps and WAB started to provide holidays for VIPs. By 1958, coaches ran at fortnightly intervals, and during 1960, 179 blind and 92 sighted people were taken by coach to Burnham-on-Sea or Bournemouth at a cost of £11.18s.

1961-1971

WAB's constitution was extended to also include activities for the partially sighted. In 1970 the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was passed and the publicity led to an increase in



The Queen Mother at WAB, 1988



Annual General Meeting, 2019

the number of people on the Register of the Blind to 1,115.

1971-1981

Major changes resulted from the loss of Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and Meriden in 1974 after changes to the administrative county of Warwickshire. In 1978, WAB became independent of the County Council. By 1980 there were 5 branches and 5 local Talking Newspapers.

1981-1991

WAB acquired its own Resource Centre in Puckering's Lane, Warwick in 1983 with an official opening by the Queen Mother in 1988. Staff numbers increased to seven and in 1985 there was a Voluntary Help Organiser, looking after 550 Volunteers.

1991-2001

Social Services delegated the Register for Blind and Partially Sighted People to WAB and by 1995 2,525 people were registered. Warwickshire Talking Book Service was set up in 1993, and by 2000 it had 454 users. New clubs were also set up in both Leamington and Rugby.

2001-2011

After financial difficulties, the office moved to new rented premises in Leamington Spa. Warwickshire Talking Book Service closed in 2010 and the service was taken over by De Montfort Talking Books until March 2019. A weekly Drop-in Centre (Vision Support Centre) was opened in Nuneaton in 2005 and by 2010 there were also Drop-in Centres in Rugby, Stratford, Leamington and Atherstone.

2011-2021

In 2014, WAB changed its operating name to Warwickshire Vision Support. We now have 16 members of staff (with plans to increase to 20), and provide services to over 3000 blind and partially sighted people with the amazing support of over 250 volunteers. Services today include: Telephone and Home Befriending, weekly Support Centres, IT Training, Equipment Demonstrations, Social Clubs, Hospital Advice Desks run by trained Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, Advocacy Support, Financial Wellbeing Support, and a host of remote and virtual services.

110 Year Celebration

by Louise Jelley

This year, Warwickshire Vision Support is 110 years old! We might not look it, as I am sure you will agree, but our services and history stretch back 110 years in Warwickshire. To mark this amazing birthday, we will be running a month of celebrations and are encouraging you all to get involved.

June 2021 will be the main month of focus of our celebrations. We have prepared a Fundraising and Activity Pack, which gives ideas about how you can support us to raise some funds whilst having fun. Some of the suggestions include: Walking 110 miles, completing 110,000 steps, 110 press ups, and 110 rows of knitting which could turn into a Dr Who scarf! Bake sales, coffee mornings, book sales, the ideas are endless.

The main thing is to have some fun, spread some joy, and maybe

raise some funds and awareness of Warwickshire Vision Support. We have launched an online virtual fundraiser in support of our 110th birthday and you can get involved, leave a message of support and a donation by connecting via this link visufund.com/warwickshire-vision-supports-110th-birthday-party

We would like to include photographs of our birthday celebrations in our summer edition. If you decide to support us and organise a fundraiser, please share with us your photographs and videos, and send them to us at enquiries@warwickshire.vision



Screenshot of the 110 Year Fundraiser Webpage

WVS Internal Staff Updates



We would like to wish former Assistant Fundraiser and Assistant Administration Officer Jemma Davoudian, the best of luck as she

departs for her new role.

Jemma began her time at WVS on 3rd June 2019. She started as an administration officer whilst attaining her master's degree in educational psychology, then later took on an additional fundraising role.

Now working at the charity Coventry and Warwickshire Mind, Jemma can successfully utilise her master's degree while continuing to support the local community.



We would also like to welcome Sam Davis as our new Marketing and Communications Officer.

The Marketing and Communications officer is a new role at WVS, and we hope to use this role as a means to raise our profile to reach more people living with sight loss and to develop more local community support for our activities.

Sam currently resides locally in Kenilworth, and has a degree in Advertising and Digital Marketing and holds a keen interest in music production, history and football.

Sad Farewell

We are very sorry to have to report that Sheila Venville, one of our board trustees, passed away on Friday 22nd January.

Sheila was a valued member of Warwickshire Vision Support and will be sadly missed by her friends and colleagues.

The staff, trustees, volunteers and service users at WVS offer our deepest condolences to her family.



Vision Support Centres - Fit for the future!

by Louise Jelley



As you will all be aware, our Vision Support Centres across the county have been closed since March 2020 when we were forced to suspend all face-to-face services.

During that time, we have focused on providing remote and virtual services and have maintained contact with so many of you through our telephone befriending service, weekly telephone support centres, remote IT support and video support centres. Now, with over 23 million people having been vaccinated against COVID-19, we feel there is some light approaching at the end of the tunnel.

As part of the service delivery review, which was carried out in 2020, we consulted many service users, volunteers and staff about the structure and purpose of the Vision Support Centres. Having taken into

consideration all of the feedback, we are pleased to be able to announce that we are gearing up to re-open our existing support centres, and launch seven new ones!

Our existing weekly support centres will continue in Leamington Spa, Stratford-upon-Avon, Rugby and Nuneaton, but we will be introducing seven new monthly centres in Kenilworth, Bedworth, Coleshill, Atherstone, Southam, Alcester and Shipston-on-Stour.

These regular new monthly centres will connect us to those living in more remote locations. We intend to make available advice, guidance and support, learning activities, presentations, equipment demonstrations and IT training at all of our centres.

We are currently in the process of scoping potential new venues, and whilst we know that we have to wait until the government guidance permits us to re-open, we know that you will be excited to hear this news.

Our Vision Support Centre Service across the county will be funded by two significant grants. We have received a commitment of three years funding for the Support Centre project from the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. Additionally, we have received twelve months funding from Severn Trent Community Fund to provide activity and learning opportunities in the centres run by our Assistant Vision Support Officers and volunteers.

We need new and existing volunteers to support us with this exciting and far reaching project. If you feel able to donate a couple of hours either weekly or once a month in support of one of the venues then

we would love to hear from you. We would like volunteers to be more involved with the activities at the centres, to support with equipment demonstrations and to run and supervise groups. We will need additional IT volunteers to join the IT Training Team.

Whilst we will be continually sharing volunteering opportunities on social media, we would really welcome all of our readers to help promote these opportunities to their network of families and friends.

As soon as we have a date for re-opening, we will communicate this to you.

Find out online first

Make sure you follow Warwickshire Vision Support on social media to be the first to find out about any new updates, opportunities or services available.

Facebook: Warwickshire Vision Support Charity

Twitter: @warksvissupport

Instagram: @warksvissupport

Linkedin: Warwickshire Vision Support

Features

Moving Upwards



Vicky Lewis,
Vision Support Officer

As part of her own professional growth, and WVS's ongoing development, we have sponsored Vision Support Officer Vicky Lewis to undertake a course that will enable her to become a fully qualified Rehabilitation Officer.

Since joining us in 2016, Vicky has held many roles including: Assistant Rehab Officer, Assistant IT trainer, My Sight Coordinator and her current role as a VSO.

Despite her excellent performance as a Vision Support Officer, Vicky had always aspired to eventually become a Rehabilitation Officer. So once the opportunity arose to take a course that would allow her to become fully-qualified, she pushed to have herself

entered at a nearby university as a sponsored student.

Now sponsored by Warwickshire Vision Support, Vicky is part way through her 2-year course to achieve her Rehabilitation Work degree at Birmingham City University.

The course will teach Vicky how to create individual training programs based on each person's needs and desires, and also with practical methods on how to solve problems and respond to each person's unique and complex situation.

Once Vicky has completed her degree she hopes to eventually move from her role as a Vision Support Officer and join the Rehabilitation Team to have a more hands-on opportunity to support the blind and partially sighted community living across Warwickshire.

The rehabilitation course is open to everyone, including those with visual impairments. For more information visit:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/courses/
rehabilitation-work-visual-
impairment-fdsc-2021-22](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/courses/rehabilitation-work-visual-impairment-fdsc-2021-22)

'Feeling' Good



Mel Pritchard,
Board of Trustees Member

Mel Pritchard, a member of our Board of Trustees, has been spending time working with the Brailist's Foundation to deliver a series of braille classes online.

Mel, who was born with a severe visual impairment, has been using braille all of her life. Pre COVID-19, Mel had been teaching students braille in 1-to-1 classes and small groups for over 20 years.

When Coronavirus hit the world and took us all into lockdown, Mel was no longer able to deliver her braille courses, something that remains a crucial element of literacy and independence for many visually impaired people worldwide.

During lockdown, Mel was approached by the Brailist's Foundation to start delivering braille for beginners' sessions online to visually impaired people.

Due to the physical nature of reading braille and the level of detail and support needed to teach it, the thought of delivering lessons on a virtual platform would be considered too laborious and too challenging a task by many.

Mel, however, is no stranger to using technology. When Mel initially joined WVS in 2013, she then went on to set up the Warwickshire Vision Support IT project which has since helped many blind and visually impaired people across the county.

Mel's passion for both braille and IT made her the perfect candidate for the job and she has been successfully delivering the online braille course for a number of weeks now.

When asked about the online braille course, Mel responded "It's been really different, braille is usually very 1-to-1 and requires a lot of hands-on work." "That being said..." she continued, "This course has been going incredibly well and I'm very thankful to be able to continue to teach braille to those who need it during this lockdown period."



Catching Up With An Olympic Champion

Noel Thatcher MBE, is a visually impaired Paralympic runner, who represented the United Kingdom at six Paralympic Games between 1984 and 2004, setting two world records and collecting a total of five gold medals. Speaking with Sam Davis, WVS' marketing officer, Noel reflects on his career and gives advice as a visually impaired runner.

Noel, what was it that inspired your passion for running?

My passion for running developed at Exhall Grange School in Coventry where I studied from age 10 to 18. We had to run three times a week,

and despite not enjoying it initially, I grew to love the freedom, friendships and competition. At one point I and three other visually impaired boys from the school won the local cross-country championship, which was a highlight of my running career.

What was your training regime like?

My training varied, but at my best I would run twice a day for a total of between 90 and 100 miles per week, plus work in the gym. It was pretty challenging balancing this with studying and work, but there are no easy routes to the top of the mountain.

Winning 5 gold medals and setting 2 world records is a phenomenal feat. How did it feel reaching those achievements?

Winning gold medals is a privilege and a testament to the power of teamwork. It's amazing to share those moments with teammates and friends. I also think that I have a responsibility to use my achievements to encourage other blind and visually impaired people.

You received an MBE for your achievements; how important was that recognition for you?

Receiving an MBE, and then last year receiving a commendation from the Japanese Foreign Minister was a huge honour for my family. As was recognition for everyone from my school teachers to my coaches and teammates as well as the wider visually impaired community.

Did you come across any challenges as someone who is visually impaired breaking into the world of sport?

I was really lucky to work with world class coaches and guide runners who never saw my sight loss as a barrier to my becoming a good runner. I always used to think that someone telling you that you can't do something was the best reason to go out and do it! You need to have self-belief.

Do you think enough is being done currently for visually impaired people in sport?

Opportunities for visually impaired people to take part in sport are much better than they used to be. Organisations such as British Blind Sport and Metro do great work.

What advice can you give to visually impaired people who want to take up running but don't know where to start?

I would advise people to contact their local parkrun team. Parkrun is open to all skill levels and has always provided a safe, welcoming and supportive community for visually impaired people and it's usually easy to find guides. It's natural to feel nervous when you start running, which is why it's good to get involved in something like parkrun where everyone is welcome and there is lots of support from the community.

What impact do you think getting involved in sport can have for the visually impaired community?

Lockdown has had a huge negative impact on our mental and physical wellbeing and it has never been more important to get out safely and move. There are more challenges for visually impaired people, so it's really important that we support and encourage each other. We are definitely stronger together.

Technology Talk With Robin



Thanks for making the time for us Robin, I suppose it would be best to start with what AbilityNet is and why it was founded.

Thank you. AbilityNet was founded in 1996 as a disability and technology charity. It's designed to help people with disabilities and impairments with technological solutions to help people perform at their best; ranging from help with specialist, high-tech setups to simpler tips such as altering the settings on mobiles, tablets and computers.

Have you noticed any changes in the general attitude towards digital inclusion and accessibility today, in comparison to when AbilityNet first started?

People's approach to disability has definitely improved after the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act, but it has still been a slow and gradual journey ever since. What I have noticed though, is in the past 10 years, organisations have become a lot more receptive to making their content accessible to everyone. They are no longer asking "why should we do this?" but rather "how can we do this?". There are lots of good reasons for organisations to make their content and products inclusive, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because by doing so they open up their services to a

Earlier in the year, WVS marketing officer, Sam Davis, met with Robin Christopherson MBE, in an online meeting for a discussion about inclusive technology.

Local to Warwickshire, Robin is blind and works as the Head of Digital inclusion at AbilityNet. Robin is a huge advocate for making technology more inclusive and accessible to everyone. In addition, Robin is also a keen technology enthusiast and hosts several podcasts.

much wider market. Also, by making their products, content and services more usable for the disabled, they in-turn become easier to use for the non-disabled too. For example, clearer font and text size can make information more digestible and easier to read for both visually impaired and non-visually impaired people. Another example is a video with subtitles for the hearing impaired can also be useful for those who aren't in a position to be able to listen to the sound. It's great to see so many organisations now coming together and understanding and adopting this approach.

You were awarded an MBE for your services to digital inclusion. What was the experience of going to Buckingham Palace like and what did that mean for you?

I was amazed. It was an honour to be recognised and awarded the MBE, especially as sometimes it can feel like I'm just being paid to get to play with technology! One thing that stood out to me was that Prince William remembered my name and asked me about AbilityNet. There were 78 people being honoured that day and Prince William remembered the name and something about each and every one without any form of notes or prompts.

What technology do you use to help you on a daily basis?

I used to have to carry around a backpack of different equipment, such as a specialised note taker, a barcode scanner, a talking GPS, a talking mp3 player and loads of other different devices. Now, due to modern technology, if I'm out on a trip to London, all I need to take is my phone. I also have a pair of BOSE sunglasses that allow me to play audio directly into my ears while still allowing me to keep my ears open to listen out for sounds.

Is there any particular piece of technology that our readers may not know of that you would recommend?

I think the readers will know about this one but it is definitely underappreciated, and that is the Amazon Echo (Alexa). The Echo is great for people who are not particularly confident with tech that want to stay connected. Instead of spending time looking things up on my phone or computer, I now just ask Alexa. She also helps me stay organised – I can ask her to read my emails, what my appointments are that day or when my next blood donation is. There are so many opportunities to stay connected, stay entertained and stay up to date without ever having to touch a smartphone. I do a couple of different podcasts with the echo and we

haven't even scratched the surface of what you can do with it.

What inspired you to start your podcasts?

The daily 'Dot to Dot' podcast was born out of my love for the Amazon Echo, I've got one set up in every room! You can listen to it by simply asking Alexa to "Play the Dot to Dot podcast" or by searching in your favourite podcast app. At the time of talking, we're currently up to episode 1460. I've also recently started a longer podcast with the amazing Shaun Preece called 'The Echo Show' which is also unsurprisingly all about Alexa. I also co-host the RNIB 'tech talk' podcast every week and yet another show called 'Maccessibility', where we talk fortnightly about mostly Apple related tech.

Where do you go for your new information on technology?

I mainly get it from two sources. The first one is RSS (Really Simple Syndication). RSS is a way of subscribing to news sources. With an RSS reader (and the one I use is on the iPhone called 'LIRE'), you can easily subscribe to news sources, like The Guardian, and the RSS checks the feeds and downloads new articles that you haven't read yet. Other than that, it's through podcasts, I'm a huge podcast fan. There's a great podcast called 'Double Tap Canada' and there's also 'Talking Tech', and of course 'AppleVis'.

What technology that doesn't exist yet would you like to see implemented in the near future?

I'm looking forward to really powerful AI (Artificial Intelligence). We're already seeing this being built in to apps such as LIDAR in the iPhone 12 Pro, something that you can point your camera at and it gives you information. I'm looking forward to discreet, wearable tech that analyses your surroundings that give you sparing yet concise information. I want something that won't bombard me with information but will still be able to recognise significant things such as an important notice on a board or roadworks. I think that sort of thing is going to come very soon and I'm looking forward to taking advantage of it when it does!

What advice would you give to a visually impaired person who wants to start using technology more in their daily lives, but isn't sure where to begin?

I would start with an easy entry level iPhone. There are loads of resources available that can help you get familiar with it. If you're really new to technology I'd recommend an Echo as it keeps getting smarter all the time. But the number one tip is to talk to somebody first to find out what your needs are and what level of support you want. For support you can always call WVS, the RNIB, or call us at AbilityNet on 08000 487642.

Glaucoma Awareness

by Louise Jelley

To help spread awareness of Glaucoma, people across the world wore green ribbons from the 7th-13th of March in recognition of World Glaucoma Week.

Glaucoma is when the optic nerve, which connects the eye to the brain becomes damaged, typically caused by fluid building up in the front part of the eye, which increases pressure inside the eye.

Glaucoma is one of the more prevalent eye conditions. It affects one in two hundred people at the age of forty and one in eight people at the age of eighty. It is also one of the most common causes of irreversible blindness.

There are currently 78 million people living with Glaucoma across the globe, with that number expected to increase to 111.8 million by 2040. In Warwickshire, we currently have 294 people on our database who have Glaucoma. This equates to 10% of the people we currently support. 221 of them are registered as either blind or partially sighted, the remainder are currently unregistered.

The actual number of people with Glaucoma in Warwickshire is a lot higher, but the exact figure is unknown, this is due to the fact that many people are unaware they have

the condition.

Glaucoma gives very little warning symptoms until it is in its advanced stages. Regular eye examinations at an opticians can assist in detection, and ultimately referral to a hospital eye clinic for treatment.

According to the NHS, the main symptoms include:

- intense eye pain.
- nausea and vomiting.
- a red eye.
- a headache.
- tenderness around the eyes.
- seeing rings around lights.
- blurred vision

You are entitled to a free NHS eye test if you have been advised by an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) that you're at risk of Glaucoma. You can also access a free eye test if you are over 40 and your mother, father, sibling or child has also been diagnosed.

Glaucoma is a serious condition that can be difficult to manage without the right help. If you need support, please call Warwickshire Vision Support on 01926 411331 or email us at: enquiries@warwickshire.vision





Amar Latif - MasterChef

by Vicky Sartain

Entrepreneur and TV presenter, Amar Latif, gained stardom when he landed a place on last year's Celebrity MasterChef - and became the show's first blind contestant.

Amar suffers from a genetic condition called 'Retinitis Pigmentosa' which reduced his vision by 95% while he was a teenager, but the disorder did not prevent him from establishing a career in television in 2005.

MasterChef producers had hoped to entice Amar onto the show once before, but he told them he wasn't interested as he truly couldn't cook. His change of heart came when programme makers assured Amar he'd be well supported throughout the series, and the rest is history.

Amar undertook some serious preparation before filming began: visiting restaurants for tips and advice, cooking whenever he got the chance, and devising a system that helped him remember and locate kitchen items on the MasterChef set, to save precious time - those who watch the show will know that every second counts!

Readers of this magazine will be familiar with its recipe page, which is kindly written by one of our rehab workers - their wholesome and easy meal suggestions jump off the page of each issue. However, despite the simplicity of these recipes, it is fair to say that not everyone feels confident about even the most basic food preparation.

Amar had similar issues, citing a general lack of information available to help blind people develop their culinary skills. His appearance on Celebrity MasterChef highlighted some of these challenges, and yet he overcame them, sautéing his way to the semi-finals, thanks to some inspired dishes.

Outside the kitchen, Amar is a great fan of travel, and in 2004 founded a holiday company with a difference. Traveleyes provides small-group trips for blind and partially sighted adventurers, instilling a sense of freedom to visually-impaired

travellers who experience their dream location through the eyes of trained sighted companions. Trips are worldwide, and will be back up and running post-COVID as soon as possible.

Amar's adventure into the world of cookery is testament to his optimism and self-belief - ingredients we should all have in stock.

For more information, visit Amar's website: www.amarlatif.com

Want To Be On TV?

To ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to be considered, we have been contacted by the BBC and TV production company Hat Trick to inform our readers that there is an opportunity to take part in the BBC Two quiz show Mastermind.

Could you be the winner of the TV show Mastermind's coveted glass bowl?

If you would like to put your specialist subject and general knowledge skills to the test in the iconic black chair then email:

mastermind@hth.hattrick.com to ask for an application form.

If Mastermind isn't for you, there are plenty of opportunities available online for you to apply to take part in various TV shows.

You can follow live updates for BBC casting calls on Twitter by following "@BBC_Casting".

Additionally, you can find out which Channel 4 shows are looking for guests at:

www.channel4.com/4viewers/take-part

Visually impaired people are under-represented on television, and we will always do our best to share any opportunities that may arise.

Spotlight on Equipment

iPhone 12 Pro LiDAR

by Ruth Okey

A LiDAR scanner has been added to the iPhone 12 Pro camera lenses and it has wonderful implications for the visually impaired community.

LiDAR stands for light detection and ranging and it is a 3-dimensional mapping technology similar to radar and sonar. It is used in self-driving cars, factory floor robots and robot vacuum cleaners to navigate the world around them by sending out laser beams to generate a map.

Its initial function was to improve augmented reality (AR) where digital data is overlaid onto real images (e.g. a phone app that allows you to visualise what different colour wall paint would look like in your house), but has since been adapted to help serve the visually impaired community.

Lucy Edwards, a blind reporter for the BBC, took to the high street with an iPhone 12 Pro to investigate how effective it truly is as part of the BBC Click program.

Using LiDAR, Lucy was able to identify things nearby with impressive detail, such as spotting she was near a white building with a red and white sign on it and was

even able to determine what was in a shop window.

In her investigation Lucy described the tool as “amazingly accurate” and in her review, Lucy confessed “Honestly I think knowing that people are around me freaks me out a little bit because I’m really not used to it, but I’m really excited that I can be in control again.”

She added “What really surprised me was the people proximity alerts. The smart phone counts down as people get closer. I think this is going to be useful after the pandemic for tackling things like queues”.

An iPhone 12 Pro costs from £999 so it is an expensive option. With all new features they are initially added to the top of the line models, but over time they will be included into the rest of the product line.



For other IT articles, visit our website and look under “how we can help” and “IT Training”



IT bits & bytes

by Ruth Okey



What 3 Words

This mobile phone application divides each part of the earth into 3m squares and gives them their own unique 3 word identification code. The 3 words can be entered into the what3words app on your smart phone and linked into your favourite navigation app to help you reach an exact location. Your 3 word location can also be given to emergency services or friends to find you. Some hospitals and entertainment venues are using what3words to guide disabled people to specific entrances or locations.



Freeview Play Accessible TV Guide

A new Accessible TV guide is available on Channel 555 on the majority of Freeview Play devices. Your TV will need to be connected to the internet and you may need to retune your device. For further information or to check the compatible devices list search online for "Freeview Accessible TV guide"

BBO Visual Assistant



A new plugin for Google Chrome is now available that assists visually impaired users to

play Bridge on the BBO (Bridge Base Online) website by reading text, cards, bids, score etc. under the mouse cursor; describing actions such as clicking on a bid or a card to play; describing actions by other players such as bids, played cards, alerts and claims.

RealSAM Smart Speaker Solution



From the suppliers of the In Your Pocket mobile phone, this is a dedicated hub for blind and visually impaired people that

offers subscribers access to books, newspapers, podcasts, radio stations and information from sight loss charities. Subscribers will be able to use their existing Google home from February and Alexa devices by the summer to access the content. It costs an annual subscription of £9.95 for existing RealSAM customers, and £19.90 for new customers.

Advice and Guidance

Public Transport & Social Distancing

by Jane Thorn



As lockdown restrictions ease, now is a good time to go over the guidelines on keeping safe on public transport.

After being locked up for so long, a lot of people are not feeling confident with what to do - and the rules and guidelines change so frequently it's difficult to keep up!

You may not have been on public transport for a whole year; I know some of you have not been out at all. Here are some guidelines and measures you can take to help ensure that you travel safely and securely when using public transport:

- Enhanced cleaning
- Limiting the number of seats available by cordoning off some seats so that social distancing guidelines can be followed. Some additional services are added at busy times for some transport
- Plan your journey, allow extra time and travel at quieter times if you can
- Downloadable apps. Stagecoach Bus App have a busy bus indicator in their live map view
- Use contactless payment where possible
- Always wear a face covering (exemptions apply for some passengers). A face visor or shield may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one. This is because face visors or shields do not adequately cover the nose and mouth.
- Regularly wash or sanitise your hands, maintain social distancing of 2 metres (if you can't, keep to 1 metre), and avoid facing other passengers where possible

Please Give Me Space



Please give me space.

The 'Please Give Me Space' initiative is a concept developed by Hidden Disabilities Sunflower in collaboration with The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and the UK Government's Cabinet Office.

If you find it difficult to socially distance, you can display their emblem when you go out, to signal to others around you that they need to pay attention and give you space.

The yellow circle with a person in the centre has two arrows pointing out either side to indicate space; 'Please give me space'.

You can download this image to use in various different formats such as on image cards, badges and screensavers all for free on the 'Please Give Me Space' website at pleasegivemespace.uk/shop/free.

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Supersaver: Microwaves

by Kate Perkins



Although I am covering many roles at the moment during lockdown, my main focus is still that of Supersaver and finding ways to assist users of our services, be it helping to apply for a TV licence refund, a blue badge request or applying for a grant for an essential item within the home to help with independent living.

During one of our virtual support centre meetings last year, the benefits of the talking microwave were discussed and how you couldn't be without it once you had one. So, when Brendan in Alcester, a gentleman who is severely sight impaired and lives alone, mentioned he was struggling with a recently purchased standard microwave, I was able to tell him the virtues of having a talking one.

The microwave has been a huge success for Brendan. After receiving a donated microwave at the end of last year, Brendan has now cancelled his subscription to a meals on wheels service because the new microwave allows him to cook for himself. He no longer has to choose from a pre-set menu but can cook whatever he fancies each day, his favourite menu being lamb steak, vegetables and potatoes!

Another user of our services in a similar position, Richard, was struggling to cook imaginatively for himself. As Richard was eligible for a grant from the RNIB I was able to make a successful application on



Richard with his new talking microwave

his behalf and he had a new talking microwave delivered at the beginning of January this year.

He told me how simple it has been to use, with the different tactile dots identifying the timer buttons and how the voiceover talks you through each step of the food preparation i.e. whether the door is open or closed and it confirms functions selected and cooking times; time remaining is spoken by pressing a button as well as requests to stir or turn food during cooking and to leave food to stand after cooking. He also is enjoying being able to cook a range of food from porridge for breakfast to a milky coffee mid-morning and a meal of his choice in the evening. Like Brendan, he also says he couldn't be without one now.

The talking microwave retails around £185 (inc VAT) which is more than a standard microwave but from the feedback it is definitely worth every penny!

Access To Work

by Christine Huber

Access To Work is a publicly funded employment support grant scheme that can help people with a disability or long-term health condition start a new job or help retain existing employment. The scheme is also available to the self-employed who are registered with HMRC. The role must be a paid position and the scheme is not open to those who volunteer.

The scheme is run by Jobcentre Plus and it is basically a grant towards any additional employment costs incurred by the employer to accommodate a disability. The Equality Act 2010 states that employers are legally obliged to provide 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace to help a person in the workplace. Reasonable adjustments could mean the provision of suitable lighting or window blinds to help control glare, flexible working hours to help with travel requirements (daylight hours for example).

Any other requirements may be considered by Access To Work. When applying for a grant a work place assessment would take place, unless a person has a specific requirement and knowledge of equipment required.

Depending on the result of the assessment help can be given with purchasing equipment like a CCTV or electronic magnifier, software for computer systems, travel to and from work when there are no alternatives available (public transport) or a support worker.

Sometimes an employer might be asked to contribute to the cost but not always.

You can apply for access to work online:
www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply

Or telephone 0800 121 7479



Access to Work
Making work possible

Recipe

Mackerel Kedgeree

by Andrew Baker

A yummy and nutritious fish dish, easily prepared with a microwave and some hands-on mixing. Mackerel is a rich source of omega-3 and spinach is packed with iron, making this a dish which is both tasty and good for you.

Serves two and is delicious either hot or cold.

Ingredients

- 1 packet of microwave pilau rice
- 1 tbsp tikka masala paste.
- 1 cup of frozen peas
- ½ cup frozen spinach (3 cubes)
- 150g pack smoked mackerel, skinned
- 3 tbsp low-fat crème fraiche (or Greek yoghurt)
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, halved
- A handful of coriander, and lemon wedges to serve

Equipment

- microwave
- sauce pan
- measuring spoons
- microwave mixing container
- egg timer

Method

1. Boil the eggs until hard (about 8 minutes), drain and set aside in cold water.
2. Place the peas and spinach in the microwave saucepan and then microwave for 6 minutes.
3. Microwave the rice as per the packet instructions (about 2 minutes).
4. Shell the eggs.
5. Mix the peas, rice, spinach and curry paste.
6. Remove skin from the fish. Break the mackerel into large chunks and stir through the rice along with the peas and crème fraiche.
7. Microwave for 3 or 4 minutes or until hot.
8. Top with halved eggs and serve sprinkled with the coriander.



Top Tips

"An egg is always an adventure; it may be different each time" - Oscar Wilde

- Use a slotted spoon to place the eggs into and take out of the saucepan.
- For timings, try out a large display mechanical timer.
- If you have an Alexa device, try using the Alexa "Egg Timer" skill. Tell the egg timer how you like them. The egg timer will keep track of the time and alert you with the crow of a rooster once your egg is done. ~ Or instead of boiling, use ready cooked shelled eggs (available in most supermarkets).
- Use sweetcorn (tinned or frozen) instead of or as well as the spinach.
- **Make it vegetarian:** use paneer or tofu to replace the fish. Add ready cooked cauliflower or tin of chickpeas to make it go further and change the curry paste to suit.

Volunteer Focus

Going the Extra Mile

by Louise Jelley

We are now 12 months on from when we first entered lockdown on March 23rd 2020. Some would say the year has dragged on, whereas others would say it has flown by. We recognise the struggles that our service users, volunteers and staff have endured these past twelve months. Whilst we were forced to suspend our face-to-face services, we nevertheless remained 'open' and have evolved our services to provide a range of remote and virtual platforms on which to reach clients.

As ever, none of this would be possible without our amazing volunteers. Here are a few statistics which illustrate what our volunteers have achieved this past year.

86 volunteers and staff carried out 3000+ telephone welfare calls in March and April 2020

124 volunteers currently support our telephone befriending service, which supports 300+ service users. The weekly phone call provides company and conversation and an essential welfare check

Volunteers have made over 10,000 telephone befriending calls to our service users

Volunteers have donated over 3,500 hours to providing an essential befriending call

220 welfare issues have been raised, some of which have saved our clients lives!

Volunteers have been actively supporting our telephone support groups, which take place on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. To date, we have run 211 of these sessions. Volunteers have also been supporting our weekly and bi-weekly video support groups and providing essential IT training and support alongside our IT Trainer.



Wednesday Video Support Group

Looking forward into the summer months, we will have a range of volunteering opportunities opening up. Many of our volunteers already perform more than one role for the charity, but we are inviting all volunteers to consider fresh volunteering opportunities in support of our new and revamped services. These include: Vision Support Centre Helpers in Alcester, Kenilworth, Shipston-on-Stour, Southam, Bedworth, Coleshill and Atherstone.

Additionally, whilst many volunteers may wish to return to their previous

face-to-face roles, we know that we will have vacancies within our home and telephone befriending services and all of our social clubs. With the expansion of the support centres comes the expansion of the IT Training, and therefore, we are looking for volunteers to support this service too.

We will be advertising volunteering opportunities on various social media platforms and via Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action. We will always welcome anybody who would like to get involved with supporting the charity.

In Memory

Whilst celebrating the amazing work our volunteers do, we must not forget those volunteers who are no longer with us.

Sadly, the following volunteers have passed away. We know that they will all be missed and were truly appreciated for the work that they did for the charity and especially the people that we support.



Elizabeth Grubb -
Shipston-on-Stour Club

Kathleen Marriott -
Stratford Club

Reg Swain -
Admin Volunteer

Sheila Venville -
Trustee

Margaret Staien -
Coleshill Club

Michael Joyce -
Alcester Club

Ann Box -
Stratford Home Visitor

Mary Gregory -
Nuneaton Vision Support Centre

Fundraising Updates

by Louise Jelley

In the run up to Christmas, Santa's elves were busying themselves around the county delivering goodies and hampers, courtesy of a number of donors. Warwickshire Vision Support staff delivered over 140 Christmas gifts consisting of food hampers, chocolate treats and small toys.

Over 100 children and young people received a token gesture of kindness and over 30 of our most vulnerable service users received food hampers. This was only made

possible through the generosity of Stratford Foodbank, The Life Church Bedworth, Morrisons Supermarket Stratford-upon-Avon, Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire and Coventry Freemasons and a grant from Western Power Distribution.

In December 2020, we ran an online virtual fundraiser where we invited people to make a donation in exchange for decorating a virtual Christmas Tree. This raised £220! Thank you to everyone who donated.

At the request of the family of the late Mrs Jean Cope, who had been a volunteer and a service user at the Kenilworth Social Club, we created an online virtual fundraiser in her memory. Family and friends have been able to connect and leave 'in memorial' messages by placing a light on the virtual woodland tree. This has raised £435.00 for Kenilworth Social Club.



Jimbo & David's Everest Challenge

No guide dog has ever climbed Everest, but Jimbo is going to give it a go!

He will lead his totally blind master David Adams from sea level to the 29,032 ft (8848.86 m) height of Everest to raise funds for European Guide Dogs, Motor Neurone Disease Association and Warwickshire Vision Support.

Jimbo and David will climb Marston Hill 197 times over the next few months.

On Monday 1st March, St. David's Day, Jimbo and David made their first climb and will continue every day (twice on Saturdays and Sundays) until August 8th, David's 78th birthday – a distance equivalent to nearly seven full marathons!

David, who is also a member of WVS' board of trustees, said "If my knees hold out, I look forward to this challenge. Having been in COVID lockdown for most of the last year, I'm looking forward to a bit of fresh air and to lose some weight along the way."

Priors Marston sits on the Warwickshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire borders and is a watershed with streams running into



David & Jimbo Walking Together

the Thames, The Wash and the Severn estuary. Marston Hill has a steep gradient of 14% and David and Jimbo are tackling the North West slope.

You can support Jimbo and David in their Everest challenge by visiting the following link:

uk.virginmoneygiving.com/DavidAdams78

COVID...DEMENTIA...AND MUM

by Rosemary Trinder

At the end of last year, charity Disability Talk ran a poetry competition entitled 'My Disabled World' in which applicants were asked to create a short poem about disability and unfairness.

A friend of WVS, Rosemary Trinder, took part in the competition with her poem "COVID...DEMENTIA...AND MUM".

Rosemary's poem is as follows:

I am sad and I am lonely and I do not understand

Why you do not come and see me, hug me, kiss me, hold my hand.

For I think I used to know you in my memory long ago,

And I know I loved your visits, and the pictures you would show.

I can still recall your perfume and the clothes you used to wear.

Oh dear, your name escapes me and that's very hard to bear.

Don't know your name but once I did, and can't remember how –

Were you my child, a friend perhaps? I can't recall just now.

One night I thought I heard your voice and what you had to say

But I couldn't catch the moment and sadly you went away.

The people here are very kind but I can't see their face,

I wish I could be somewhere else but just not in this place.

If you can't come and visit me, then can I come to you?

I can't remember where you live, but somehow I'd get through.

Although I can't remember all you meant to me

I know it was so special in my distant memory,

But now my mind is muddled, and I ponder every day,

What is the purpose of it all, why won't it go away?

Please come and see me one more time, and maybe then, together

We'll talk and smile and laugh and sing, and put life right forever

Do you have any hidden talents that you want to share? Send us your poems, short stories, articles or anything else made by you for a chance for it to be printed in the upcoming summer edition.



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and by email.

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@warksvissupport

Warwickshire Vision Support is the operating name of Warwickshire Association for the Blind.

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales Number 6511954, Charity Registration Number 1123220