



Sandwell Visually Impaired Newsletter Issue 13 Summer 2010



A great big thank you to walkers and sponsors

After all the wonderful sunshine this summer, SVI and the Friends of Dartmouth Park must have chosen the wettest day for our sponsored walk on 4 July. But we weren't deterred.

The Mayor of Sandwell, Cllr. Mrs Pauline Hinton, officiated at the opening, introduced by SVI's Chair, Graham who said: "This is a great example of two user led groups collaborating to give all members of their communities, the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of this wonderful park."

Walkers included 'Blind' Dave, representatives from the Police, Mansell the contractors, as well as

Friends of the park and SVI members, AND three very wet guide dogs!

Funds raised are going towards a planned sensory garden in the park and Mansell kindly agreed to help us.

Despite the weather the occasion was greatly enjoyed and we hope sufficient monies will be raised for this exciting project. If anyone would like to make a donation, please make cheques payable to Sandwell Visually Impaired.

In memory

We were sad to learn of the passing of Mr Jeffrey Raymond Hadley. Our sincerest condolences to his family for their sad loss. We deeply appreciate the generous donation made by his family and friends and will use this in a way that will benefit the visually impaired community of Sandwell.

In this issue

- Make a spectacle of yourself for World Sight Day!
- Take a trip to the theatre
- And much more for you to enjoy.

SVI aims to make living and/or working in Sandwell better for people coping with sight loss.

Interested in growing your own food?

Did you once enjoy growing your own food but have lost your sight and your confidence?



Do you have sight problems and are interested in learning some new techniques for growing your own food?

Then why not come to the Thrive Garden Workshop at Ideal for All on Wednesday 15 September 11am – 3pm.

There will be: practical workshops where you will learn techniques for successful food growing; a visit to Salop Drive Market Garden for a tour and tasting of the abundant crops; and a chance to meet other blind and visually impaired gardeners. You will have plants, gardening advice and fresh ideas to take home.

Tea, coffee and lunch will be provided.

For further information or to book a place, contact:

Wendy Chamberlain or Susan Twigg at Thrive on: **0118 988 5688**, email info@thrive.org.uk

Make friends with a book

Enjoy the pleasure of books in the company of others who enjoy a 'good read'. Since November 2009, group reading sessions have taken place in Smethwick Library. For two hours a week the group gets together to read a short story, with pauses for discussion and sharing of thoughts and feelings brought up by the text. The group leader reads aloud, but offers the opportunity for others to read parts of the story if they want to. The session finishes with a poem, read and discussed in the same way.



Tea, coffee and toast are provided part way through. Of the 48 people who have attended so far, six have a visual impairment. Stuart, SVI's Assistant Secretary attends regularly and agrees that the group is most welcoming.

Sessions are open to everyone over 16. Each session stands

alone – so why not go along and give it a try? Just turn up or call Smethwick Library on **0121 558 0497** for more info.

Make a Spectacle of yourself for World Sight Day



Graham dons specs and tips his hat to World Sight Day!

World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness about blindness and visual impairment held on the second Thursday in October. To mark the occasion, SVI will be out and about on **14 October** at local supermarkets in the borough making a spectacle of ourselves. We will be raising awareness of

sight loss prevention and the importance of regular eye checks. To draw attention to ourselves we will wear bright colours and, in some cases, outlandish glasses! We will also use the opportunity to engage people of all ages in the community on priorities for the new Sandwell Vision Strategy. On **Friday 15 October**, there will be a sight awareness day at The Independent living Centre. Come along to find out about services, aids and equipment that help people live with sight loss. The message is '**your sight matters so have a regular sight check**'.

I Would Miss

I would miss the melancholy
clouds crying on me
I would miss the snow falling
from the cloudy sky
I would miss the sight of my
family's faces
I would miss the sight of animals
I would miss the sight of birds
gliding through the air
I would miss looking at famous
pieces of art
I would miss reading my favourite
books
I would miss watching films
Get your eyes tested!

Written by Conor, Year I pupil at
Mesty Croft School

What a show!

On 29 June, we held our Open Meeting at The Public. It was the first time SVI had used this venue and the staff made us very welcome.

Attended by over 60 people, it has been heralded as one of the most successful meetings yet. Guests included representatives from Birmingham's Repertory and Hippodrome Theatres and Wolverhampton's Grand.

To give us an idea of how audio description works, we were shown a DVD of a play and an audio describer narrated between the dialogue. Afterwards, props were given to the audience to examine more closely. There was even a dog's head and my guide dog took a real interest in that! Other items included costumes, hats and a sword.

A question and answer session gave us a chance to dispel some of the problems



which we may encounter. So, if you want to try the theatre for the first time or make a return visit, get in touch with the theatres on the following pages – they will only be too glad to help.

A welcome awaits you at the Grand

The Wolverhampton Grand Theatre is committed to providing and constantly improving its services for visually impaired theatre goers. A dedicated member of staff attends all audio described performances to both welcome and assist customers.

Free touch tours led by the audio describer are available one hour before each audio described performance. Headsets for the audio description are available from the kiosk staff.

Guide dogs are welcome and a call to the box office is all it takes to secure a seat with leg room for both you and your dog.

Seating is reserved close to the front of the stage and the Grand currently operates a half-price ticket scheme for audio described performances only.

Customers can join the mailing list and the VI email club to find out what's on and get up-to-date information on seat availability by contacting Janine Graeme on **01902 573311** or email Janine@grandtheatre.co.uk

Little Shop of Horrors at Birmingham REP

The Rep has kindly offered limited FREE tickets for the audio described performances of Little Shop of Horrors for our visually impaired readers.

The show is a weird and wacky rock musical with a cast of strange characters – geeky Seymour who's in love with ditsy Audrey, girlfriend of the terrifying and sadistic dentist Orin. Slowly taking over the stage though is Audrey II – an exotic plant that grows to monstrous proportions and develops a blood thirsty appetite.



Thursday 16 September matinee 2pm with Touch Tour 12.30pm Or evening show 7.30pm (TT 6pm)

For free tickets and a place on the minibus contact Liz soon – see next column.

Liz here to help

Hi, I'm Liz and I'm co-ordinating SVI's theatre events.

You may have been at the last SVI Open Day when we heard about audio description and tried it. Here's a chance to try it for real.

SVI has been offered a few tickets to see 'The Little Shop of Horrors' at the Birmingham Rep on 16 September. There's a touch tour before the performances [matinee or evening shows], where you can have hands-on experience of the props and costumes used in the show.

The tickets are free, but there will be a small fee for transport.

Why not come along for a great afternoon or evening's entertainment? There will be a chance to sample the café bar as well.

Interested? Ring or email me and I will reserve you a place on the minibus and add your name to my list for future theatre information.

Call Liz on **0121 429 8104**

lizannhammer@talktalk.net



Spamalot

Alexandra Theatre Birmingham is pleased to announce that an audio described performance of 'Monty Python's Spamalot' by Vocaleyes will take place on Saturday 18 December at 2.30pm.

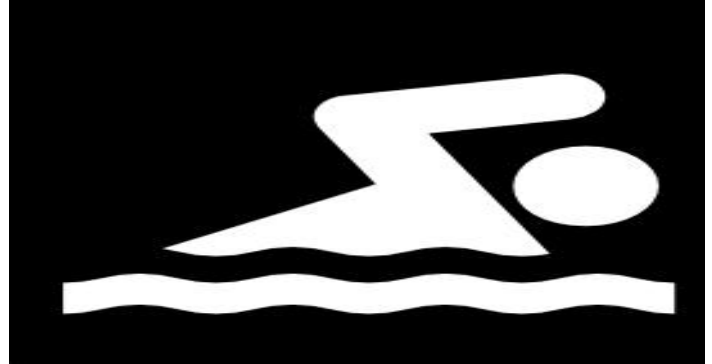
It's a new musical lovingly ripped off from Monty Python and the Holy Grail which tells the legendary tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

It features a bevy (or possibly a brace) of beautiful show girls, cows, killer rabbits and French people.

The cast include Olivier Award winning actor Matthew Kelly as 'King Arthur', Todd Carty (BBC1's Eastenders) as 'Patsy', the nation's favourite Nancy Jodie Prenger (BBC1's 'I'd do anything') as the 'Lady of the lake' and Eric Idle as 'God'.

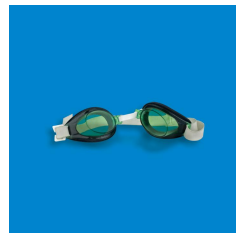
Tickets priced £17 can be purchased by telephoning **0121 632 5554** (Open Mon – Sat from 10am until 6pm) or by emailing access4allbirmingham@theambassadors.com

SVI splashes out!

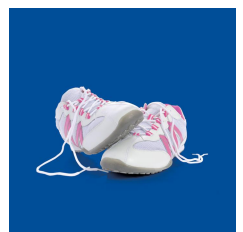
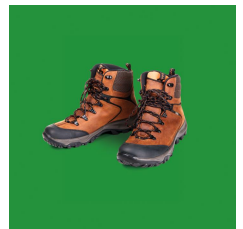


Over 20 SVI members and friends regularly take to the water at Alexandra High School on Monday evenings.

Swimmers and learners get a chance to take a dip knowing that help is on hand should they need it. With swimming buddies in the water even the least confident of us have dipped our toes.



Experienced swimmers get time to do a length or three as well. It's great fun and there's more to come thanks to the 5x30 Time to Get Active programme – we'll let you know about future activities like more line dancing and walking plus lots more.



Would you like to know more about SAIBA?

Sandwell Active Independent Blind Association (SAIBA) is a user led group that organises social and leisure activities for visually impaired people and their friends who want to get out and about and have a good time.

It's SAIBA's 30th birthday in 2011 and we are busy arranging some fun things for our members.

This year we have a holiday to Greece, a Ghost Walk, ten pin bowling, evenings and days out as well as our regular weekly meetings in West Brom and Oldbury.

Want to join?

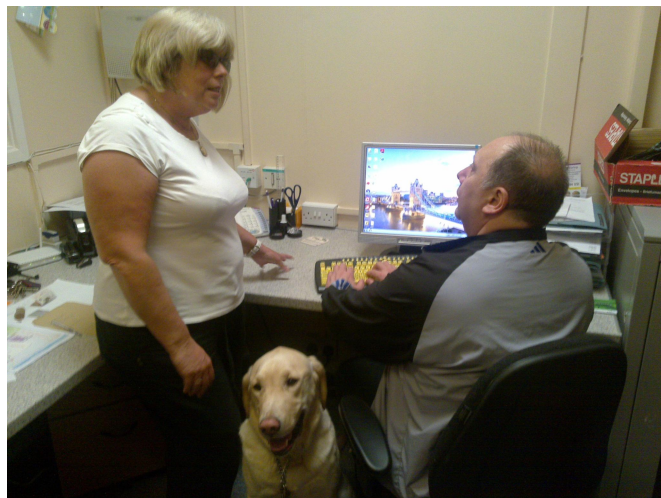
Find out more by ringing Stuart on **07766 704 070** or email

stuart@saiba.org

Or call Sandra at the SVI office on **0121 525 4810**.

Computer training for visually impaired people

Dudley College is working closely with community organisations to provide a range of nationally accredited I.T. courses locally.



They offer various qualifications from beginners level – typing letters, email and internet; through to advanced level – word processing, spreadsheets, databases, internet, email, and PowerPoint, using a variety of software including Dolphin guide, JAWS and Supernova.

They were awarded the BCS Quality Mark for Accessibility in 2009 for their inclusive IT training provision for disabled people. Several SVI members have attended these courses and gained qualifications – so why not give it a try?

New courses will be starting soon, so if you are interested and wish to obtain further information about the courses or local venues you can contact Jo Griffin on **01384 363223** or email your query to jo.griffin@dudleycol.ac.uk



Recipe: Healthy Tiramisu

Ingredients: 3 egg yolks; 3 tablespoons [tbs] of granulated artificial sweetener; 12 sponge fingers; 4 drops of vanilla essence; 4 oz skimmed milk quark; 2 tbs of coffee dissolved in 2 tbs of water; 2 tbs low fat fromage frais; 2 tbs brandy; 12 chocolate covered coffee beans
2 level tbs cocoa powder

Method: Whisk together the egg yolks and 1 tbs of sweetener until thick and creamy. Add the vanilla essence and quark. Whisk gently, then add the remaining quark and whisk until smooth.

Break the sponge fingers in half and spread evenly on the base of a shallow dish. Mix the coffee and brandy and spread evenly over the sponges.

Place half of the sponge fingers into 6 serving glasses and cover with half of the cream mixture. Put the second layer of sponge fingers over and cover with remaining cream mixture.

Chill in fridge for thirty minutes. Sprinkle with the remaining sweetener. Decorate with coffee beans and a sprinkle of cocoa.

[Recipe by Bernard – Membership Secretary]

Stop press

Over the next three months SVI will be contacting lots of people to find out how they would like to see future services for visually impaired people in Sandwell – contact Sandra on **0121 525 4810** if you want to be part of a focus group and have your say.

We are pleased to have Central TV's Vidar Hjordeng as keynote speaker at our **2010 Annual Forum** on **Tuesday 26 October**, a date not

to miss. Details coming soon.

Membership and feedback forms are included with this newsletter.

This issue – thanks to:

The editorial team, Sandwell Council Adult and Community Services, SPIN and Reach Project Printing, Tipton.

Editor: Sandra

Tel: **0121 525 4810**

Email:

Sandra_troth@sandwell.gov.uk