

Warwickshire Vision

Christmas 2019



Theme: Bringing people together

Supporting people living with sight loss in Warwickshire since 1911



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Contents

Editorial	4
Focus on Health.....	5
Features	8
Spotlight on Equipment	18
Advice and Guidance	20
Events Round-up.....	26
News Round-Up	30
Volunteer Focus	32
Quiz Page.....	33

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are expressed to Rosemary Went and Rosalie Visick and all contributors to the magazine.

We also thank Kenilworth Talking News Association for producing the digital audio version of Warwickshire Vision.

In the Focus on Health section, we acknowledge the use of information from: BBC News, the Daily Mail (Man regains sight after 20 years), The Guardian (Boy loses sight due to poor nutrition), Vision North Eyecare and eyesite.co.uk (Tips for preventing dry eyes) and Science Daily (Gene Therapy)

Front Cover Image: AGM 2019 by Jemma Davoudian

Editorial

by Phil Arkell - CEO

Welcome to Warwickshire Vision - the only county-wide magazine for visually impaired people in Warwickshire.

I sincerely hope you like our fresh new look. In this latest facelift of the magazine, so wonderfully spearheaded by Rosemary Went and Rosalie Visick for the last two decades, you will find a range of stories exploring how we, as a charity and you as a community, bring people together.

We have also introduced some regular specialist columns covering areas such as IT, Rehabilitation and Money Saving Tips, as well as a Recipe page and a Quiz page. We hope you will enjoy these and look forward to your feedback.

Of course, we are particularly interested in your stories, your experiences and the lessons you can share with each other. So, if you have a story to tell, then please get in contact with us.

We are also looking for feature writers and contributors, so please contact us on 01926 411331 if you want to join the team.

On behalf of everyone at Warwickshire Vision Support, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Thank You, Lesley Edwards

At the AGM Lesley Edwards retired as Treasurer and Trustee from the Board of Trustees. Lesley has faithfully served the Charity for over 13 years, playing an important role in managing the finances of Warwickshire Vision Support.

Lesley can leave in the knowledge that the Association is in much improved financial and structural health.

On behalf of everyone at WVS we wish Lesley a happy retirement and thank her for her commitment and dedication.



Focus on Health by Jemma Davoudian

Boy loses vision due to poor nutrition

A 19-year old teenager, who suffered permanent damage to the fibres in his optic nerve, has an eating disorder called ARFID (avoidant restrictive food intake disorder), causing heightened sensitivity to certain food textures and smells. As a result, the young man survived on a diet consisting of chips, bread, crisps and processed meat.

At the age of 14, he started experiencing hearing loss and his

vision began deteriorating soon after. Now legally blind, he agreed to have his story documented in the Annals of Internal Medicine in order to raise awareness.

It is well known that poor diet can cause cardiovascular issues, obesity and cancer. However, this case is a sobering reminder that vitamin and mineral deficiencies can also cause irreversible damage to the nervous system.

Tips for managing dry eyes

Dry eye is a common and often chronic problem caused when tear production and drainage is imbalanced.

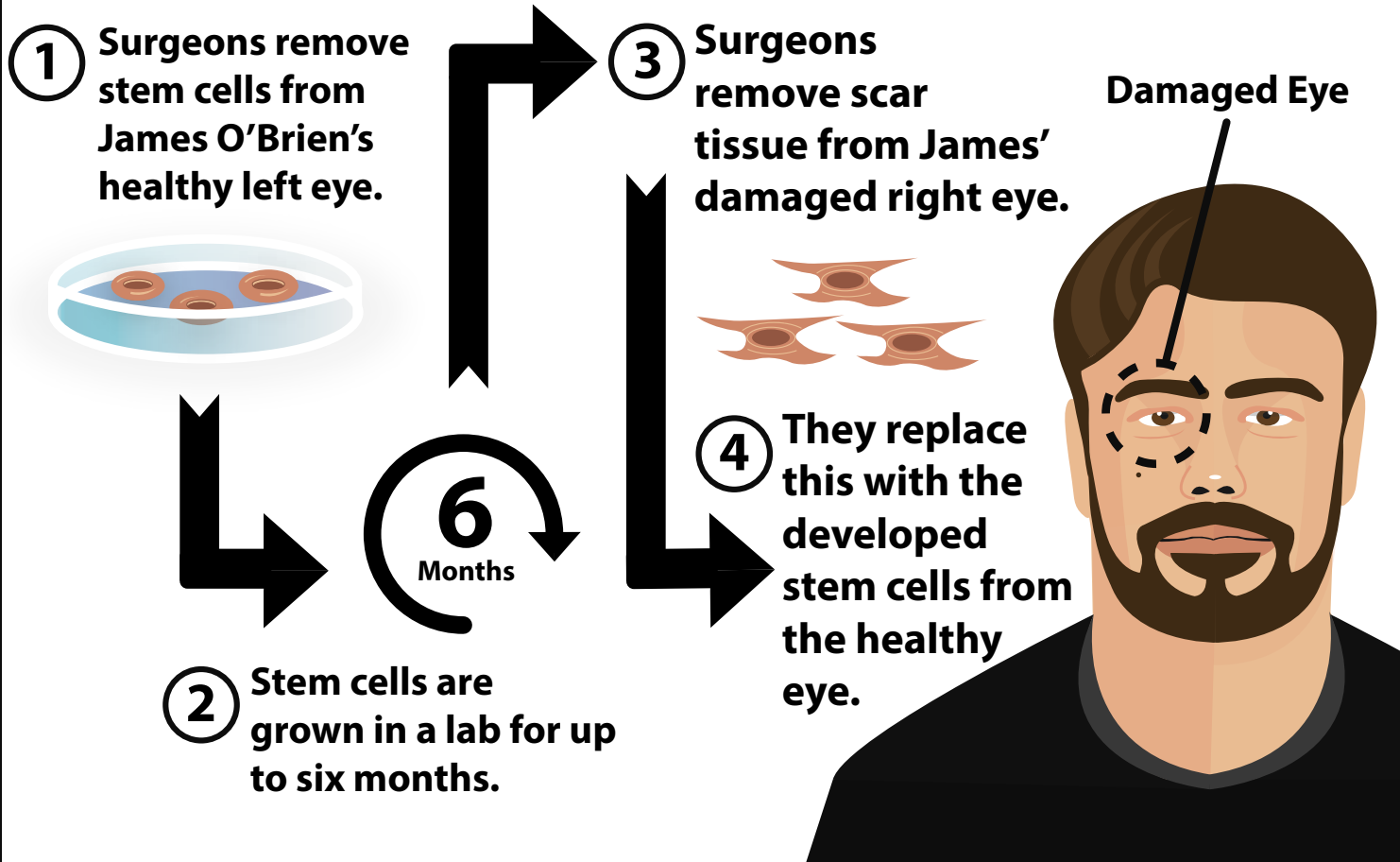
Dry eyes can feel irritated, scratchy or inflamed. Excess watering and blurred vision are also common in sufferers. Dry eye conditions are often associated with ageing, gender (women are more likely to develop it than men), medication and medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, arthritis).

There are many treatments available for dry eyes – including over-the-counter drops. However, there are some valuable self-care tips you can apply at home:

- Increase the humidity of the air in your home.

- Wear sunglasses outdoors to reduce wind and sun exposure.
- Nutritional supplements containing fatty acids can help dry eyes, but always consult your optometrist first.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day: aim for at least 8 glasses!





Man regains sight after 20 Years

A London man, blinded in one eye during an acid attack in his teens, has become the first patient to undergo pioneering stem cell treatment on the NHS.

James O'Brien, of south-east London, had been blind in his right eye for 25 years, following a random acid attack when he was just 18. But now, thanks to the work of doctors at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, Mr O'Brien has gone from "near-blindness in this eye, to being able to see everything."

Mr O'Brien's treatment began in early 2018, with stem cells being extracted from his healthy left eye. They were then sent to a laboratory in Modena, Italy where they were grown under contract to the NHS. Moorfields

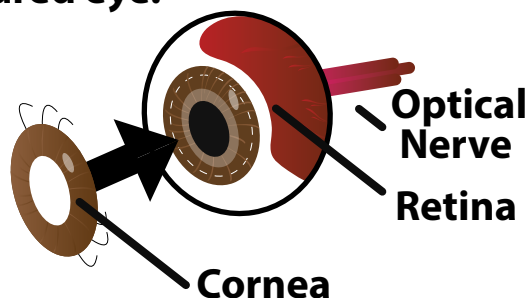
surgeons were then able to cut out the scar tissue from Mr O'Brien's damaged eye, and replace it with the newly grown stem cells harvested from his left eye.

After a year, once the new tissue had had a chance to mature and settle down, a new cornea was implanted. This was a harvested cornea from a deceased organ donor.

Now 44, Mr O'Brien is married with two young children, and feels blessed to be able to see his family with both eyes.

Sajjad Ahmad, the consultant ophthalmic surgeon who performed the procedure, asserts that Mr O'Brien "kindly accepted being

5 After approximately one year, they insert a cornea from a donor patient into the injured eye.



6 The new stem cells from the healthy eye ensure the cornea can properly function and sight is restored.

the 'guinea pig' for this treatment. Because of what he's done, it will now enable us to offer it to everyone who needs it."

Mr Ahmad, along with his colleagues at Moorfields, plans to continue developing the procedure so that patients blinded in both eyes during acid attacks, or as a result of degenerative sight loss conditions, may have their sight significantly improved by it. The Moorfields team has plans to operate on at least one patient per month.

The procedure costs the NHS over £90,000 per eye, however NHS England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have approved the treatment for all eligible patients.

What are stem cells?

Stem cells are simple cells which have the ability to develop into almost any type of specialised cell in the body. This means they can be used when replacing damaged cells and tissues in many parts of the body.

Gene therapy shows promise for wet AMD

Researchers from the Department of Ophthalmology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City have gathered preliminary data which supports the effectiveness of gene therapy in six wet AMD patients. The patients, who had previously undergone anti-VEGF injections to manage the disease, have so far gone at least 6 months without requiring further treatment.

Gene therapy is a promising alternative to anti-VEGF injections. The treatment involves an initial injection to insert a vector into the eye. This can funnel genetic material into the eyes, which then begins making the protein aflibercept (preventing the formation of abnormal blood vessels).

In essence, instead of injecting a vial of aflibercept protein into the eye, your eye makes the aflibercept itself - making it a potential one-off treatment.

Clinical trials are pending.

Sandra with her Home Visitor,
Sally Thompson



Me and My Home Visitors

by Sandra Jones, Nuneaton

Born and raised in Nuneaton you would think that I would have many friends and would be able to go out whenever I want to see someone or to go to the shops.

My early onset Glaucoma diagnosed when I was in my late teens prevents me from having that freedom. I was determined from a very young age that I would not let my deteriorating eye sight stop me from living a fulfilling life. Despite the relentless hospital visits and operations throughout my twenties and thirties I lived independently, fell in love and got married. By the time I was 32

years old I was totally blind and was registered as Severely Sight Impaired.

No longer able to see, I finally embraced Braille and within 6 months had learnt how to read and type in Braille. I kept very active supporting the Nuneaton Branch of Warwickshire Association for the Blind and was actively involved in their 'Listening Ear' Project. For many years I supported what was then WAB and did not see myself as someone who needed their support - but, for over 10 years now I have been a service user.

The support I have received from Warwickshire Vision Support has been invaluable. In addition to attending the weekly support centre in Nuneaton I also attend the monthly social club. For me though I receive the most rewarding support from the Home Visitor Service. Every time I want to leave the house I have to organise a guide and plan transport. I am not able to live my life spontaneously so for me the Home Visitor Service brings company and conversation into my home.

Every other week I receive a visit from one of a number of Home Visitor Volunteers. They are all lovely and I have become good friends with them, but they are also all very different and what they bring to the service is different. I enjoy all their company but sometimes I appreciate just chatting and catching up on local gossip and events. Sometimes one will read my mail and assist me in completing some paperwork. I get practical support as well in the form of labelling my tins and jars in the kitchen cupboards. It might seem like a simple task but it ensures that I can continue to cook and prepare food knowing what ingredients I am using. I am an avid knitter and love to discuss knitting patterns with Lesley House who visits me and co-ordinates the Nuneaton Home Visitor Service. Over the years I have discovered many common interests with my Home Visitors and now

occasionally see them socially, I have even arranged to visit the theatre with one of them.

All of the Home Visitor Volunteers go above and beyond, I look forward to their visits and enjoy every moment of time spent with them. I feel more connected to the local community around me, so even though I do not get out as much as I used to, I do not feel lonely as I always have a visit to look forward to. The Home Visitor Service bridges the gaps that family and friends would normally fill and ensures you never feel alone.

Becoming a Home Visitor by Sally Thompson

I have always lived around people who have visual impairments due to a condition that affected my Dad's side of the family.

About 10 years ago, I saw an advert in a local paper asking for volunteers to support what was then WAB to help set up a Home Visitor Service in Nuneaton. I believed that was something I could do and gave them a call.

10 years on I am still volunteering and have formed lovely friendships with many of the visually impaired people I visit.

I find volunteering rewarding and enjoy the time I commit to each visit. If my visit can make someone feel less isolated and lonely then it has been worthwhile.

Sport for All

Maggie Bowes is 69 years old, registered blind and runs marathons for fun. We share some insights from this inspirational woman.

I have been running since I was a child when I attended Exhall Grange School. In those days, there wasn't a proper track to run on and we were guided by sound a bit like clackers or castanets but I just loved it. I had a love for horses in my younger years too and used to enjoy participating in dressage competitions.

Upon leaving school, I did not have the opportunity to start running again until 1999 when I decided to join a gym. I said to one of the gym staff who was a retired Army PT Instructor, that I wanted to have a go on a treadmill and he took me under his wing. He was a gentle giant to my petite frame. I regularly attended a training session with the gentle giant often quite late in the evening after I had got home from work. My first experience on the treadmill lasted only a few minutes and learning to run and build up stamina took time.

My trainer suggested that I should enter the Coventry Fun Run and at the first outing, I won my class. I have not looked back. That same year I entered the Two Castles Run between Warwick and Kenilworth.

As my fitness and running with a guide improved it was suggested to me that I might like to try a triathlon.

I am not a keen swimmer and knew that I would need to learn before embarking on the challenge. I took a 12-week swimming course, at the end of which my instructor told me how problematic my technique was. I knew I was not the best but it did not deter me and I set my sights on swimming an iconic mile.

As my swimming improved I entered my first duathlon in Coventry. I swam 400m which was 16 lengths and ran 2.5 miles. I then started developing my cycling technique. I bought a tandem bike and set to work on training - experiencing a good number of accidents and falls along the way.

In 2008 I was proud to represent Great Britain at the Vancouver Triathlon World Championships. It was fantastic to be part of such a great team.



In 2015 I completed the London Marathon in 6 hours and 15 minutes. I get a lot of pleasure from running, it is good for both my physical and mental health and I enjoy the company of my running guides.

My advice to someone who might consider taking up running would be to invest in a good pair of running shoes. They make all the difference and can save you from some injuries.

I would also say that you should start off slow and steady with a combination of running for a minute or two and then walking. You do not necessarily need a trained guide to start with but a good friend will do, if they are patient and prepared to move at your pace.

The Park Runs which take place at weekends are a great way to meet fellow runners and if you do want to buddy up with a guide, then people are often willing to help. They are free to enter, and timed, so you can see your improvement each week.

Once you start to run faster and feel you need to be guided more formally, then communication is key to the relationship between you and your guide. You need to be clear from the outset what kind of instructions you want from them. For example, if the surface is uneven and whether you need to raise your foot more, also clear left and right directions.

Whilst I have had my fair share of falls and trips over the years, the



Maggie Bowes with some of her Medals

feeling I get when I run makes them all worthwhile. A good guide runner will also give you confidence. I would encourage anyone to start running - it may be a passion from the past which you can reignite or a new venture for you to embrace, either way it will be a worthwhile one.

I am 69 now and still look to get out a couple of times a week at least. Enjoy running for fun.



Peter Wright with his CCTV

IT and Me

by Jemma Davoudian

At Warwickshire Vision Support we are passionate about ensuring our clients can access information in their preferred format. For some, this is the written word, and we work to make this as accessible as possible. For example, when we receive high quality equipment donations, we pass them forward where appropriate.

Mr Peter Wright, of Leamington Spa, is one such client who has benefited from the use of an electronic desktop magnifier, also known as a CCTV. These magnifiers can be helpful for

reading, writing and completing daily tasks. Peter uses his CCTV unit to magnify things such as newspaper articles, medication labels and letters. He is also able to write his own lists and memos using the magnifier screen.

I sat down with him to discuss how this equipment has impacted his life, and whether he now feels more connected to others.

How did you get the equipment?

Whilst attending the Leamington Vision Support Centre (held on Mondays, 10am – 12 noon at Chandos Court), I had the

opportunity to hear about electronic desktop magnifiers from one of the regular exhibitors. I thought the equipment would be particularly helpful because it would allow me to magnify entire portions of text at once, and I would be able to adjust the brightness settings to suit my vision. I was in the process of saving up for the CCTV when Warwickshire Vision Support let me know that they had a donated CCTV unit available.

Not only did Warwickshire Vision Support help me to get a CCTV unit, but they also helped set it up - for that I am very grateful.

What do you use it for?

I use it for reading all sorts - TV listings and newspaper articles are the big ones. Letters can be really difficult to read when the print is small, and I worried I might miss important information before I was able to magnify them using my digital desktop magnifier. Filling in forms and writing lists has also become so much easier, as I can magnify as I write. I've also noticed improvements in back pain as I no longer have to strain to see writing with my magnifying glass.

What is the hardest thing about using it?

It is easy to use, but I do wish it was portable so I could use it throughout the house. Nevertheless, I am very pleased with it.

Do you feel more connected to others because of the tech?

Yes. I am now able to keep up to date with local event listings, I can chat with my friends about recent news articles and I feel far more independent when it comes to writing shopping lists or memos.

One unexpected benefit of the CCTV unit is that I am able to look at appointment letters and my calendar and feel confident that I know what is coming up, or which important appointments I need to attend.

I feel so much more independent and connected to the world.

I can even write cards to my loved ones!



Bringing people together

by Phil Arkell

Often when we talk about bringing people together, we think of social activities that provide an opportunity for us to meet new people, make friends and share our experiences. Our clubs, support centres and home visitors are excellent examples of how Warwickshire Vision Support brings us together.

We also form communities in other ways. Warwickshire Vision (formerly WAB Mag) has been creating its own community of readers and listeners for decades. We may not meet each other face-to-face, but the magazine has enabled thousands of people to receive advice and information, learn about each other and, of course, share the successes and challenges facing us.

It may surprise you to know, that for almost 20 years, the magazine has been produced under the Editorship of Rosemary Went and her Co-Editor Rosalie Visick. During this time, with

the support of a small number of other co-editors, they have created more than 50 magazine editions comprising nearly 2,000 pages of stories and almost half a million words.

Each of these stories was identified, researched, written, edited, formatted and proof read before making it into the final edition. In some cases, Rosemary and Rosalie would take an article all the way through from start to finish and at other times, rely on their cohort of regular contributors who submit news stories, poems and creative writing for consideration.

Rosemary and Rosalie have met regularly on Monday mornings at the WVS office to review articles, accepting some, rejecting or amending others until the magazine slowly emerges. I could tell you that this has taken more than 5,000 hours of 'office' time, but then if I tell you





Rosemary Went

that they both arrive with pre-edited articles then you will realise that the number of hours they commit is considerably more.

Of course, the magazine is not just produced in large print. To ensure that everyone has access to the gems inside, an audio edition is also available. WAB Mag was produced on audio cassette until 2011 when Rosemary thought the magazine should 'go digital' and make the switch to memory sticks.

This process required considerable research, resulting in a proposal for funds, the purchase of boom boxes and memory sticks for listeners and a schedule of home visits to deliver and demonstrate the new devices - a monumental achievement.

Of course, we must also recognise the volunteers at Kenilworth Talking



Rosalie Visick

News Association who produce the audio edition of the magazine. Their expert team of readers and technicians guarantees a quality product each time, whilst Rosalie selects the musical interludes.

Warwickshire Vision has become our standard bearer. An extra edition celebrated our centenary back in 2011 whilst regular editions have honoured our volunteers, recognised yours, and our achievements and shared some of the major developments in eye health and technology. We hope that there is something for everyone in each edition.

Our future plans are to broaden our community, reach more people and ensure that those people acquiring sight loss know to whom they can turn when they need help.

One Voice

Public transport and the obstacles to participation

Warwickshire Vision Support's primary objective is to improve the lives of visually impaired people. Through advocacy we work to make an impact on people's daily lives. Please read Debbie's story and see how a negative situation resulted in a positive outcome.

Debbie's story

Debbie had planned a family holiday to the Cotswolds with a local travel company. As a guide dog user she requested a seat be reserved for Kayleigh, her service dog. The company informed her she was required to pay for this additional seat. Debbie requested the support of Warwickshire Vision Support.

Vicky, one of our Vision Support Officers, contacted the company on Debbie's behalf and advised them that under the Discrimination Act 2005 and Equality Act 2010, service dogs are allowed to travel on public and private transport at no extra charge. Also that a recent change to the law, to ensure the welfare of animals in transport, requires service dogs to be restrained to ensure their safety.

After this intervention, Debbie was able to go on the coach trip with her family and Kayleigh at no additional cost.

The travel company is now tailoring trips for guide dog users - which is great for Debbie as a regular user who is planning to visit Blackpool, Devon, Ireland and many more places. In a further development, she has found that they are now more supportive with arranging accommodation to support her requirements.

This small intervention by Vicky has made a real difference to Debbie and her family who are now able to enjoy short breaks in the knowledge that their needs will be met.



Debbie Tilson and Kayleigh

Me and My Dog

by Christine Ramble, Trustee

Guide dogs are often referred to as 'life changing' - in the year I've had my dog Sparks I've certainly found that to be true. I thought long and hard before applying for a guide dog: it is a big responsibility and a lot of work! I was managing fine with my long cane but began to realise that I was going out on my own only when absolutely necessary. A guide cane is a useful aid, but not what I'd choose for a pleasant stroll!

All that has changed since I got Sparks.

We enjoy going out together every day, and I know I can trust him to avoid obstacles and stop at kerb edges. He likes finding our usual shops where, seeing him, people are very helpful. He's a seasoned bus traveller and there's rarely a journey when someone doesn't speak to us at the stop or on the bus. His favourite outing is, of course, the park when he has a free run and plays with his doggy friends - their owners usually stop for a chat too. I've started volunteering with Guide Dogs as an occasional fund-raiser and speaker and enjoy the variety of people I've met through this, from pre-school children to business groups.

Sparks has enriched my life in so many ways: my guide outdoors and



Christine and Sparks

always my much-loved friend and companion - my world would be a darker place without him.

May you all share in the warmth and affection of good friends at Christmas and in the New Year.



Howard Burgess

Spotlight on Equipment

The history of talking news and devices used to listen to it by Howard Burgess

Audio recordings date back as far as 1877 when the phonograph was invented.

In those days, recording was limited by time, so poetry was recorded first. Full length novels were not recorded until the 1930's, that's when talking books recorded on gramophone records were created in Britain. The average novel could fit on 10 records.

By 1935 recorded books were posted out to visually impaired people, the first being an Agatha Christie novel. Propel forward to 1970 and the first Talking Newspaper was launched

in Wales. In the mid 1980's, the Talking News movement had spread across the country. I, together with some fellow volunteers, formed the Talking News Service for Kenilworth. Using facilities at the Priory Theatre



we produced our first recording on cassette, reading news articles from the local paper. Of course, technology has now overtaken us and USB memory sticks are used to produce high quality digital audio playback. These are played on what we call 'Boom Boxes'.

The 'Boom Box' connects the listener to the recording and thus to the outside world. It makes local news easily accessible, timely and keeps them connected to their community. A USB memory stick can contain a newspaper, a compact disc or a book.

I recall one lovely talking news production which seemed like a live report from Coventry Cathedral of the Maundy Money distribution. I was convinced that the intrepid reporter had been inside the Cathedral during the service due to the sound quality and 'David Attenborough-style voiceover'.

The volunteer had in fact recorded the service on the television and then recorded a commentary. It blended so well that when listening you felt as if you were inside the Cathedral.

I personally cannot live my life in silence. I use my boom box to listen to the newspaper, my Daisy Player to listen to books and my radio to listen to Radio 4. I am surrounded by the spoken word.

The Boom Box is particularly valuable to me because access to local news and events keeps me current. I understand what is happening

in my community and I can form an opinion about it. This not only helps me to participate in local decision making, but it also gives me the information I need to be able to engage in discussions with neighbours and friends about local events.

One of the challenges of isolation is that you can run out of conversation. Funnily enough, that is not a problem I have ever encountered, but I do know that my Boom Box ensures I am kept informed and ready with a comment or opinion on a local issue.

For that, I thank Kenilworth Talking News for the high quality and variety of the stories they produce.

If you want more information about receiving your local talking newspaper, please call WVS on 01926 411331 or call the numbers below:

Contact your local Talking Newspaper

Kenilworth & Mid Warwickshire:

Teresa Adams: 01926 858199

Nuneaton & Bedworth:

Sue Pendleton: 0247 649 1109

Rugby:

Contact: 0779 307 2889

Stratford & South Warwickshire:

Jacky Williams: 01789 295489

Coventry:

0247 671 7522 and select option 5

Rehab Tips for safe independent travellers

by Jane Thorn

Darker, shorter days make travelling for VIPs trickier than usual. Here's a few tips to help keep you safe whilst retaining your independence.

Suitable clothing: hat, scarf, gloves; layer clothing beginning with wool or silk next to your skin, followed by sweaters and a coat.

Don't forget those UV shields or sun glasses to cut down glare. Give your cane a clean to keep it as reflective as possible and remember your mobile phone. A backpack will leave your hands free.

Crossing roads

Always use your other senses when deciding to cross. See and be seen.

Remember the Green Cross Code? It still applies.

Think! Is it safe to cross here? Is there a safer place nearby: a footbridge, zebra or controlled crossing?

Stop before the kerb. Is the traffic in front of you slowing or accelerating? Be mindful of large mirrors on passing vehicles.

Wait if you think a driver is signalling for you to cross. If you are uncertain, DO NOT CROSS; step back from the kerb - call the driver on with a hand movement. Be certain it is safe to step into the road.

Look right, left and right again.

Remember, wind and rain mask the sound of traffic. Remove any hat or coat hood covering your ears whilst assessing the traffic and crossing the road.

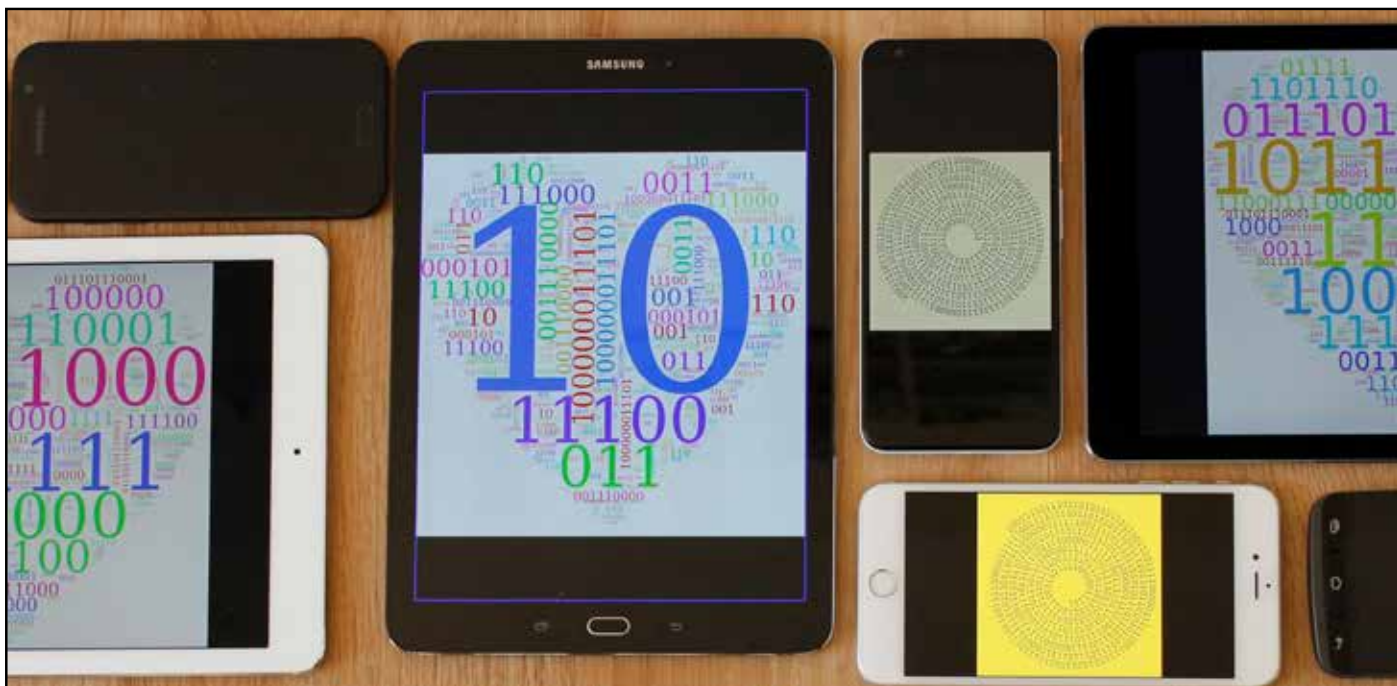
Cross in a straight line: you are on the road for less time.

Don't cross a side street on the junction: walk a little way down the side street away from the junction.

Spinning Cone

Do you know about the spinning cone on some controlled crossings? Press the button on the pedestrian lights then move your hand down to under the box. A fluted cone is there for pedestrians who cannot see the green light or deaf/blind travellers. This cone spins when the light turns green for pedestrians to cross. It is not saying 'it is safe to cross', but that the green light is on to aid your decision.





IT Bits and Bytes

by Ruth Okey

Are you slow at typing?

Why not try voice dictation?

Typing on touch screen keyboards on Apple and Android phones and tablets can be slow to use and the text is difficult to see. To enter text more easily use the voice dictation feature and talk to your device - you can even include punctuation.

- Open the App you wish to use and bring up the keyboard by selecting the text field you want to type in.
- Get your thoughts together and when ready to dictate, select the microphone key or icon.
- Depending on your device, select pause, keyboard symbol or the microphone key to stop.



- Speak punctuation: for example, full stop (.) comma (,) question mark (?).
- Speak line spacing: for example, new line, new paragraph.

Points to note:

- Dictation may need to be enabled on your device.
- Voice dictation requires an internet connection unless off-line dictionaries have been installed.
- Speak clearly into the microphone. Voice dictation works best in a quiet room.
- Always check what you have dictated. Voice recognition errors can lead to some very embarrassing text messages.



Rosalie Visick

Super Saving

Your guide to reducing costs
by Kate Perkins

Following our initial mailing earlier this year, introducing our new 'Supersaver Service', Rosalie Visick, one of our service users in Warwick who is severely sight impaired and a regular attendee at the Leamington Support Centre, requested me to review her gas and electric bill.

Rosalie asked for help as she was receiving separate bills for her gas and electricity at different intervals, despite both being from the same supplier - thereby making budgeting that bit more difficult.

With Rosalie's permission I phoned E.ON and managed to get both bills in sync so they would arrive together. We also arranged a new fixed 2-year tariff with no exit fee - this reduced her bills whilst still keeping the freedom to switch to another

cheaper tariff later on if she chooses. At the same time, we registered Rosalie for the Warm Home Discount and requested large print bills.

Rosalie also asked to be on E.ON's Priority Services Register - this is a free service for anyone who is vulnerable through age or disability. The Register means that you are given advance notice of any planned power cuts and given priority support in an emergency.

Just recently I met with Rosalie again, this time to help with her phone bill. There had been some confusion over the contract when Rosalie switched the contract from her late husband's name to her own name. We rectified this and at the same time, achieved a slightly cheaper deal and a back-dated refund on her bill.

Money Saving Tips

by Sue, Nuneaton

Keeping warm in winter

Did you know that a cold house can affect your health? To keep warm, dress in plenty of thin layers and if you wear slippers make sure they are a snug fit with non-slip soles to reduce the risk of falls.

The ideal living room temperature is 21C whilst your bedroom should be 18C.

Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 5th April 1954 you are entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment. You should receive it automatically, if you are eligible, and get the state pension or another social security benefit.

Most payments are automatic and should be received no later than 13th January 2020.

Warm Home Discount

You will qualify for a £140 discount if on 7th July 2019 you were in receipt of the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit (even if you also get Savings Credit) and your name (or your partner's) appears on your energy bill. Your energy supplier must be part of the scheme - the big six energy suppliers are all members. Your supplier will send you a letter to confirm eligibility and apply the discount by 31st March 2020. If you

are asked to confirm your details, then do so as quickly as possible.

If you are not eligible, you may be able to apply directly to your supplier if you are on a low income for a discount (PIP, DLA and Attendance Allowance are not included in your income).

Help with NHS costs

An HC2 certificate reduces costs of NHS services including prescriptions, dentistry, sight tests, glasses/contact lenses and essential travel to receive treatment.

You should qualify if you receive Income Support based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, or Universal Credit. Your earnings during your last complete assessment period must be below £435 (or £935 if you had a child element or limited capability for work). You may also qualify if, as a single person you have no more than £16,000 in savings, investments or property (not including the home where you live), or £23,250 savings for a couple.

The certificate is valid for 12 months. You need to re-apply 6 weeks before your current certificate is due to expire.

To request an NHS low income scheme HC1 form, phone 0345 603 1108 on the automated helpline.

For the full article on money saving tips visit www.warwickshire.vision

Recipe - Winter Warmer

By Andrew Baker

Bacon Macaroni and Cheese

One of the best ways to bring people together is over a meal. One of my favourite dishes is Bacon Macaroni and Cheese. This recipe serves 4 from just £2.40 or about 60p each, is wholesome and tasty too.

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp. butter or soft spread
- 300g macaroni or other pasta
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 500ml milk
- 100g cheddar cheese
- 100g Stilton or other blue cheese
- 100g bacon

Method

Melt 1 tbsp. of the butter in a pan on medium heat. Using scissors, cut the bacon into bite-size pieces and add to the butter. Season with salt and pepper, and cook on high heat for a few minutes until the bacon crisps at the edges. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and set to one side.

Turn the heat down to medium, add the remaining butter to the pan. Add the flour and stir briskly to make a thick paste. Add a splash of milk whilst stirring continuously. Keep adding milk, and stirring it in until it is fully incorporated and the sauce is smooth.

If your sauce is still a little lumpy, just lift out the lumps with a spoon or fork - alternatively, pass the sauce through a sieve.

Grate the cheddar cheese and throw it in - the Stilton crumbles into the sauce easily. Stir until melted.

Add the pasta and put the bacon back into the pan. Cook for 10 minutes until the pasta is soft and swollen – you may need to gradually add a small cup of water, as the pasta absorbs the liquid from the sauce.

As it cooks, the sauce will thicken. Season if necessary and serve.

Andrew's tips

1. Get everything ready before turning on the heat
2. Use scissors to "chop up" bacon. It is much more comfortable than using a knife
3. Cheat, use cheese ready grated or use your hands to crumble it
4. Serve from the pan to save washing up
5. You can also freeze and warm up in the microwave for later.

Photograph of Macaroni and Cheese
by Hermes Rivera on Unsplash



Late News: Legacy Gift

We have just received notification of a substantial legacy gift, generously left to Warwickshire Vision Support by one of our service users.

At present, we do not know the full size of the bequest, but we can say that this legacy provides a really strong basis for new and exciting opportunities.

However, it also calls for careful and measured decision making to ensure that the charity is able to derive the maximum benefit from this opportunity.

The Board of Trustees has decided that over the next 12 months, they will:

1. Explore how other charities have maximised benefit from similar windfalls
2. Involve members, staff and volunteers in decision making
3. Revisit and amend the Strategic Plan within the context of new resources

This process can only start once the full details of the bequest are known.



Wendy Pope, Derek Clark and David Bosworth at Nuneaton Carnival

Events Round-Up

Temperatures rise as Carnival fever hits Nuneaton!

On a slightly overcast day in June staff, volunteers and service users assembled on the Avenue Road Gala Field in Nuneaton to set up a stall and prepare for the day's activities. Whilst the weather might have tried to dampen spirits, the team remained positive and put on a good show. Volunteer Dave Bosworth handed out balloons and drew in a crowd to participate in some sight awareness activities. Carnival goes both young and old donned blindfolds and proceeded to try to identify and count the coins given. This activity demonstrated the everyday

challenge that visually impaired people face when handling money. Sandra Jones produced name badges in Braille using a Perkins Braille and Wendy and Derek from the Nuneaton vision support centre joined us too.

This year the Carnival Queen, Chloe Reubens, chose Warwickshire Vision Support as her charity to benefit from the money raised. Chloe, who is 18, is herself visually impaired and is just about to embark on a drama degree at university with a view to becoming an actress.

On Thursday 19th September, Louise Jelley visited Nuneaton where she was presented with a cheque for £550 by the Nuneaton Carnival Court.

Leam Terrace Street Party

Saturday 29th June, The New Inn Pub in Leamington celebrated its 3rd Annual Leam Terrace Community Street Party. This event was held in aid of two local charities, Castel Froma Neuro Care and Warwickshire Vision Support.

Activities throughout the day included a cake competition, an auction, dog show, football shoot-out, hula competitions for both adults and kids, along with raffles and tombola. The auction included a remarkable selection of items and events, ranging from a family ticket to a Butterfly Farm, to a signed England Rugby Kit worn by fullback Elliot Daley.

One of the highlights of the day was the auctioning of a hand-crafted garden bench and table made by 74-year-old Mark Liggins. Mark is a visually impaired service user who attends the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre. Mark was registered as severely sight impaired in 1951, however, he does not let this affect his love of carpentry. Over the years Mark has crafted a range of products including beds, cabinets, sheds, windmills and garden furniture. If Mark isn't at the support centre you can normally find him working hard in his shed on his latest project.

The bench sold for the amazing sum of £180. The day was a huge success raising over £7,000 for the two chosen charities.



The proud owners of Mark's Bench

Speaking after the event, Phil Arkell, Chief Executive of Warwickshire Vision Support, thanked Mandy Beck, Trevor Jenkins and the amazing street party committee for a wonderful day and a remarkable donation that will help visually impaired people in Leamington Spa.

Coffee, Cake and Conversation

On Friday 26th July Edinburgh Woollen Mill in Stratford-upon-Avon hosted a coffee morning in aid of Warwickshire Vision Support. Throughout the morning customers joined some of our service users and volunteers who popped in and took the time to enjoy mid-morning refreshment.

Louise Jelley was on hand to give advice and provide leaflets for people interested in our services. In total £156.24 was raised. Thank you to everyone who supported this event.



Good Companions

Railway Adventure

On Wednesday 10th June 2019, 27 members of the Good Companions Club in Leamington Spa boarded the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway.

The trip, arranged by Meryl Beck and her team, included transport, a packed lunch and our own fully accessible carriage.

The group was blessed with wonderful weather and of course enjoyed the 'Good Companionship' of our club members. Meryl had gone the extra mile to ensure that the trip would be accessible to every member of the group.

It was a day of nostalgia, adventure and friendship. A real treat for those who have few opportunities for a day trip to somewhere completely different.

Thank you Meryl for all your hard work.

Running in Aid of WVS!

This summer two members of the WVS community took part in running races in aid of Warwickshire Vision. On the 9th June, our Fund-raiser Louise Jelley completed the Two Castles Run between Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle, a total of 10 Km and raised £616.

On Sunday 7th July our Chair, Liz Thiebe completed the Leamington Half Marathon raising £505. A big thank you to everyone who sponsored both Louise and Liz.



Liz Thiebe

Volunteer Excellence

We are proud to announce that Meryl Beck and Andrew Harris were both recipients of external Volunteer Awards.

On Monday 29th June the current High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Simon Miesegaes, presented Meryl Beck with a Certificate of Recognition for her contribution to Leisure and Sport in South Warwickshire.

Meanwhile, Andrew Harris received his award from the Mayor of Nuneaton and Bedworth, Councillor June Tandy.

Congratulations!



Thank You

We would like to say a big thank you to Elaine Partridge, outgoing Lady Captain of Maxstoke Golf Club, who chose WVS as her Charity of the Year, raising a massive £7,250.

Elaine has also volunteered to help at the Coleshill Club - welcome!



Pop-Up Vision Support Centres

Thanks to a grant from Warwickshire County Council, we will be offering 'pop-up' vision support centres in remote locations across the county.

By the time we go to print, we will have held events in Hartshill, Bedworth, Shipston on Stour,

Alcester, Bidford, Warwick, Kenilworth, Harbury, Southam, Studley and Henley.

We have many more planned for next year. To find out when we are coming to your town, please call the office on 01926 411331.



News Round-Up

Annual General Meeting

We are very pleased to report that our AGM, held on 18th October, was a resounding success with more than 50 service users, volunteers, trustees and staff in attendance.

The event was designed not simply for WVS to share information about our activities, but perhaps more importantly to receive feedback from our service users and volunteers. This was first and foremost a listening and learning exercise.

Participants were welcomed by Liz Thiebe, Chair of the Board of Trustees. Liz also confirmed that Keith Eales had been elected to the Board and that Richard Orme and Heather Fairbairn had been re-elected for a further term.

Liz also made a presentation to Lesley Edwards who is retiring after 13 years of service on the Board of Trustees.

Phil Arkell (CEO) presented a progress report and invited questions from the floor. Issues raised included:

- The cost and value of WVS pursuing ISO9001 accreditation
- The need for WVS to develop services for younger people
- Some members also shared some very personal and humbling experiences about how WVS had helped at a time of need.

Following the Q&A session, the participants went into their pre-allocated table groups relating to



their own expertise and experience to give honest feedback about that particular service.

They were asked two questions:

1. What are we doing well?
2. What can we improve?

Here is a brief summary of the outcomes:

Vision Support Centres

- Change table layout for more interaction
- Introduce Suggestion Boxes
- More say in event selection

Clubs

- More activity choices
- Information sharing between clubs
- Introduce club for younger people

Home Visiting

- Invaluable, friendly service
- More training and support for Home Visitor volunteers

IT Training

- Need to expand to meet demand
- Introduction to IT sessions at Vision Support Centres
- Problem of interruptions during sessions
- Broaden scope to include technology such as Alexa and more basic devices

Volunteering

- More group discussions
- Volunteers to be given all role descriptions so they can branch out
- Volunteer Co-ordinators are a really useful point of contact
- More information about Pop-up events and clubs

Thank you to everyone who made the day a great success.

Volunteer Focus

Place your nominations for our Volunteer Awards

In June we celebrated the amazing work our volunteers do every day. We are now planning our Volunteer Awards for 2020 and would like to give **you** the opportunity to nominate a volunteer who, in your opinion, makes a real difference. Someone who goes the extra mile and is worthy of recognition.

For the 2020 Awards there will be five Awards, one for each geographical area; South Warwickshire, Mid-Warwickshire, Rugby, Nuneaton & Bedworth and North Warwickshire.

Anyone can make a nomination but because all volunteers are amazing people, make sure you tell us what

makes your particular nominee stand out.

A nomination form is enclosed with this edition of Warwickshire Vision. In order to make your nomination:

- Complete the form and return to us via mail or at a vision support centre
- Call us on 01926411331 to make your nomination or
- Email Volunteers@warwickshire.vision giving full details of the name of the volunteer and the reason you are nominating - what makes them special.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 27th March 2020.

Volunteer Training Update

We have now completed two First Aid Courses in Rugby and will be expanding this to our club volunteers across the county in 2020.

We are also rolling out a new one-day training programme for all volunteers. This training day will cover an Overview of WVS Services, Sight Loss Awareness and Safeguarding.

We want all our volunteers to feel confident that they have the skills and knowledge to perform their roles. Training will take place at various times and locations to be confirmed.

Staff Changes

Since our last edition we have welcomed Ebony Rushforth and Jemma Davoudian to the Admin Team; Ruth Okey has joined us as Technology Officer, Harjeet Matharu as Volunteer Coordinator working alongside Del Hobden and Maria Dela Cruz has now become Assistant Vision Support Officer after being both a volunteer and Rehab Student. Welcome!

I would like to wish Imogen Edwards and Liz Rosewell who have both left us, a very successful future.

Christmas Word Search



BEEF

MINCE PIE

BRANDY

MULLED WINE

BREAD SAUCE

NUTS

MARZIPAN

BUTTER

PIGS IN BLANKETS

CHOCOLATE

PLUM PUDDING

COOKIES

PUNCH

CRANBERRY SAUCE

SPICED TEA

EGGNOG

SPROUTS

FRUITCAKE

STUFFING



Dolphin

GuideConnect

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VOICE INPUT

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Technology
For Sight
Loss



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Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton	Newtown Community Centre Newtown Road Nuneaton CV11 4HG	Every Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church Regent Place Rugby CV21 2PJ	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon
Stratford-upon-Avon	The Christadelphian Church Rother Street Stratford CV37 6LU	Every Tuesday 10 am - 12 noon
North Warwickshire	'Pop-Up' events at multiple locations	Call 01926 411331 for more details
Smaller Towns	'Pop-Up' events scheduled throughout the year	Call 01926 411331 for more details

Warwickshire Vision is available free to people living with sight loss in Warwickshire. This publication is also available in digital audio and by email. For more information, please contact:

Warwickshire Vision Support
5 Charles Court, Budbrooke Road, Warwick CV34 5LZ

☎ 01926 411331

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

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