



Oxfordshire

Association for the Blind



November Newsletter 2021



Inside this issue: What's On, Children and Young People's Update, Ian's Story, Remembering Mum, Christmas Gift Ideas, plus lots more!

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What's On

December

- 9 Introduction to Alexa
- 10 Christmas Jumper Day
- 22 Science Oxford Family Fun Day

January

- 4 World Braille Day
- 8 Panto at the Oxford Playhouse
- 10 Raffle closing date
- 10 Introduction to Braille
- 14 OAB New Year Raffle Draw

February

- 2 Introduction to Smartphones

March

- 15 OPTELEC information day
- 22 OPTELEC information day

Join our lottery

Scan the QR below or visit
<https://bit.ly/3hdAm9t>

When you sign
up to our lottery
you are directly
supporting
OAB and in with
a chance of
winning £25,000!



CEO Message

What is in a name?

.....

Quite a lot! Our name Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB) has been with us since 1977. For some it's a name associated with positive memories and people they have met. For others it can be off-putting and feel quite negative, and even the term 'the blind' can feel condescending, we are not the blind, we are blind or visually impaired people!

So, with that in mind we are now putting the wheels in motion to change our name. We are a positive organisation, so we need a positive, modern, welcoming name that reflects who we are. We don't want people to be put off from accessing our services just because of our name.

What will we be called? If you have any suggestions, please let us know. We would like to share some suggestions in the new year and ask for your opinions. We've got to all feel comfortable and confident using our new name. Once we've collected

all the feedback and listened to your thoughts, we'll set out the new name and branding in Spring 2022. To help us all understand the reasons behind this, we've put together a few FAQs, you can read these online, or give us a call and a member of the team can answer your questions.



Get in touch

Email: info@oxeyes.org.uk
Call: 01865 725 595
[oxeyes.org.uk/NameFAQ](https://www.oxeyes.org.uk/NameFAQ)

Finally, I'd like to take this time to thank everyone for their support. As the year comes to an end, we can reflect on everything that has happened this year. Despite the negative backdrop of Covid, fuel and food shortages and everything in between our work shines through. We are making a positive impact in the community and that is because of everyone's dedication and hard work. Thank you, Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Mark

Mark Upton
Chief Executive Officer





In August we explored the Botanic Gardens, and Cutteslowe Nursery and Garden Centre. They were both relaxing experiences (despite the insects and tarantulas at the latter) and it was lovely to be out in nature and learning about it as we touched and smelt various plants – and stick insects!

We returned to Science Oxford for more fun - and education too! Trying out all the different experiments and making mobiles from natural objects from the woodland outside. We'll be returning here just before Christmas for some Winter Fun!

We had an amazing day at Millets Farm with SPR Expeditions led by Steve and Jane. They taught us how to create shelters in the woods, and we all enjoyed toasting marshmallows as we sat around the campfire before a treasure hunt with some helpful guidance!



Children and Young People

An update from Laura Finnis



Looking back on the year, the nerves of getting started again post-lockdown seem so far away, and it's been great to see many of the youngsters and their families once again.

We have continued to play Tennis every Wednesday which continues to be good fun and good exercise and we are improving, although I'm not sure anyone who saw us would think that!

Aged 5-25, want to join in?



E-mail or call Laura Finnis
laurafinnis@oxeyes.org.uk
01865 725 595



We tried our hand (or foot rather!) at FootGolf in half-term. It was great fun kicking a football around a golf course - with much bigger holes!



We also ventured to the newly re-opened Museum of Oxford. We smelt, touched, and heard our way through costumes, merchandise and the various uses of the Town Hall building. We even made Morris dancer hats!!

And lastly, if you're not too exhausted already, we had a day trip to the Dan-yr-Ogof caves in Wales. We were meant to walk up Pen-y-fan but due to the bad weather we went caving instead! It was fantastic, exploring stalactites and stalagmites, lakes and waterfalls inside and a whole dinosaur park outside so well worth the travel.



All in all, good fun and a busy year. We would love to hear from anyone who would like to join in our events and from anyone who has ideas of possible events and activities. We like to try all things new! Thank you for your interest and support and we wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

We'll be back in 2022!



Fundraising in the community



Andy runs the Manchester Marathon in support of OAB

On the 10th October Andy Smith from Banbury ran the Manchester Marathon and completed 26.2 miles in 4hrs and 23mins! An incredible achievement and not only did he make a fantastic time, he also raised over £800 for OAB!

“It was brilliant, running past crowds of people cheering us all on! I was so pleased to see my family: Amanda, Dominic, Kai, Mum, Dad and my Godparents. At mile 22 I hit a wall and really struggled but someone saw my vest and called out my name and spurred me on to the end, I even got a sprint finish!”



Lawrence takes on the Blenheim Super Sprint Triathlon

On the 11th of September volunteer and supporter Lawrence Watson took on the challenge of competing in the Blenheim Palace Super Sprint Triathlon consisting of 400m Swim, 13.3km Cycle, and a 2.9km Run. Lawrence chose to support OAB and raised an amazing £570!

“I have enjoyed being part of the OAB befriending scheme which has been a lifeline for so many in the past year. I am blind in my left eye so this is a cause that is close to my heart.”

Want to take on a challenge?
Get in touch  info@oxeyes.org.uk

Introducing... Daniel Fernandes

In 2019 Daniel and his family emigrated to the UK from South Africa but just two weeks after the move, his sight rapidly deteriorated.

“I have been living with visual impairment my whole life, but in 2019 my vision was drastically reduced. After suffering a haemorrhage in my retina, between February 2019 and August 2020, I had only 4 or 5 days of clear vision.

In August I was rushed to the JR for emergency surgery, to reduce very high pressure which was causing intense pain. After the initial success of the first operation, the pressure spiked again which resulted in a second operation, this time a tube implant on the 18th of December.

The operation went well, and my vision was much clearer until the evening after, when my sight went almost completely black. It turned out that a sudden drop in pressure had caused folds in my retina, which meant that



I spent Christmas and New Year in darkness.

It has been tough; my mental health has taken a beating. I have gone through some counselling, which has been really helpful and that's what motivated me to plan my birthday as a fundraiser.

I wanted to raise money for OAB as I was always in contact with them for advice, and they were always there. I would pick up the phone or send an email and they would always point me in the right direction.

The party was great fun, and it was so good to see friends and family after COVID, we even had a dance off!”

Daniel raised an incredible £1,000 for OAB for his 40th Birthday Fundraiser with donations in lieu of gifts. from his friends and family.



Remembering Mum

By Lucy Linczyc

My beloved mother, Margot Linczyc, was a supporter of OAB for 12 years.

Mum received assistance from the amazing team at OAB who shared invaluable advice, support, and lots of brilliant equipment.

When she was no longer able to visit the centre, a regular volunteer, Thomas, visited her at home. He read to her and brought such joy, and for this we are extremely grateful.

One of her main wishes was to donate her fantastic equipment gathered over the years. Mum would be delighted that others will continue to benefit from her equipment, and I would encourage other families to consider doing the same. Every little donation helps someone else!

Thank you OAB for being there for both mum and me. Your support over the years has been invaluable, bringing happiness, laughter, and strength.

You are an incredible resource.

Are you of working-age?

Would you like to join similar people on the phone for a group conversation once a fortnight?

If you are interested, please let us know and we will find a day and time that is suitable for everyone.

There is no cost to you as we will make the calls and connect you.

It's a great way to meet new people and make new friends.

Please give us a call to register your interest:
01865 725 595

OAB has been supported by:

- Banbury Town Council
- Bicester Town Council
- Henley on Thames Council
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Witney Town Council



Ian's Story



Since moving back to Oxfordshire in April I have been wonderfully supported by OAB. It has been great to see first-hand how Nathan, who has a similar degree of blindness to me, copes with everyday life. It has given me confidence and reassurance at what had become a very difficult stage in my life and gave me renewed optimism for the future.

Nathan has helped guide me in the ways of the iPad and iPhone so I can enjoy "reading" audible books, decipher and answer emails, and communicate much more easily. I have started to read Braille and OAB have loaned me

a text-to-speech device which enables me to read magazines, books, journals, and interpret diagrams.

OAB has helped me realise that with perseverance and a good level of support, blindness need not be an obstacle to continuing a full and active life. For someone like me, who has had a challenging career, reared a family as a single father, and had previously enjoyed a wide range of hobbies - from singing, to sailing and building a model railway - the relatively sudden onset of sight loss through glaucoma has been a massive blow. OAB is helping me enormously in overcoming a disability that could have blighted my life.

OAB relies on voluntary donations from supporters, so please consider donating this Christmas. OAB offer a uniquely supportive and personalised service to people who might otherwise become isolated and lonely, through the loss of such a vital sense, one which we so often take for granted.



Share your story
info@oxeyes.org.uk



ActiveEyes

We have really enjoyed the past few months, particularly now we can meet in person. Our regular social sessions will continue to take place on the third Thursday of each month, 7:30pm at the Duke of Monmouth on the Abingdon Road, Oxford. It has been great to see so many of you again and we will continue this into the new year.

Recently, VI Tennis has restarted, and it has been great to get active again! We are beginning to offer lifts to Wheels for All again and we hope that some of you may take part in the Tandem event next year.

We have started a regular trip to Cutteslowe Horticultural Centre and are hoping to start sailing in the spring.

If you would like to attend any of our groups, please email Guy Lawfull at activeeyes@oxeyes.org.uk

Nathan's Introduction to Alexa

Would you like to learn the simplest way to access the internet without needing to see anything?

Alexa can help you listen to RNIB audiobooks, use voice dialling for phone calls, set timers and alarms, find bus times and much more!

Join us on the 9th of December 1.30pm at Bradbury Lodge to find out more!

Please R.S.V.P by e-mail info@oxeyes.org.uk or call 01865 725 595

Use Amazon Smile when shopping

When you shop through Amazon Smile we receive FREE donations, at no extra cost to you! www.smile.amazon.co.uk

O X S I G H T O N Y X

Are you ready for this?

OXSIGHT Onyx[®] are the most advanced smart glasses we've ever made, specifically designed for central vision loss.

- **86%** said their ability to **read** had significantly improved
- **3 out of 4** people could **recognise faces** and facial expressions better
- **75%** had improved **object recognition** and could identify significantly more detail in an image

Without OXSIGHT Onyx[®]

"I can see some lines but that's about it."

"I can't see his face. I couldn't tell you who it is."

With OXSIGHT Onyx[®]

"I can see his teeth, his tongue, his nose, his eyes, his ears."

"The detail is a lot clearer. I can see his face. I can see facial hair."

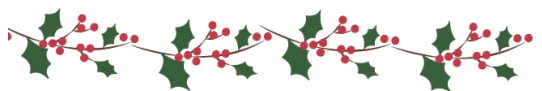


Would OXSIGHT Onyx[®] change your life?

To find out more visit www.oxsightglobal.com or call 01865 580255 to book your free demo



There are lots of ways in which you can help support OAB this Christmas.



Even the smallest gesture can help make a huge difference.

Whether it is helping to sell Raffle Tickets to your friends or family, donating to our Christmas appeal, or simply letting someone know about the work that OAB do.

If you would like more information, please contact

**info@oxeyes.org.uk
01865 725 595**

Alternative gift ideas



Why not get someone the gift that keeps on giving and enter a loved one (over 18) into our lottery where for just £1 you are in with a chance of winning £25,000!

Stocking Filler? No problem. Our New Year Raffle is the perfect gift to see in 2022. The draw will take place on the 14th of January 2022 and the lucky winner will take home the Grand Prize of £1000. There are lots of other prizes too such as tickets to The Cotswold Wildlife Park, Blenheim Palace, and vouchers for the Oxford Playhouse, plus lots more!

Gift ideas for you? We have lots of different equipment on display in our resource centre. If you are looking for a new gadget to help you day-to-day then why not arrange to come in for a visit and see what works for you.

**Text OABXMAS to 70450
to donate £10**
Texts cost £10 plus your standard network rate