



Oxfordshire
Association for the Blind

Newsletter

March 2019

Director's Message

With spring just around the corner and the promise of longer days and warmer weather, here at OAB we have been undertaking a traditional old fashioned 'spring clean'. The Rotary club of Oxford Spires led by The President Deborah Holland-Axtell kindly gave up their time in January to support OAB and dusted the hard to reach cobwebs, cleaned windows and prepared the meeting rooms for painting. Thank you Oxford Spires Rotary. The meeting rooms by the time you read this will all have had a fresh coat of paint and be ready for use. They are available for external hire so if you are interested please call OAB on Tel: 01865 725595 for further information.

We look forward to welcoming you to the centre over the next

few months and below is a reminder of the new opening hours of the centre and advice line. I look forward to seeing you.

We are open:
Monday-Friday
10am-3pm



Bradbury Lodge



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Opening Hours: 10am to 3pm Mon-Fri

OAB is a registered charity (No: 1140556) and limited company (No: 07465300)

Help is at Hand

As a Deafblind person, life can be very frustrating at times, but if you really try, help is at hand!

So many of today's activities are moving online and despite various organisations like GPs (NHS), the banks and our local councils claiming ease of access, for the visually impaired and the deafblind, the result is more often frustration and despair. Recently I was beset by problems seeing my computer

screen and the text on it to access such online services. In desperation I asked OAB if they could help solve some of these problems. Two sessions with OAB volunteer Guy were arranged. Guy showed me new keystrokes for magnification but most critically he got me working on my computer in reverse video (black screen with white text). Wow, what a difference that made! People with RP or Usher syndrome like me suffer from glare and retina bleaching whether indoors or outdoors.

For computer screens, reverse video removes all the screen glare to make my computer accessible once more. I am so grateful to OAB, and OAB volunteer Guy for getting me working on my computer again.

Trying to remain independent despite the dual loss of sight and hearing is quite a challenge. Simple tasks like going to the shops, to the GPs, etc. becomes a real issue. So, trying to cross the road at a controlled crossing is incredibly frustrating and even dangerous if the cone tactile indicators are not working or even worse, are missing. I was so worried about one particular dangerous road crossing with defective tactile indicators, that I decided to try and find out how to report the defective indicator and ask for it to be repaired. After an ineffective struggle with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) website, I resorted to a good old-fashioned letter to the OCC Traffic Signal Team. In under two weeks my crossing indicator was repaired and working again! I even got an email from the Traffic Signal Team Senior Engineer, Nick Marceta, telling me it had been repaired, and saying if you want to report defective traffic light tactile indicators you can

telephone 01865 815775 and leave a message; do not forget to give precise location description and your contact details. This is the Team's guaranteed point of contact and the answer machine is checked at a maximum of three hour intervals between 8am and 8pm, 365 days a year. If you prefer, you can also telephone Highways Enquiries on 0845 310 11 11 and talk to a member of their staff. Such a great response from the OCC team, so I urge you to report any tactile indicators not working or missing; it would give visually impaired and deafblind people a safer crossing point. As my dear Mother used to say, "if you don't ask you don't get"; Help is at Hand!

Michael Johnson, OAB Member

Home Visits

Do you live in the Oxford city area? And would you benefit from a regular home visit from a volunteer? Or would you like to give some time and visit someone who is visually impaired, to find out more please call Laura Finnis on 01865 725595 or email: laurafinnis@oxeyes.org.uk

Children & Young People's News

It's all been good fun with the children and young people – at least for me, not sure about the youngsters themselves! Since the last newsletter, we have enjoyed the following activities.

PIZZA-MAKING AT PIZZA

EXPRESS! Thanks to Pizza Express for kindly offering this event for free and to Manuel for his expertise – I have to say he had his hands full with some of us but it was much easier than I thought. At least we all ate our own pizzas so no-one could complain! And to top it off, we all got certificates – I don't think any standard was required!

SPELLBOUND AT THE

ASHMOLEAN! And thanks to the museum team for this opportunity for children to handle artefacts – well a copy of a very old bottle which may or may not contain a witch, hear a story and make cauldrons. The children also made potions from various materials to go in the cauldrons and made their own witches in bottles. All in a light-hearted friendly atmosphere!

PANTOMIME: DICK

WHITTINGTON AND HIS CAT

Well, it had been years since I had attended a pantomime and I had forgotten how hilarious and truly bizarre they are! The excellent cast introduced themselves to their characters during the touch tour before the show so we could familiarise ourselves a bit with who was who and the show was audio-described too. Honestly, I'm not sure who actually understood what was going on with pirates and humungous dresses and a truly funky cat but it was all part of the fun!

In the next few weeks, we are looking to go on a winter canoe trip, ice-skating (either of which could kill me off or at least turn me into a nervous wreck!) and another museum event, this time at the Pitt Rivers. Please let me know if you have any suggestions of your own or if you would like to get involved in any way.

The following article is by Victoria Beaumont about the wonderful experience and achievement of her daughter Millie Shaw among others.

We would like to say a massive 'Well done' on a very moving performance. If any other children/young people have an event or experience to share, please get in touch as it's always great to hear from you!



Having fun at the Ashmolean



Making pizzas
at Pizza
Express

A Night to Remember

Wednesday 7th November 2018 was a landmark day for young people in Oxfordshire with special needs or disabilities. It saw the first ever performance of a "buddy ensemble" from Oxfordshire which included at least three students with VI. This was a choir and accompanying band made up of a mixture of young people with SEND buddied by mainstream peers. The group performed to a packed house at London's Royal Albert Hall. The performance was of an extremely high standard and was greeted with rapturous applause and a standing ovation. Conductor and Project Director Angela Turton who is Director of Service for Oxfordshire's County Music Service described it as "a memory that would last a lifetime" for ALL concerned. The Buddy Ensemble was just one of many groups performing that night as part of the Music For Youth "School Proms". It showcased the talents of students aged 10-25 from both main stream and special schools across Oxfordshire as well as members of West Oxfordshire Wheelchair Dance group who performed a

wheelchair ballet together with dancers from the Oxfordshire Youth Musical Theatre. Angela Turton was overall Conductor with John Lubbock OBE - renowned conductor of internationally acclaimed the Orchestra of St Johns who works closely with the charity Music and Autism throughout Oxfordshire and beyond - conducting the band. The performance began with the “Adiemus from Songs of Sanctuary” by Karl Jenkins. This was followed by “This Is Me” from the greatest Showman opens with the truly poignant lyrics for such a group: “I’m not a stranger to the dark, hide away they say, we don’t want your broken parts”.

I was asked to write this article as I am the extremely proud Mum of one of the performers with a disability. My daughter Millie Shaw is blind and partially deaf. She sang in the choir with her buddy Georgie. As Georgie was one of three soloists this meant Millie was front line on stage on the night. Millie developed a trusting relationship with her buddy which made her feel safe so she was able to relax and enjoy making music with the others in the choir. She developed musically and also in her self-confidence and belief

in her own musical abilities. She hasn’t been able to stop talking about it since! As a Mum I am enormously proud of my daughter, but also proud of ALL the students with or without SEND in this amazing ensemble. Oxfordshire County Music Service brought together an amazing group of young people and what they achieved was inspirational.

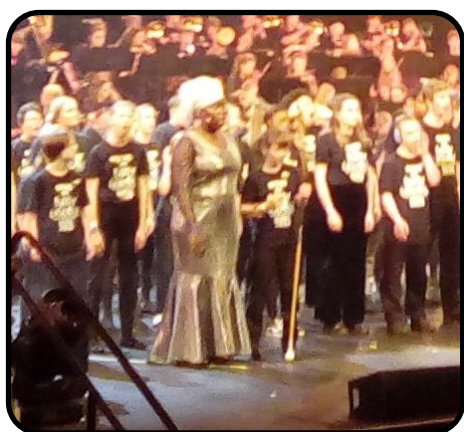
I spoke to Millie about the Buddy Ensemble Project and final performance at the Albert Hall and asked her how she felt about it....

“I felt really good about the Albert Hall. I enjoyed it a lot and it made me feel really proud of myself. Georgie looked after me and helped me to sing really well. Angela’s choir rehearsals took place on Saturdays at the Centre For Music. There were lots of rehearsals but it was good fun. I made new friends like Anna who let me feel her violin and Hannah who sang in the choir like me. I’d love to do something like this again”.

The performance at the Royal Albert Hall was the culmination of months of work. Music Service staff ran buddy band rehearsals at weekends

Staff also rehearsed throughout the autumn with students in participating schools to prepare them for the final performance in London. Rehearsals were also filmed and clips were put together to form a video montage so those students unable to cope with the whole day at the Albert Hall were represented on the day in a film which was showed on large screens in-between the two pieces of music.

This was a truly inclusive project and an immense achievement for all those who took part, which will have a lasting impact. Finally here was an opportunity for SEND students not just to take part, but to showcase their abilities performing to a high standard and being given a chance to show the world just what they can do. Thank you to Oxfordshire County Music Service for making this happen, as a Mum, I feel this is the start of bigger things to come for our young people if given the chance.



Millie on stage at the Royal Albert Hall

Come and See Us

The resource centre is open from 10am until 3pm, Monday to Friday and our Client Advice Officer is here to help!

Give us a call to make an appointment and we can help with:

- Lighting
- Magnification aids
- Kitchen Aids
- Clocks and watches
- Audiobooks and Talking Newspapers
- Technology

And much much more...

Give Nathan a call on 01865 725595.

Oxford Macular Group

Daphne Dorman is pleased to report that the new Leader of the Oxford group is Mrs. Anne Lee. Her telephone number is: 01865 316245 in case of enquiries.

Recycle for Good Causes

If you have any unwanted jewellery or other items please use the enclosed envelope, if you require an envelope please contact us.

Local Clubs and Groups

Abingdon & District Macular Group – 01235 531857.

ActivEyes – 01865 725595.

Banbury Macular Group – 01608 685293.

Chipping Norton Group – 01608 810899.

Didcot / Wallingford Visually Impaired Group – 01235 813391.

Dreaming Spires ten pin bowling – 01869 331778.

Goring Macular Group – 01865 725595.

Henley Visually Impaired Group – 01491 628284.

Kidlington Macular Group – 01865 376482 or 01865 373104.

LOOK Oxfordshire – support for families of visually impaired children, 01189 722322.

Oxford Macular Group – 01865 316245.

‘OXVIC’ – Oxford Visually Impaired Club – 01865 725595.

Retinitis Pigmentosa Group - 01235 511044.

Thame & District Society for the Visually Impaired – 01844 212983.

‘VIBNO’ – Visually Impaired But Not Old! - 01869 331778.

Wantage Blind Social Club - 01235 764646 or 01235 765849.

Witney Friends of the Visually Impaired – 01865 725595.

Witney Macular Group – 01993 771828.

Sensory Impairment Team

The County Council has an excellent team of specially trained staff supporting people of all ages affected by sensory impairment.

Their telephone no. is: **01865 894935.**

Carers Oxfordshire

A service for anyone who is caring for another person and would like some support. Their no. is: **0845 0507666**

OAB is assisted by:

