

BRIGHT EYES

The Newsletter for Supporters of the Berkshire County Blind Society

Star Performers!

Summer 2010

BCBS has been overwhelmed by the number of energetic fundraisers who have been raising money to support our work.

In March Emma Haworth once again ran for BCBS in the London Marathon, raising just under £1,000. Then in May Caroline Masih spent 9 days trekking the Great Wall of China, raising an incredible £2,800. This is the first time that Caroline has ever taken part in an overseas challenge event, and she is the first person to do so for BCBS.

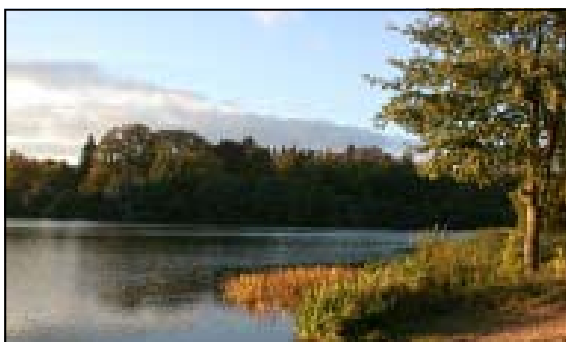


In July three intrepid groups took part in two separate events. Two teams successfully completed the National Three Peaks Challenge, which involved climbing the three highest peaks in the UK - Snowdon in Wales, Scafell Pike in England and Ben Nevis in Scotland - within 24 hours.

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Sponsored Walk - Virginia Water Lake

Our 2008 Walk around Virginia Water Lake was so popular that we've been asked to do it again. The 4 mile walk, will take place on Sunday 19th September and will include a number of mini challenges to provide walkers with the opportunity to try some simple everyday tasks whilst wearing



Simispecs, glasses that simulate a range of visual impairments.

Virginia Water is a beautiful setting for a picnic afterwards. It is also popular with dog walkers, joggers and cyclists so you can combine all your family's interests.

To take part all you need to do is complete and return an entry form with your registration fee (either enclosed, or available on our website at www.bcbs.org.uk/events).

The 2008 walk raised nearly £8,000 - let's see if we can beat that sum in our Centenary Year.

www.bcbs.org.uk

Centenary Dates for your Diary

September

2nd - Newbury Club Coffee morning
25th - Curry evening, Twyford
19th - Sponsored Walk, Virginia Water
27th - Centenary AGM, Newbold College

October

2nd -Country Dance, Aborfield
3rd - Strictly Showcase, Reading
9th -Thatcham Arts Festival
14th - World Sight Day Event, Reading

December

Christmas Lights Fundraiser, Bracknell

This list is not complete or final as many events have still to be confirmed as we go to print..... but here's a taste of possible things to come

November

Bonfire Party at Legoland

December

Christmas Fair/Raffle
Victorian Extravaganza -
Hungerford Club



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A 14 strong team from Bakehouse, including Managing Director Tony Brown and led by team leader David Plummer, were the first to set off on 16th July, in their bid to raise £10,000. Unluckily for them, the hot sunshine we all enjoyed at the beginning of July was replaced by downpours but they still completed the challenge in under 24 hours.

Proving that sight loss is no barrier to an active life, BCBS member Ian Cartwright joined his friends Rob Sutcliffe, Rich Pierce and Alex McTaggart and completed the Three Peaks Challenge the following weekend, 22nd and 23rd July, in 23 hours. So far they have raised over £800, with pledges still to be collected.



Then on July 24th Bakehouse employee Nicky Cracknell and friend Felicity Jenkins took part in the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge, hiking the peaks of Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough in under 12 hours and look set to raise over £600.

BCBS is very grateful to all these supporters, and their backup teams, for their fantastic efforts on behalf of Berkshire's visually impaired residents.

Fundraising News

Berkshire County Blind Society has been awarded a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. This three year grant will fund a brand new project designed specifically to reach out to visually impaired people living in more rural parts of Berkshire and those aged 20 to 50 who participate less regularly in the range of activities we offer. Berkshire is a diverse county, which includes cosmopolitan urban centres like Slough and Reading, market towns such as Hungerford and Newbury and large swathes of open countryside dotted with villages and isolated houses. Our 2,000 plus members are equally diverse. We hope that this project will help us to understand better the needs of visually impaired people living throughout Berkshire.

This, in turn, will help us to develop a range of services that are appealing and accessible to more visually impaired people in order to enhance their quality of life. The grant will allow us to employ a full-time member of staff who will consult with members and volunteers to develop a programme of support and activities to reach out to more visually impaired people. It will be a challenging role but one that could have a tremendous impact on the lives of visually impaired people.



In 2009 our staff spent over 4,500 hours visiting blind and partially sighted people in their own homes across Berkshire.

Strictly Showcase

3rd October 2010 at Earley Crescent Centre



On Sunday 3 October at 3.30pm dancers from clubs and groups in the South East will come together to bring a touch of the “Strictly” magic to the Earley Crescent Centre. The dancers will showcase their skills in Tango, Salsa, Charleston and Jive. The event promises to be full of energy and the audience will have the opportunity to have a go in taster sessions.

Tickets are £5 for adults and £3 for children over the age of 10 (not suitable for under 10s) and refreshments will be available on the day. Tickets are limited and can be obtained now from BCBS. Complete the enclosed order form or call us on 0118 987 2803 for more information. All proceeds from the event will be shared between Berkshire County Blind Society and FAST, a community support group set up by one of BCBS’ members to support local people with disabilities.

How you can help

We are an independent organisation and do not receive any funding from the RNIB or central government though we receive some local funding for our social work activities. There are a number of different ways you can support Berkshire County Blind Society and our work with blind and partially sighted people living in Berkshire.



Make a one-off or regular donation

Whether large or small, one-off donations provide a welcome cash boost to the essential services we provide to visually impaired people. You can make a donation by sending a cheque payable to **the Berkshire County Blind Society** to the address on the back page. Or you can donate online at www.justgiving.com. You can also make a regular donation by Direct Debit and help to secure our future.

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If you are a UK Taxpayer, the Society can claim 28p from the taxman for every pound you give through the Gift Aid scheme and it won't cost you a penny! You can do this easily when you donate online or get in touch with us on 0118 987 2803.

Volunteer

If you have some spare time to offer, we would love to hear from you. We have a variety of tasks to suit everyone - from visiting people in their homes to accompanying members on outings and providing IT support. **Please contact Andrea Stannard on 0118 987 2803.**



Berkshire County Blind Society also needs volunteers to help with its planned supermarket and street collections. Are you able to spare a few hours on any of the following dates, either collecting or transporting our client volunteers? **Please call us on 0118 987 2803.**

August 20 and 21 - Wokingham
September 17 and 18 - Winnersh
September 24 and 25 - Newbury
October 1 and 2 - Maidenhead

October 15 and 16 - Lower Earley
October 23 - Calcot
October 29 - Bracknell

Take part in one of our fundraising events

Or organise your own event. Form an employee fundraising group and organise a sponsored event. Many employers will match funds raised by employees - perhaps your employer might do so? **Call us on 0118 987 2803.**

Get Active Sports

It's a sad fact that visually impaired children and young people often miss out on physical activities provided for their fully sighted peers in school and there is rarely any activity adapted to their particular needs outside school.

The BCBS Get Active Sports Club provides an opportunity for children and young people with a visual impairment to experience various activities in a safe, enjoyable and supported environment. They are able to learn new sporting skills, let off steam, improve their physical health and develop their social skills, under the supervision of trained coaches and instructors, some of whom are also visually impaired.

Since December 2009 members joining in the Get Active Sports Club have been able to enjoy a variety of sports, including goalball, basketball, football, athletics, cricket, jujitsu, rock climbing and tennis.



Some of the sports have been developed further and have provided the youngsters with the chance to take part in public competitions and demonstrations. The BCBS Celebrity Cricket Match at Bradfield College (see over) was a tremendous boost for our group, who had only played cricket a few times at the Get Active Club. They were given the chance not only to play against professionals but also at a public event, attended by their families. Following an athletics day in February two went on to enter into a competition organised by the Metro Sports and Social Club for the Visually Impaired. They returned with six medals.

The Club's activities are funded until March 2011. After that, each session will cost BCBS £355. Please help secure the Club's future, up to and beyond the 2012 Paralympics, by making a donation today.

All the children helped by the BCBS have a serious diagnosed eye condition. 75% have additional special needs including profound development delay, autism, cerebral palsy, hearing impairment, communication difficulties or epilepsy.

LASHINGS of Fun!

All the practice and hard work of our Get Active members paid off on when they gave a demonstration of Blind Cricket during the interval at the BCBS Celebrity Cricket Match at Bradfield College on the 6th June, with support from London's Metro Blind Cricket Club.

The members of the Lashings World XI were great sports and it didn't take much to persuade them to don Simispecs, (special glasses that simulate various forms of sight loss) to experience what it feels like to play cricket blind. Little did they realise that we were also joined by England Blind team member John Garbett and Blind Cricket Yorkshire's captain Atif Rafiq.

Lashings stalwart Richie Richardson said: "I played against some bowlers who were very difficult to play in my career, like Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, but this was something completely different for me, it's a complete step into the unknown."



BCBS players join forces with volunteers from London Metro against the Lashings World XI

Lashings' Captain, New Zealand all-rounder Chris Harris, who was almost bowled out by John Garbett, agreed: "We all take so much for granted," he said. "Wearing these glasses allowed us to experience what it must be like for these players and made us appreciate how fortunate we are to be able to play international cricket."

BCBS is now working with Blind Cricket England and Wales (BCEW) to develop its own county team but unfortunately this all costs money - bats, stumps and coaching and, when we start competing nationally, cricket "whites" and transport. We need your support!

Curry Evening

**With entertainment by
tribute band A4ABBA**

25th September 2010

**Twyford Youth and
Community Centre**



Tickets £15

**includes authentic Indian meal and
soft drinks.**

BYO wine and beer

**Tickets are limited and are available
now from BCBS**

Why we do what we do

BCBS has recently hosted a series of EyeT4All taster courses for computer novices to try out Guide magnification and speech software. The sessions were successful in sparking an interest with a number of visually impaired people, but many have very limited knowledge and need extra help to get started in their homes and/or to solve problems as they occur.

We also regularly receive “crisis calls” from other members who are struggling with their technology and, whilst we could refer them to remote services, we try to help



as their level of knowledge can be limited and referring them to a third party can be demotivating, complex and expensive.

In response we are trying to set up a project to give members access to one-to-one IT support in their homes. It will be offered by local volunteers with the appropriate experience and training (plus CRB checks and support from BCBS) and will help visually impaired people to tackle basic IT/ set-up problems. It is still in its early stages but we hope to have volunteers based across Berkshire. Please support this project if you can.

“Part of the world again”

by Jeanne Scott, BCBS Member

I was introduced to Guide computer speech and magnification programme by BCBS and it has made all the difference in my life. With failing sight more things were becoming difficult or even impossible and now, although I am registered severely sight impaired, using Guide has suddenly opened up the world again. Not only am I able to enlarge the print on the page and change the colour to my choice, but the computer tells me every key I press and

reads to me (in an option of voices and speeds) what is on the screen.

I have now taken on responsibility to lead a History Group of our local U3A (University of the Third Age) because I can listen to an account on a web site, or a CD or watch a DVD then type up notes which I print out in a very large print enabling me to present my work to the group.

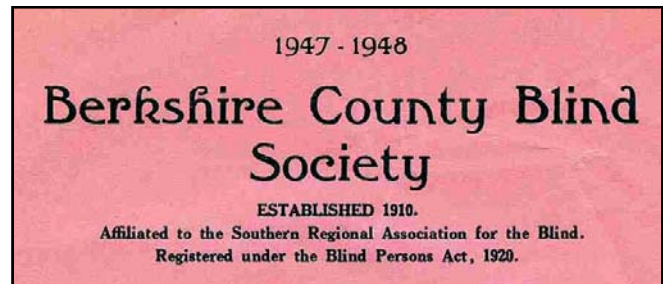
“Contact by e-mail with friends and family is incredibly easy. It is brilliant to feel part of the world again!”

63 years of help from BCBS

My first contact with BCBS was over 60 years ago aged five, following two unsuccessful eye operations which had left me with little sight in one eye and none in the other. After the operation someone from the Council came to visit my mother and informed her that I would be shortly going to boarding school in Bristol. Mother was so taken aback that she just cried "No!" and sent him away. So our doctor put us in touch with BCBS to help us come to terms with the situation. We were visited regularly over the next few years by Miss Musgrove (and later Miss Reeves) from BCBS, and they became good family friends.

In 1949 I started school at Drayton Manor in Tring. Miss Musgrove still visited us during the holidays and took our family to Ascot to meet another family whose little girl was about to start at the same school. We were able to give both parents and child reassurance about the school and our families kept in touch for many years.

I lost the remains of my sight gradually, but knew BCBS were there with assistance when required. Miss Musgrove continued to visit me until I moved to Tilehurst in 1965 and saw my first child as a baby.



When we had to move to Harrow there was no home visiting but, on moving back to Earley, I was helped again by BCBS. In 1977 I had several weeks of mobility training and was supported in finding work as an audio-typist and telephonist.

In 2002 my elderly parents and I went with BCBS on a group holiday to Babacombe. This was the last holiday we had together as my father became very ill and my mother died soon after he recovered. Most of my time now is spent caring for my father, but I have still enjoyed various outings with BCBS for which I am really grateful.

All this shows just how much I and others have been helped and encouraged over the years by BCBS and I would like to offer them my sincere thanks, to congratulate them on their Centenary and wish them many more years of success.

Pat Cocks BCBS Member



Serving Berkshire for 100 years

Brighteyes is published by **Berkshire County Blind Society**
Middleton House, 5 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR
Telephone: 0118 987 2803

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