

A Walk in the Dark

On Friday 26th March a group of Sight Concern's supporters set off on a blindfolded walk through Worcester City Centre. The aim of the walk was to raise awareness of the charity and promote our first major fundraising event of the year: 'Dining in the Dark'.

The group of twenty four included the Mayor of Worcester; Andy Roberts, Will Bowley and Joe Carlisle from the Worcester Warriors as well as representatives of the event's sponsors, local media and staff and volunteers from Sight Concern.

The walk started at MFG Solicitors on the Tything, who were one of the generous sponsors of the event. At this point everyone was extremely nervous and there was an air of panic as they navigated kerbs, pedestrian crossings and uneven pavements, appreciating

these challenges in a new light for the first time, but with the help of a team of excellent sighted guides their confidence grew. The intrepid group of walkers took in Sight Concern's Bradbury Centre on Sansome Walk, the offices of Modus Creative (also sponsors) then down the High Street, via the Guildhall and finally to the Glasshouse restaurant, the venue for 'Dining in the Dark'.



See page 3 for more pictures and information on 'Dining in the Dark'

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Chief Officer Update

It's been a busy few months since we re-launched as Sight Concern Worcestershire. The Winter weather challenged us all and I'm glad Spring has arrived. With the onset of the good weather we are promoting our free 6 week VIP Golf taster sessions in conjunction with the English Blind Golf Association. Chris Belcher and I went to watch a training session and were truly inspired!

The new image is going down well; we have received a lot of positive feedback regarding this as well as an increase in support for the charity, more interest in our work, more requests for representation, and more people with sight loss asking for help.

Sight Concern continues to develop, at our AGM in January we elected our board of trustees, many of whom are new to the role and have been selected on the basis of the range of skills and experience they can bring, this includes 5 people with sight loss.

A volunteer get together in March gave me the opportunity to meet a few more people who give their time freely to support the work of the charity. What a wonderful group of people, we couldn't do it without them! Thanks volunteers.

Jenny Gage

Call us on 01905 723245

‘Dining in the Dark’

Dining in the Dark is a unique dining experience. A fundraising dinner with a difference which took place at the Glasshouse brassiere and bar in Sidbury, Worcester on Thursday 22nd April.

Whilst starter and dessert were eaten normally, guests ate their main course blindfolded. As well as raising funds for the charity, the event also raised awareness of what it is like to have limited or no vision. By increasing reliance on their other senses, diners ‘saw’ their meal from an entirely different perspective. The evening included a charity auction run by Phillip Serrell of ‘Antiques Roadshow’ and ‘Flog It!’ fame, all in aid of Sight Concern.

At time of going to print the final total had not been added up so we will report back, along with some photographs, in the next issue of Sight Lines.



Comments

from participants of the blindfolded walk.

“ This has really ‘opened my eyes’ to the challenges that people with sight loss face on a day to day basis ”

“ My sighted guide was excellent, I realised that the right training and support can really increase your confidence. ”

“ I suddenly lost the confidence to speak to people, I hadn’t realised how much I depended on eye contact ”



DID YOU KNOW?

Tactile map of Bromsgrove

Bromsgrove District Council deserve a big round of applause when it comes to the inclusion of people with sight loss, with the production of a tactile map of the town centre.

Intended for use by those with severe visual impairment who cannot use the standard town guides, the map will be updated and re-issued once a year to take account of any changes in the High Street in Bromsgrove. Because of likely changes of ownership in the retail outlets they cannot guarantee that the map is 100% accurate.

Anyone interested in receiving a copy of the map should contact Fiona Scott, Equality Officer at Bromsgrove District Council on 01527 881719 or email equalities@bromsgrove.gov.uk. Alternatively we hope to have some of these maps at the Bradbury Centre if you wish to pick one up.

UNWANTED SALES AND MARKETING CALLS

If you don't want to get any calls from sales and marketing firms you can add your details to a list, run by the Telephone Preference Service, which makes it illegal for a company to call you for marketing purposes in the future.

The Telephone Preference Service can be contacted at:
www.tpsonline.org.uk
Tel: 0845 0700707

It takes about 28 days after you've registered before the service takes effect. If you are still getting calls after 28 days, then you can complain to the Telephone Preference Service.



Update on RNIB Access to Health Campaign

In the last newsletter we told people about the RNIB Access to Health Campaign which fights for people with sight loss to receive health information in a format of their choice. Many people sent the campaign letter to their G.P. and received a positive response. Unfortunately, one G.P. practice in Worcester replied with an appalling letter, in small print to a person who asked for correspondence in audio

format, telling her she had been misinformed and does not have the right to receive information in her preferred format.

We are working with RNIB to tackle this G.P. practice. We have written to the practice informing them how they can make information available in a variety of formats.

The person who received this letter appeared on BBC Radio 4's In Touch programme. NHS Worcestershire responded to this and have taken it up with the practice. At the time of writing we are awaiting a response but we will keep you updated.

Would you like to help campaign?

RNIB have asked Sight Concern if we can help them out by contacting the people we know locally to encourage you to support their campaigns.

The role of a key campaigner only asks you to commit to taking three actions per year. These actions could be sending emails, letters or contacting key service providers to demand better service.

Sight Concern have supported RNIB's campaigns in the past as it is through the power of numbers that these campaigns are successful.

As RNIB are a national charity and do not provide direct services in many parts of England, including Worcestershire, they need the people that use the services of local charities, such as Sight Concern, to support them to get the messages across in the local area and to present a national coordinated approach.

For more information about the key campaigner role contact Chris Belcher at Sight Concern on 01905 723245 or info@sightconcern.co.uk

Reviews

Rock and Roll comes to the Bradbury Centre



In February Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Societies Youth Section (WODYS) kindly came along to the Bradbury Centre and entertained visitors with a selection of rock and roll hits ranging from 'Peggy Sue' to 'Rock Around the Clock'.

This group of young people volunteer to entertain in sheltered housing groups, charities and local nursing homes. By the end of the afternoon there was much foot tapping and recollection of times gone by. Even their costumes were authentic with bobby socks, pony tails and bright pink netted skirts.

After the show the young people mingled with the audience and enjoyed refreshments and lots of laughter and chat.

TRIP TO THE BARBER INSTITUTE

In December Sight Concern organised a trip to the Barber Institute in Birmingham. The group was led by Marion Chester, a volunteer teacher in the Art and Craft class and herself visually-impaired. The Institute has a fine collection of paintings, sculpture and ceramics which deserves to be better known than it is.

Marion's teaching background was invaluable, as she cleverly brought to life the works of such luminaries as Rodin and Degas. The reaction of those with sight difficulties was to want to run their fingers over the exhibits, but they were warned they may trigger the alarm systems! But Marion's descriptions were so persuasive it hardly mattered.

After lunch we were treated to an audio description of Bassano's 'The Adoration of the Magi' by a member of the Institute's Education Department. The Barber Institute is well worth a visit and it is always good to know that places like this are not out of reach to people with sight loss.

FUTURE TRIPS

On Thursday 20th May we are putting on a trip to the Black Country Museum in Dudley. The cost of transport is £7.50 and entry to the museum is £10.70 for under 60s and £8.60 for over 60s. We shall have pick up points in Malvern, Worcester, Bromsgrove and Redditch starting from 9:00am so if anyone would like to go on this trip please give us a call on 01905 723245.

In July we are planning a trip to the seaside, it will probably be Weston-Super-Mare but we are also investigating other possibilities. Information will be available on the website or from the Centre in June so all are welcome to telephone for details.



HOLIDAY 2010

After last year's successful holiday to Teignmouth, we have decided to follow the same format but this time we shall be going to the Russell Hotel in Bognor Regis which once again is an Action for Blind People Hotel.

The holiday will be from Monday 20th September until Friday 24th September and the cost is £287.00 for bed/ breakfast and evening meal plus all coach travel and insurance cover.

There are still a few places left on the holiday but if you decide to go you must be able to manage on your own in unfamiliar surroundings, or take someone with you to help as everyone goes around in separate groups when they are out on the day trips.



"Confidence in the Kitchen" Sessions

The first 'Confidence in the Kitchen' class started on Wednesday 20th January after snow postponed the initial start date.

These six week sessions are designed for people who have either lost their confidence in the kitchen or who are looking to brush up their existing skills.

One student was initially terrified of picking up a knife but by the end of the sixth week she was chopping vegetables with the skill and confidence of a professional - no cut fingers at all! The kitchen was always filled with laughter and mouth watering smells. One student said: 'This is an opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and have some fun'.

The next six week series of classes starts in June. Anyone interested should contact Rhian Thompson on 01905 723245 or info@sightconcern.co.uk

Apricot Bread and Butter Pudding

Method

Toast the bread, spread with butter and cut each slice into 6 equal pieces. Arrange, butter side up, with the apricots in a microwavable dish (approx 23cm wide by 5cm deep).

Beat together the eggs, sugar and milk in a jug. In a small bowl, blend the cornflour with a little of the milk, mix until smooth, then stir into the jug.

Pour over the bread and apricots and then sprinkle with the extra sugar.

Ingredients

Serves 4

- 4 thick slices white bread or brioche
- Butter
- 75g dried apricots soaked in 2 tablespoons of orange juice and cut into small pieces
- 2 eggs
- 85g soft, light brown sugar
- 400ml milk
- 1.5 tbsp cornflour

Cook on high power, uncovered, in the microwave on high for 10-12 mins. Stand for 5 mins before serving.

Note: This recipe is based on a 700w microwave.

CALLING ALL GREENFINGERS

We have been approached by the Three Counties Showground and asked if we would like to enter a garden in the Autumn Show which is Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th September. Last year 68,000 people attended the show so this is a huge opportunity for us to promote what we do.

Rhian Thompson; Rehabilitation and Training Manager, and Reg Perkins; a keen gardener and trustee, are heading up the project. A garden designer has kindly offered his services and is currently coming up with plans. The theme of the garden will be to celebrate our 80th Birthday and combine this with the healthy eating for eyes agenda which we promote within the community. This encourages people to eat certain vegetables which are high in anti-oxidants and Lutein, which 'feed' the eye and help prevent some eye conditions.

We are looking for people who to assist us with growing plants or who have contacts within the building or horticultural trade as there will be lots of manpower needed, along with materials and sponsorship of the garden in order to keep costs to a minimum. If anyone is interested or would like to find out more please contact Rhian Thompson on 01905 723245 or info@sightconcern.co.uk

WEBSITE REMINDER

If you want to keep up to date with what is happening at Sight Concern in between issues of 'Sight Lines' then the best place to do that is at our fully accessible website which can be found at www.sightconcern.co.uk

The content is updated on a weekly basis so there is always something new to look at. We have all sorts of things on there including notices about issues concerning people with sight loss, news about the charity and details of upcoming events.

You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more instant news on the comings and goings of the Bradbury Centre. Links to these pages are available from our home page.

We hope to see you online soon!



Gadget Review

"Boombox MP3 Player"

Some of you may be familiar with or already using an MP3 'Boombox', especially if you have Talking Newspapers who have converted to this type of technology.

This small portable player enables you to listen to audio books, talking newspapers or music direct from a USB stick.

So what is a USB stick? It is literally a plastic and metal stick onto which information is downloaded via a computer.

The Boombox is small and lightweight and is powered by four AA batteries or a mains lead. It has five simple controls; play/pause, skip forward, skip back, volume and an on/off switch.

The speakers are located on the front of the player and it also has a headphone socket. The rectangular slot for the USB stick is also located on the front of the player.

The RNIB sell the Boombox at a cost of £28.20 but some Talking Newspapers are supplying them free of charge if they are converting to this format. We have one on display in the Resource room if anyone is interested in finding out more.



Sight Concern's Resource Room

Don't forget Sight Concern has a resource room full of aids and equipment for you to 'try before you buy'. We also offer information on other equipment that is available to help you with your independence.

We always advise that you phone and book an appointment first, to ensure that a trained member of staff is available to advise you. Please contact us on 01905 723245 or email info@sightconcern.co.uk.

Through Broken Eyes - A Poem

My lovely, beautiful daughters, I miss seeing them grow.
I have an image of Hannah - but Grace I never saw.
To know just what she looks like, for Grace there's no before.
They handed me this bundle.
A beautiful baby daughter - is what they said to me.
I prayed just for a second - for my eyes to let me see.

I could not see then nor now.
Of Grace an image I have made - a happy contented little girl
With cheeks a rosy glow, bouncy curls that cover her head
And a button nose.

Hannah, her hair is golden blonde.
She is beautiful - she is getting tall now.
Her hand fills mine.
Her smile is like the sunshine.

I see them through my ears, I see them
through my touch.
I see their smiles when they laugh.
These are my beautiful daughters.

And I love them very much
God Bless you both.

(Written by Julie Vaughan a Sight Concern
User from Redditch)



BLIND 2010 BLIND FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

Whilst the eyes of the world turn to South Africa this Summer, there will be another major football tournament a little closer to home.

Blind 2010, the Blind Football World Cup, will be taking place at Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford from 14th-22nd August. The event will showcase the very best blind footballers from across the globe as they compete for the most prestigious prize in the sport - to be crowned world champions and win the right to compete in the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The event is open to the public and tickets are £5 for adults and £2 for concessions. For more details about the event or where to buy tickets please visit www.blind2010.com or call RNC on 01432 265725.



WORCESTER TALKING NEWSPAPER

Volunteers are wanted to help with Worcester Talking Newspaper.

On Thursday evening about once a month for 2/2.5 hours for administration.

Alternatively volunteers are needed for Friday mornings 8am-9:30am to copy tapes and put them for posting.

There's no heavy lifting or technical knowledge required. You will not be on your own and you will be given full support and guidance.

Anyone who is interested should call Terry Price on 01905 354029.



MFG sign up to support Sight Concern

In 1930, Worcestershire Association for the Blind was registered as a charity which makes 2010 our 80th Birthday. As part of the celebrations, Sight Concern Worcestershire has teamed up with local solicitors, MFG, to form a year long partnership.

In addition to being a key sponsor of our 'Dining in the Dark' event, MFG are also sponsoring canvas bags which are being sold in the centre as a fundraising initiative and we are currently talking about a larger anniversary ball to take place later this year.

Gurdip Kaur-Brring from MFG said 'We are delighted to be partners with Sight Concern and help them celebrate their 80th year. It is exciting for us to get involved and have realised that our support will make a real difference in the lives of people with sight loss in Worcestershire.'

MFG are also offering us a 'Make a Will' month during June this year. In this month they will donate their time to make a limited number of wills for a donation to Sight Concern of £60 for a single will and £85 for a double one.



MFG have Worcestershire offices in Worcester, Kidderminster and Bromsgrove, all of which can be contacted on 0845 5555 321.



To book an appointment to make a will and support Sight Concern, please just give MFG a call on 0845 5555 321 and mention this newsletter.

SKYDIVING

Imagine standing at an open doorway in an aircraft flying 10,000 feet - the noise of the engines and the wind ringing in your ears with only the outline of distant fields below. Now imagine leaning forward out of that doorway and letting go - falling forward into the clouds, diving down through the air as you start freefalling at over 120mph! Then imagine as the canopy opens and you begin a tranquil parachute descent from a mile up in the air. Imagine being able to do this for FREE whilst harnessed to a professional instructor and helping a charity! Stop imagining, it's time to make it real!

Skydives can take place on any weekend throughout the year and the nearest jump site to Worcestershire is Cirencester. If we have enough interest from people we will organise a specific date for all Sight Concern jumpers!

Get in touch with Alice Watts, our Fundraising Manager, for an information pack on how to take part in this amazing event. Her number is 01905 723245 or email info@sightconcern.co.uk



CHERISH JEWELS ANNIVERSARY BRACELET

Along with the support from MFG Solicitors, another local company is helping us to celebrate our 80th birthday. `Cherish Jewels` was set up by Michelle Mills-Porter who has designed a beautiful bracelet to commemorate our 80th birthday.

The bracelet is made from `Miracle Beads` which shine like they are battery operated when the light catches them! Michelle says "I really enjoy giving back what I can to the local community. Helping Sight Concern by making these bracelets has been a wonderful experience",

The bracelets cost £11.00 and are available from the Bradbury Centre by calling 01905 723245 or can be bought online at www.cherishjewels.co.uk



Fundraising News

Part of the success of our name change has meant an increase in support for the charity. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who takes the time to raise money for us, whether they have been doing it for years or have just started to support us.



Moose International:

Moose International is a fraternal service organisation who believe in caring and sharing. Towards the end of last year, the local group raised £378.41 for Sight Concern by doing a supermarket collection. Lodge Governor Arthur Kelly and representatives from Moose International Worcester came to the Bradbury Centre to present the cheque and have a guided tour of the facilities they were helping to support. Many thanks to Moose International for their continued support. Anyone interested in finding out more about their organisation can visit www.mooseinthemidlands.co.uk or call 01905 820257.

Action COACH:

To help us celebrate World Sight Day in October, Action COACH nominated to support Sight Concern at a big event. The Founder and CEO of Action COACH, Brad Sugars, came to Worcester as part of his UK tour to talk to local companies about how to grow their business. The truly inspirational event was attended by over 600 people and raised £1000 for Sight Concern.

Our huge thanks go to Simon Williams, Managing Director of Arrivsta Ltd. which trades as Action Coach, for choosing Sight Concern. For more information on Action COACH, please contact Simon on 01905 621566.



Get Involved:

Have these stories inspired you to get involved? We would love to hear from you if you are thinking of organising an event for Sight Concern. We have a fundraising pack full of ideas, hints and tips which we can send you. Fundraising can be anything from a coffee morning to a sweepstake. Why not organise one for the FIFA World Cup this Summer?



DONATION FORM

As a local, independent charity we rely on donations from the public to continue the good work that we do. If you feel you can support our work please complete this form and return it to:
Sight Concern Worcestershire, The Bradbury Centre, 2 Sansome Walk,
Worcester, WR1 1LH

Yes I would like to donate £5.00 or £_____ per month
(Please complete standing order below)

I am currently unable to make a regular donation but please accept my
One-off gift of £_____ (Donation enclosed)

Gift Aid Declaration (Please complete if appropriate).

I would like Sight Concern Worcestershire to claim back tax on all donations I make until further notice. I am a UK Taxpayer and understand that I must pay an amount of income/capital gains tax equal to the amount Sight Concern Worcestershire reclaims on my donations in a tax year. Currently 25p for every £1 donated.

Please tick the box to show that you agree to the declaration.

Title..... Forename..... Surname.....
Address
.....
..... Post Code
Telephone E-mail.....

Bank Standing Order form

(Please enter your bank details in block capitals)

Pay donation from:

Bank Name
Bank Address
.....
Post Code
Account Name
Account Number
Sort Code

Pay donation to:

CAF BANK
Account Number: 00013206
Sort Code: 40-52-40
Our Reference:

Monthly donation £..... until further notice starting from / / .

Date..... Signature.....

All information you provide is protected by the Data Protection Act and will not be shared with any other organisation. You have the right to advise us at any time if you do not wish to receive future mailings from Sight Concern Worcestershire.