

COVERED!

Fife Society for the Blind Newsletter Autumn/Winter 2008

Welcome everyone, to this the Autumn/Winter edition of "Covered!" Despite the poor weather conditions this summer I do hope you had an opportunity to have a few days holiday to enable you to relax and recharge your batteries.

Along with this newsletter you will find two books of raffle tickets, the fundraising group hopes you will be kind enough to sell these tickets, there are five tickets in each book and each ticket costs £1. Could you please return the counterfoils and monies by 5pm on the 18th December to the address shown below. We realise that not everyone can get out and about to sell the tickets so please do not worry if you are unable to sell them.

We also have our own charity Christmas cards available to purchase this year so if you are interested please phone the Centre.

The newsletter has a variety of articles, as well as updates on what has been happening at the Society during the summer. There is an article about changes to the concessionary travel cards scheme and the benefits and importance of making a will.

Amanda Graham has written a very interesting article about her working holiday in Sri Lanka earlier this year. So, sit back, relax and imagine yourself bathed in warm sunshine.

Barbara Dickson our patron is appearing in concert at the Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline on Friday 13th March, 2009. If you are interested in going along to hear Barbara Dickson we may be able to arrange transport, so please leave your name and telephone number with reception, and we will get back to you with details of costs etc.

Ron Oliphant - Editor

NEWS FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ALAN SUTTIE

This has been a busy summer for staff who have been working hard to move forward with our plans that aim to bring about a real difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people in Fife. Firstly we have been looking at ways to bring our services closer to the communities where you live. As a pilot, Liz Reid has been working in Taybridgehead, Kirkcaldy East and Lochgelly to identify organisations, services and facilities who we can work with to help people directly in those communities. We held very successful open days at the beginning of September and as well as welcoming many of you to the Centre here in Kirkcaldy, we had a presence in Newport on Tay and St Andrews. I know that this was greatly appreciated by those who live in North East Fife.

Working in partnership with our colleagues in the Deaf Communication Service we have just started a scheme to assess elderly people in residential care to identify

those who have both a hearing and a sight loss. Once identified, we will be working with staff on strategies to improve communication and engagement with a view to reducing isolation for these individuals. Unfortunately for many of us as we grow older, both hearing and sight can fail, and this combination can have a dramatic impact on quality of life. We believe that at least a third of those in residential care might benefit from this service.

Shona Robinson MSP, Minister for Public Health in the Scottish Government has just endorsed a 'Scottish Vision Strategy' which challenges us all to address serious sight loss in an ageing population. This comes from a World Health Organisation initiative to eliminate avoidable blindness by 2020 and we need to ensure that we work to make this a reality in Fife. Many of our services already meet the targets that have been set but we still need to work even harder to ensure that the importance of good eye care is recognised across all

communities in the Kingdom.

Having started with good news I must end by paying tribute to valued supporters who have died in the past month. Etta Blyth from Dunfermline led the Dunfermline Group over many years, supported the Fife Forum of Visually Impaired, and was a stalwart fundraiser as well as a Director of the Society. In paying tribute to Etta at the Annual General Meeting, the Chairman remarked that, "Etta was always forthright, never allowing Professionals or 'louder' voices to prevail." Mrs Marjorie Wilson of Cupar spent more than half of her 100 years supporting our work. A member of the Cupar Committee from 1952 she was its Convenor from 1970 until just last year. Not only was she a great advocate and supporter but someone who showed a direct and personal interest in the blind and partially sighted people who attended the Cupar group.

Pat Ferguson receives special award for service to the Community.

St Andrews Rotary Club has made a special presentation to a non-rotarian in recognition of her services to the community. Pat Ferguson has been the convenor of the St Andrews Committee for the Blind for the last six years.

Presenting her with the award club president Dennis Hopper said that not only does Pat organise the activities of the group through her active participation but turns her hand to anything from making the sandwiches to playing carpet bowls. She also provides music on her accordion (she is an enthusiastic member of Billy Anderson's accordion and fiddle group) if the group is short of a speaker.

The staff at Fife Society for the Blind which is the co-ordinating group for the whole area, have the highest regard for both her organising ability (she has to liaise with them regarding the use of the mini bus etc. and linking with other visually impaired groups)

and for her infectious enthusiasm.

Apart from her membership of the Billy Anderson accordion and fiddle group Pat has also been in charge of the WRI at Strathkiness. In this and other ways she has contributed to the community in and around St Andrews.

Concessionary Travel Cards

A number of your concession cards are due to expire at the end of November 2008 and these will need to be renewed if you want to continue to travel at concessionary rates. We hope to make the renewal of your card as easy as possible and have asked Insight to help us with this process. We need to have confirmation that you are registered as Partially Sighted or registered Blind. Once we have this information confirmed we will be able to organise for a replacement card to be sent out to your home address.

There have however been changes to the eligibility criteria for concessionary travel and we now have to

use the National eligibility criteria for the Scotland-Wide free bus and train travel schemes. What does this mean for those renewing their cards? If you are registered blind then there will be no change you will still be entitled to receive the following: free Scotland –wide bus travel, a companion can travel free with you; free rail travel throughout Scotland, companion can travel within the boundaries of the Fife scheme for half fare; receive taxi vouchers; free travel with a companion on Ring & Ride and Dial-a-Ride Services.

If you are registered Partially Sighted there may be changes to your concessionary travel entitlement. You will still be entitled to receive free Scotland-wide bus and train travel but you will no longer be automatically entitled to receive a companion card or taxi vouchers. To receive these additional concessions, taxi vouchers and companion travel, you will now need to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, middle or higher rate of Care or in receipt of

Attendance Allowance. If you are in receipt of one of these allowances or wish to discuss your circumstances further please contact the Concessionary Travel Team on 01592 583370.

AMANDA IN SRI LANKA (Or Ceylon as it was previously known)

I must start with the traditional Sri Lankan greeting “ayubowen” meaning welcome. I have been involved as a volunteer with two Sukitha centres for disabled girls in Sri Lanka for 3 years now. Many of you have helped with fundraising and have shown great interest in my visits so would like to share some of my experiences with you.

There are many words and images that come to mind when I think about Sri Lanka and here are just a few: SMILE, rice and curry, tuk tuk, coconuts, spices, sunshine, adversity, happiness, civil war, love, tea, beautiful beaches, Tamil tigers, fresh tropical fruit, Buddhist temples and monks in bright orange robes. I could go on but now I am going to tell you how I

became involved with Sukitha in Sri Lanka.

On December 26 2004 tragedy struck throughout the Asian continent when an earthquake in the Indian Ocean resulted in a Tsunami that engulfed the east, south, and southwest coasts of Sri Lanka. 30,000 Sri Lankans lost their lives and 100,000 on the island were without homes.

My daughter had already arranged to go to Sri Lanka as a volunteer with teaching projects abroad so she arrived in the aftermath of the Tsunami. She worked in the camps of tsunami-affected people and in the Sukitha homes, which were not primarily linked to the tsunami but here begins the start of a tangible humanitarian project. Other volunteers also became involved with Sukitha and have formed a charity called Sukhita Child based in Glasgow.

I became so interested in the work my daughter was involved in I decided to join her the following year. The Sukitha homes are run on a very small budget. They

depend on donations from local benefactors and donations from abroad. The Government pay a very small grant that is inadequate to pay the salaries and meet all the daily expenses. One of the homes is in Galpatha near Kalutara. This home is supposed to be for girls aged from 6 to 18 years of age but some girls have to stay there permanently as they have nowhere to go. The home is a very large house, which was bequeathed by a local family.

The children have varying complex needs and require a lot of care. The staff are untrained and low paid but do a great job under difficult circumstances. The other home is at Horana. This vocational training centre was established in 1985 providing training for girls from the age of 16 to 32 years. The centre provides training in dressmaking, tailoring, agriculture, food preparation, beauty culture, batik, printing and handloom weaving. At the end of 2 years the girls are provided with the basic financial

assistance to start their own enterprise.

When I was there a small six year old girl brought by her uncle because her mother had died and her father couldn't look after. She has cerebral palsy and is unable to communicate with speech. She cried all night but the next day she made friends and a year later she seems to be thriving. We spend time singing and dancing with the girls. We also take books and art materials and the girls asked to draw every day. One day we made paper hats with newspaper and what fun we had.

Sometimes the girls are asked to sing and dance at functions or special occasions. They make their own costumes and are taught by their teachers to perform traditional dancing. The shows were very professional.

The two centres provide a home and shelter and loving care to those who have nowhere to go or cannot be supported at home. There is a lot of work needing to be done and it is a challenge but it is great to see how the

lives are gradually being improved and living conditions also. I have made many new friends through my work in Sri Lanka and my life is much richer for that.

Golf Tournament

Fife Society for the Blind held its first golf competition on Thursday 25 September at Thornton Golf Club. Forty golfers in ten teams took part in a Stableford competition and helped to raise £970. The money will be used to purchase speech and large display software which will enable the Society's clients to enter the world of communications without the limitations of the printed word.

The teams which participated in the competition were: Scottish Power, Longannet Power station; Robert Hutchison Ltd, flour millers, Kirkcaldy; Aberdour Golf Club; Cupar Rotary Club; Fife Joinery Manufacturing Ltd., Glenrothes; Loch Leven Lasses; Fife Transportation Golfers; Scottish Disability Golf Partnership; and Steel,

Eldridge, Stewart solicitors, Cupar who entered two teams.

The competition was closely fought and the top four teams were separated by only four points but eventually a team from Steel, Eldridge, Stewart, consisting of D.Stewart, E. McConnell, J. Gray and E. Barrett were declared the winners with 107 points. In a very creditable second place was the Scottish Disability Golf Partnership whose players were J. Gales, R. Drysdale, F. Paterson and A. Hughes. In equal third place, with a score of 102 points, were the teams from Cupar Rotary Club and Fife Transportation Golfers.

The Society would like to thank all those who took part in the competition, and especially Crail Golfing Society who generously donated the prizes for the winning team.

Recreational Round Up Amanda Graham

Bowling

This year the Inter-Fife bowling championships took place in Abbeyview

bowling club.
Congratulations to the winners and thank you to Jim Binney and his wife for organising and running the show. Everyone worked really hard to make it a successful day.

The results of the day were
Gents singles: runner up - Tom Walsh, winner - Lawson Brand

Ladies singles: runner up - Marie Spencer, winner - Bernadette Walsh

Jinty Wilson Trophy: Runner up - Isobel Brown, winner – Robert Rodgers

Pairs: runner up - John Barber and Joe Tottenham, winners – Pop Walls and Jim Thorburn

Well done to all of you.

I am pleased to say Eleanor Clark is on her feet again. Eleanor has been selected to represent Scotland in the world bowling Championships. Eleanor is looking for funding so if anyone would like to make a donation then you can contact the office. Thank

you to those of you who have already contributed.

Fife Social Groups

All the clubs are running again after a summer break with lots of exciting programmes. If you are interested in any of the activities then please get in touch.

Telecare

Are you a good listener? Do you like using the telephone? Do you have a spare hour during the week? You could be the very person I am looking for. Call me for more information.

Rambling

The ramblers can hang up their boots for the winter. Thank you to everyone for making this a worthwhile and enjoyable activity.

Swimming

Every Tuesday at the Fife Institute. A huge thank you to Instructor Dave Sellers who is retiring it won't be the same without you!

Curling

Every Monday at Kinross. This is going from strength to strength

Art Link

If you are interested in audio description of art there are some exciting things happening in Edinburgh. For more information call me.

The young ones or Under 60's

They meet once a month-interesting venues and company.

**Holiday Cottage, Ladybank
There is a very nice cottage available for a week or short break. It is available to any of our clients and a carer or friend. There is funding to cover the rental costs. Please get in touch and ask to speak to Amanda. There is a Train station and good bus service to Ladybank.**

Fife Forum Focus Claire Chue Hong

The forum has continued to meet on a regular basis. In June Anne Cowan attended the forum meeting to talk about the Concessionary Travel Scheme and answer questions regarding the scheme. She acknowledges the difficulties faced by visually impaired people when using public transport, the problems people have

had with booking the Ring & Ride service which she hopes to resolve, and also stated that she will look into the taxi card scheme and whether the value of the vouchers can be increased.

RNIB are running a national campaign for visually impaired and blind people to receive the higher rate for the mobility component of DLA. The forum supports their campaign and would like to hear about the problems people have with getting around and the benefits that getting the higher rate of mobility would give them.

In August the forum had articles in The Courier and Fife Free Press bringing up the issue of pedestrian crossings in Fife that are not observed by drivers and traffic signals that are not operational. If you have any issues regarding pedestrian crossings in your area we would like to hear from you.

If you have any other concerns or issues you would like the forum to look into please get in touch.

“Turning a Blind Eye on Blind Patients”

National Federation of the Blind

So many visually impaired and blind people have reported that, when they were in-patients, even in eye wards, their basic needs were overlooked and no account was taken of their sight problems. There was no help with menu forms, eating food, opening cartons, filling water glasses, seeing the tea trolley, finding the toilet – the list goes on.

The issue was raised at a recent meeting in Perth and the audience clearly agreed that the problem is general. The local branch has decided to follow it up. We shall be writing to the Disability Equality Officers in each of the Scottish NHS Trusts, asking them to take action to improve matters, by clearly identifying patients with particular reasons to need extra help and to ensure that staff know what to do. We will also take it up with Scottish Health Councils.

Comments and suggestions are very welcome, as are new members to support us. Please contact: Pauline Topham, Secretary, Scottish Central Branch NATIONAL FEDERATION of the Blind UK, 8 Seymour Avenue, Dundee DD2 1HG Telephone: 01382 668543 E-mail: paulinetopham@btinternet.com

Equipment Upgrade in Karten Room

FSB is proud to announce the arrival of six new hi-spec PCs with 24” high-resolution LCD monitors in their IT room. The new PCs are each accompanied with the latest 19” LCD displays and CCTVs from various companies such as Optelec, Humanware and VisualEyes. In addition, clients are able to utilise the latest access software such as Jaws, Thunder, Zoomtext, and Supernova. Clients currently attending IT classes are enjoying the new equipment.

“I wish I could take the equipment home” said Jane Lindsay who has recently completed a course on

learning to use Microsoft Word with Zoomtext. “The larger monitors make the screen so much more accessible”.

The IT room also has a wide assortment of video magnifiers for clients to “try before buying”. This equipment ranges from low-cost magnifiers which work in combination with standard televisions to high-tech colour LCD standalone modules with incorporated sliding XY tables.

For further information please contact Hazel White, Access Technology Trainer, on 01592 583272.

Volunteer Corner
Liz Reid, Volunteer Co-ordinator

A wet, windy and cold summer has come and gone, only to be swiftly followed by a wet, windy and cold autumn! Mmm...no point in getting negative because we can bring a bit of sunshine into other peoples lives, how, by simply being a good neighbour. By giving up you're time for an hour or two a week, Fife Society for

the Blind can use you and the talents you've been blessed with or developed along the way on the great journey of life. I'm going straight into it. We desperately require the following volunteer opportunities to be filled in our situations vacant spot:

Fund-raisers – Our annual income is heavily dependent upon what we can raise ourselves. Funding providers like to see what a project or charity is actually doing themselves to get money in. It's not easy in to-days climes, what with daily news bulletins of a credit-crunch, cash strapped communities, escalating heating bills, rising petrol at the pumps.....no, don't get depressed. I'm not asking for money, though of course every penny helps, I'm asking for collectors both sighted and visually impaired who can collect in an area near to where you live. 'Don't have transport' – we can provide it. 'Can't stand too long' – we can provide chairs and have plenty of breaks. 'It can get a bit cold' – we have hot tea or coffee on board the minibus when it gets used as a base

and at some of our venues we even provide hot soup and rolls! 'Don't like asking for money' – we'll buddy you up with our experienced collectors. Please don't leave it to the chosen few, dedicated volunteers who turn out in all weather conditions, they need to feel supported too. So, come out with The 'A' team, enjoy the chat and banter and help collect some of that essential dosh

...spondoolies...cash...money. I want to thank the following personnel for consistently turning out at collections; David McKay, David Ross, Helen Buchanan, Russell Simpson, Bill Young, Mary Monk, Davie Pollock and Pete Riggs & Sam known more commonly as The 'A' team.

Abseil from Forth Rail Bridge

On Sunday 5th October three of the Society's members did a free fall abseil from the Forth rail bridge. David Ross, who works for FSB Enterprises, Jayne Middlemiss, one of the Society's volunteer befrienders and Michael Young a client were the

brave souls who participated in this event. On what turned out to be a beautiful sunny autumn afternoon our three abseilers descended from a height of 160 feet from the walkway underneath Forth Rail Bridge to the beach at South Queensferry.

Needless to say the object of the abseil is to raise money for the Society, there is still time to help David, Jayne and Michael with their sponsorship, you can get in touch with them through reception.

Forthcoming events & Activities

Collections still to happen:
15.11.08 – Kirkcaldy High Street and The Postings Shopping Centre & 22.12.08 – Scottish Co-op, Leven

Christmas Hamper – We would welcome and appreciate donations of non-perishable foodstuff and toiletries (new or unwanted gifts but not used please) for our annual Christmas draw. Tickets at 50pence each will be on sale at the centre from around beginning to middle of November and the winning ticket will drawn on

Tuesday 16th December just in time for Christmas.

The Body Shop & Craft Jewellery Fund-raiser

Body Shop Consultant Alison Wood will be hosting a fund-raiser in the training room at FSIC on Tuesday, 18th November between 10.00am – 2.00pm and will donate a percentage of takings to FSB. This is an opportunity to do your Christmas Shopping under one roof. Volunteers and members of staff will be on hand to help anyone choose gifts and write their order. Sounds like a way to beat the Christmas crowds and I'm booking my spot now.

Minibus Drivers

We urgently need at least two committed Volunteers to come forward and do a bit of minibus driving. Though not saying goodbye – just a wee au revoir – Sandy Brannan has hung up the minibus steering wheel after 21 years of committed and dedicated driving. Blind and partially sighted people in the St Andrews and Dunfermline areas looked forward to their weekly visit

from Sandy as he took them to their social club or the bowling in summer time. He is already being sorely missed by clients and fellow volunteers who help to run these activities. Sandy was presented with a cheque from the St Andrews club and theatre vouchers from FSB. Thanks a million Sandy – you're just fantastic! Thanks to drivers; Mel Clark, Andy Weir and Bill Ovens for stepping in and saving the day!

Swimming – Welcome to new volunteers Mary Hayward and Mary Hurding otherwise known as Mary and Mary T for joining the blind swimming group. They're making a huge difference to the group by helping out with transport and accompanying blind swimmers in the pool. A new male volunteer would be a welcome addition.

Open and Out-reach Week This was a huge success in all 3 areas and all venues were well attended by partially sighted and blind people from all over Fife. Relatives, friends, carers and health professionals turned out too and feedback

has been very positive and included, 'This is great, nothing like this ever comes to the village.' 'I've met people and had answers to some of my concerns regarding my loss of vision and this has eased my mind.'

Special thanks to all the Volunteers who helped out by guiding, washing dishes, lugging furniture and driving and also to Visually Impaired Volunteers Gladys Taylor for her excellent aromatherapy work-shop and to Janet Suttie for demonstrating talking book machines, special games and Braille.

There was standing room only at the 'Can't cook, Won't Cook' alias Amanda and Anne's cookery demonstration. With the aid of the talking microwave and other specially adapted aids they produced a lovely chicken curry, carrot cake and chocolate fondue. Comments included 'Are you going to be running a cookery courses?' Well Anne and Amanda are you?

A big thanks too, to Dr Anne Sinclair and Ophthalmic

Nurse Helen Paterson for giving up their valuable time and staffing the Low Vision Clinic. They were kept very busy and dealt with enquiries in their usual professional, friendly and empathic manner. At one point on entering the room, I couldn't see them for a 'sea' of people.

Hazel and Kirsty in the Karten room were kept busy too in another extremely busy technology workshop. Well done.

This newsletter just covers the tip of the proverbial iceberg with what is going on at Fife Society for the Blind and where the need is. If you can help out or you know someone who might, then contact me in the usual way.....please.

200 Club Draw results

May 2008

1 st	R Whiteford	£212.50
2 nd	K Goodman	£ 42.50
2 nd	H Crawford	£ 42.50
3 rd	N Boni	£ 25.50
3 rd	J McAllister	£ 25.50
3 rd	A Reid	£ 25.50

June 2008

1 st	S Hunter	£213.75
2 nd	A Boase	£ 42.75
2 nd	J Williamson	£ 42.75
3 rd	A Davidson	£ 25.65
3 rd	W Mcfadden	£ 25.65
3 rd	J Jarvie	£ 25.65

July 2008

1 st	A Davidson	£218.75
2 nd	I Taylor	£ 43.75
2 nd	G Jobson	£ 43.75
3 rd	F Ross	£ 26.25
3 rd	G Strong	£ 26.25
3 rd	I Hardie	£ 26.25

August 2008

1 st	E Wotherspoon	£215.00
2 nd	A Ursito	£ 43.00
2 nd	J McAllister	£ 43.00
3 rd	M Gray	£ 25.80
3 rd	I Hardie	£ 25.80
3 rd	C Penman	£ 25.80

September 2008

1 st	G Strong	£215.00
2 nd	E Russell	£ 43.00
2 nd	E Rippin	£ 43.00
3 rd	P Ewels	£ 25.80
3 rd	A Ursito	£ 25.80
3 rd	M Lannan	£ 25.80

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