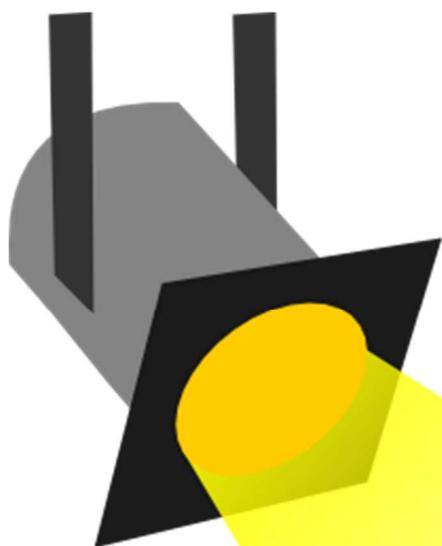


# Essex Blind Charity



# Spotlight

**October/November  
2019**

## ISSUE 92

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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

#### **The Editor**

Essex Sight  
40 Osborne Street  
Colchester  
CO2 7DB  
01206 548196  
Email: [services@essexsight.org.uk](mailto:services@essexsight.org.uk)

**Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by November 4th**



## **The Editor writes:**

Welcome to the October/November edition of Spotlight. We have changed things around in this issue a little just to keep you on your toes (only kidding). Why change it? What was wrong with the old format, I hear you say. Well, the changes have come following feedback from readers and from editorial pressure. The first is the title page. Now, I know you all know Spotlight is bi-monthly, however many people have picked it up and on seeing the title month, put it down thinking it is old news! The obvious thing was to state both months on the cover page. The main change is the combination of the news from across the County. This was purely down to editorial constraints. Due to the way Spotlight is printed, it must be compiled in multiples of four pages. Recently, it has been difficult fitting in content where there has been too much for a 20 page, but not enough for a 24-page issue. Even with the best will in the world, some items have been left out. Hopefully, by making these changes, we can fit more content in, and I would always welcome more articles from our readers.

We hope you will find the articles informative and of interest. Please feel free to share Spotlight with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, on tape or memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide Braille copies.

I hope you will all continue to send your contributions, as your stories and experiences make Spotlight of interest to everyone. You can email articles to [services@essexsight.org.uk](mailto:services@essexsight.org.uk)

Editor

## **Community Support Team by Jonathan Dixon**

The community team have been out and about, promoting Essex Sight, finding new venues and ways to reach more VIP across the County. I recently visited the Dovercourt and Harwich Hub in Dovercourt High Street to meet various community providers and will be giving a talk to their friendship club in November. We will also be giving a talk in Manningtree in November, all details are listed below in our new County News section.

Whilst at the Dovercourt and Harwich Hub, I met Clare Leach who told me all about Harwich Sing and their latest session called Golden Oldies Sing-along. The session, held on Wednesdays from 11.30 – 12.30pm, is singing old favourites, just for the fun of it. It's all about feeling good, socialising, making friends and general happiness, while taking a trip down memory lane. For more details on the session, contact Clare on 07754 423613.

We were very fortunate that one of the members of the Phoenix Riders Line Dance Club nominated Essex Sight to be recipient of the proceeds of their monthly social dance fundraiser. Many thanks to them for thinking of us and the donation will certainly be put to good use.

Thanks to a grant from Colchester Catalyst, the Colchester Sight Centre will be having a new kitchen demonstration area fitted. This will more than triple the current area we have available and will allow us to fully demonstrate the great range of accessible equipment that is available to use in the home and will also allow us to run workshops to help people to be safe and confident in the kitchen.

If you are a carer and live in Colchester or Tendring, you may not be aware that there are two schemes directly aimed at you. Time 4 You Tendring is a research project looking into carer breaks. By taking part you can receive a grant of £100. Colchester Catalyst also provide a Carer Respite Break Scheme for people living in a 'CO' postcode. If eligible, you can receive up to £600. For more details contact 01255 474410

## **County News**

I hope everyone has enjoyed the Summer. As I write this, although we are now officially in Autumn, there is a beautiful blue sky outside, and the sun is shining.

In order to reach as many people as possible, we are trying other locations for “pop up” sight centres in addition to our regular library sessions.

On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October, we will be at Moat Foundation’s Community Hub in Maldon. This is an opportunity to get information and advice and to try out some low vision aids. We will be there from 10am-1pm, 2nd Floor, Fullbridge Mill, Fullbridge, Maldon CM9 4LE.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November from 10 – 12pm we will be visiting the Dovercourt and Harwich Friendship Club, at 276, High Street, Dovercourt, Harwich CO12 3PD

On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November from 10 – 12pm we will be visiting the Community Coffee Morning at Manningtree Library, High Street, Manningtree CO11 1AD

### **Ramble Tag**

Have you heard about this device? Ramble Tag is a Velcro armband with a hand strap attached and is worn by the person doing the guiding. The VIP holds the hand strap (rather than an arm or elbow). If anyone would like to try one out, please get in touch. It would be great to get some feedback as to what people think.

### **Large Print 2020 Diaries/Calendars**

2020 diaries are now for sale in the Sight Centres. The RNIB large print calendar is not yet available (at the time of print).

In order to avoid unnecessary expense and wastage, we have ordered a smaller supply this year, so be sure to get your one soon. Should you wish to purchase direct from VIP Diaries, their telephone number is 01539 726613 and products are delivered free of charge.

## **Essex Sight Annual Exhibition**

We will be holding our Annual Exhibition on equipment, technology & services for people with a visual impairment on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October from 10 to 2pm at

Firstsite, Lewis Gardens, Colchester CO1 1JH

Entry is free, so come along and find out about the products and services available from British Wireless Fund for the Blind, Dolphin Enhanced Vision, Humanware, Optelec, Ox sight, Professional Vision, Sight and Sound, Synapptic and more!

### **Update from Maldon and District Vision Impaired Club.**

The club is a small, friendly social group for people with varying degrees of visual impairment. We have had a full program of events so far this year with some excellent speakers and entertainers.

The year started with a visit from the Mayor of Maldon who told us about the workings of Maldon Town Council and answered lots of our questions – ranging from rules about chopping down trees to the history of the town. Other speakers included a Judge who told us some stories about villains he has come across and a wildlife photographer who explained how beavers are being encouraged to build their dams to reduce flooding. We also heard about the railways which used to serve Maldon from a local historian – several members could remember when those trains used to run.

We have had lots of music from live entertainers who mix up the old and the new and encourage singing along. We had a great outing for lunch to a local pub and recently enjoyed an afternoon tea hosted by one of our member's family.

We have a full program of entertainment right through to our traditional Christmas meal in December. We meet in Plantation Hall, Heybridge on the first and third Thursday of every month. Transport can be arranged for those who need it and we always have some home-made cakes to enjoy. Please get in touch if you would like to know more – for you, a relative or friend - Wendy 01621 842727, Phyl 01621 857451

## **Sight Centre Activities**

### **Weekly**

#### **Colchester**

Tuesdays	10 – 12pm	Coffee Morning
Thursdays	By appointment	iPad/iPhone sessions
Monday – Friday	By appointment	Document Reading

#### **Clacton**

Thursdays	1 – 3pm	Social
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#### **Chelmsford**

Friday	10 – 1pm	Information and Advice
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### **Monthly**

#### **Colchester**

First Thursday	10 – 12pm	Knitting Group
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#### **Brentwood**

Second Monday of month	10 - 1pm	Information and Advice
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#### **Maldon**

First Tuesday of month	10 - 1pm	Information and Advice
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## **Spotlight On**

### **Open University Distance Learning**

During the past year and a half, I have returned to studying again but this time, as a screen-reader user. My previous attempts to study online with the Open University had all stalled at the outset. This was fundamentally due to compatibility issues with my old screen-reader. However, this situation was overturned when I purchased a license for the JAWS screen-reader software produced by Freedom Scientific.

As expected, I did have to learn the new navigation keystrokes for JAWS that allowed me to interact with the Open University website. This was not too much of a trial, as the general principles of using a moderator key and short-cut keys are a widely integrated feature of most screen-readers. The next step to tackle, was to test the accessibility of the Open University website itself. I spent several hours clicking through their web links and accessing web pages and guidance notes. This included reading the sections on the additional support available to students with disabilities. Being suitably encouraged, I enrolled as a student and registered on one of the free Open Learn courses provided by the Open University. This gave me the opportunity to rigorously test out a free short course without any financial commitments or time pressures. Open Learn courses provide a sample of course material taken from a fully accredited course. They are conveniently available to start studying at any time of the year. Moreover, you still get access to, and feedback from, an online tutor. This process was very useful in establishing my ability to access and interact with course material. So much so, that I enrolled and completed a second Open Learn course to complement the first course. The next resource which I utilized, was to have a conversation with the visual impairment advisor at the Open University. This was an hour of my life well spent in gaining assurances that textbooks would be provided in a digital format for example. It was a discussion that eventually led me to request my textbooks to be provided as a digital DAISY talking book. As someone who had never used DAISY books before, they were an absolute revelation to me. DAISY books give you the entire text in a digital format and they are also embedded with MP3 audio files containing a person reading every word cover-to-cover. This really makes listening to long chapters much more interesting than a monotone synthesized screen-reader! Furthermore, the advisor outlined the option to apply for

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which is a non-repayable government benefit that can be used to pay for computer equipment, IT training, and a learning support assistant if needed. The advisor also helped me with my decision to enroll and later register for a degree, by checking that accessible digital materials were already available on my short-listed courses. The course I ultimately selected did include several audio and video clips and apart from one video, which I did report, all had accompanying text transcriptions available. Similarly, it was comforting to know that other visually impaired students had successfully completed this style of online distance learning with the OU.

Having received these useful assurances, I decided to go for it and take on the challenge. The initial formal steps included registering for my chosen course module, as well as, declaring my disability with the Disabled Students Support team. This proved to be useful, when I later discovered the government's online DSA application form was difficult to navigate due to poor design. Consequently, Disabled Students Support were engaged very early on in order to get the form filled in. I was also required to submit medical evidence to support my DSA application. After a few weeks had elapsed, I then had to attend a 'needs assessment', which took place at the University of Essex. This whole process was well worth the effort, as I was successful in obtaining a new laptop, keyboard, speakers and the latest version of the JAWS screen-reader, which were all delivered to me for a nominal contribution of two hundred pounds. Furthermore, I was also eligible to receive twelve hours of enhanced JAWS screen-reader training, which took place at home.

In conjunction with applying for DSA, I also had to apply for a tuition fee loan from Student Finance England (SFE). Whilst the tuition fee loan application form was advertised on the SFE website, it was unavailable to part-time students. So, I did have to resort to asking a family member to fill the paper application form in on my behalf. Rest assured, the opportunity to provide constructive feedback regarding better accessibility to their online forms, did not pass me by! Never-the-less, there are two important points to consider here. The first is that whilst the inception of GDPR is there to protect us all, it should not be rolled out as a barrier in favour of organisations making reasonable adjustments in assisting with applications. Do remember that in the absence of direct help or help at home, Essex Sight does offer a limited correspondence service. The second point to note, is that repaying an SFE tuition fee loan in the current format, only occurs if a person's taxable income is over the

income threshold. This is currently set at £494 per week before tax and other deductions, according to the gov.uk website. The government website also states that the loan is written off after thirty years.

The Open University offers hundreds of wide-ranging courses from access modules through to post-doctoral studies. Their home study style of learning need not be an isolating experience either, as contact with your tutor is actively encouraged. There are also opportunities to join online tutorials although, accessing these lecture “pods” might require sighted assistance. Periodic face-to-face tutorials are available at regional study centres as well. In addition, there is a culture of student participation in online forums throughout the OU. So, studying at home doesn't mean without external support. Whilst I have only completed my first module thus far and enrolled onto my second, it has been a positive experience overall. Not without its unexpected issues and challenges quite naturally, although I prefer to think of them as opportunities to reform for the benefit of those yet to start studying. However, I would encourage anyone who is considering higher education to contact the OU to discuss any questions you might have. As the Open University advert says, “What's stopping you?”.

Darren

## **Audio Book Review**

I listen to a lot of audiobooks and just lately I have been going through a series on Gerald Durrell and I am finding it very interesting. For people that might not realise who he is, he is a naturalist and has written many books about his life, the animals he collects, his family and how they get up to no end of different things. They are very amusing, and I would really recommend listening to on audio.

Books are available in audio format on CD and I believe memory stick as well from RNIB

Mrs FIONA LANGSTONE

## Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant



Read House is the residential care home run by Essex Blind Charity in Frinton on Sea. The home specialises in the care of elderly people with sight problems. We offer permanent and respite care (short breaks) by staff who have all been trained in visual awareness. The Home is situated on the seafront at Frinton on Sea, a short distance from the town centre with its friendly local shops.

If you would like to find out more about Read House or to receive our Information Pack, please contact me or Sandra on 01255 673654. We are more than happy to show you round at any time to suit you.

Being mindful of the lack of space in this issue I will just report on another successful visit by Gemma's Farm. Gemma brings a whole farmyard of animals to the Home and this year we had sheep, goats, ferrets, ducks, a Shetland pony, rabbits, and lots more. Our residents really enjoyed holding and stroking all the animals and we look forward to another visit next year.

### **Harwich Sing**

Harwich sing is a modern, all-inclusive enthusiastic community choir with emotion, energy and passion established in 2012. Anyone and everyone can join, it's all about the music and the feel-good factor!

Harwich Sing is really good on so many levels. It boosts confidence, is very social, can be very amusing, full of enjoyment and brings people together to share their love of music. But singing in a choir is more than just a bit of fun. It's been scientifically proven that it is good for your health: from getting more oxygen into the blood, to increasing the flow of feel-good hormones and improving mental health.

Contact Clare on 07554423613

# Quiz

## Musical Movies Quiz

1. What was the name of the smash movie about 70s super-band Abba?
2. Which Bond girl starred with Elvis Presley in Fun in Acapulco?
3. Who danced with Gene Kelly in the Broadway Ballet section of Singin' In the Rain?
4. Which controversial figure directed the musical New York, New York?
5. In which film did Bill Haley sing Rock Around the Clock?
6. Who sang most of the soundtrack for The Bodyguard?
7. Who had a managerial role in Spiceworld?
8. Joel Grey won an Oscar for which role in the 70s classic Cabaret?
9. Who played Che in the film version of Evita?
10. Which Tim Burton film featured the hostile takeover of present delivery at Christmas?
11. Who played the Doctor in the musical film version of Doctor Doolittle?
12. Where is Gigi set?
13. Which tough guy actor played Sky Masterson in Guys and Dolls?
14. Which star of The King and I was born in Russia?
15. Who does Julie Andrews marry in The Sound of Music?

## Equipment and Technology

weWALK is being promoted as the world's most revolutionary smart cane. It is a white cane that uses smart technology which aims to help visually impaired people navigate their surroundings. The weWALK cane consists of an electronic handle with a regular white cane that is inserted into it, and it is equipped with built-in speakers, smartphone integration, and ultrasonic sensor to detect any obstacles above chest level, warning the user via a vibrating handle.

Users can also pair the cane with their smartphone with the ability to integrate it with a voice assistant and google maps. It uses its built-in speakers to inform the user of nearby stores and infrastructural details that they may not be able to see.

Turkish designer Kursat Ceylan, who is also blind, invented the cane to use modern technology as a tool for the visually impaired. Ceylan is the CEO and co-founder of Young Guru Academy (YGA), the non-profit organisation behind the invention.

The technology used to create the weWALK cane is built around an open platform, which means that third parties could add their own smartphone-based functions. YGA hope to eventually pair it with ridesharing apps and transportation services to further improve its navigational abilities.

*'In these days we are talking about flying cars, but these people have been using just a plain stick,' explained Kursat, 'As a blind person, when I am at the metro station, I don't know which is my exit... I don't know which bus is approaching... which stores are around me. That kind of information can be provided with the weWALK.'*

The weWALK smart cane runs on android and ios-based mobile phones. It features a USB input that can be used to charge the battery with one full charge lasting up to five hours of usage time. The device is available for purchase currently in the USA for \$500, however we have contacted YGA to find out more about this exiting product and will publish further details when we know where it is available for sale in the UK. This is the link to the website <https://wewalk.io/>

## Entertainment

### Theatres (audio described performance)

#### The Season

New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

A brand new romantic comedy, filled with heart-warming and hilarious songs

- **Date:** Thursday 7 November 2019
- **Time:** 7:45 pm
- **Ends:** Saturday 16 November 2019 at 7:45 pm
- **Ticket price:** From £10
- **Touch Tour:** Saturday 16th November at 1.30pm

#### Aladdin

New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

This ancient tale gets a brand new twist, incorporating over twenty classic songs including I'm A Believer, Papa Don't Preach, ABC, I Will Survive and Highway to Hell, all played live by our multi-talented company of actor-musicians. Mix in outrageous jokes and classic slapstick, with some wicked magic, and Aladdin serves up a sizzling hot feast for all the family.

- **Date:** Tuesday 10 December 2019
- **Time:** 7:30 pm
- **Ends:** Saturday 1 February 2020, 7:30 pm
- **Touch Tour** Various dates and times available, call for more details.

**Bookings tel:01473 295900**

# Answers to quiz

## Answers

1. Abba: The Movie
2. Ursula Andress
3. Cyd Charisse
4. Martin Scorsese
5. The Blackboard Jungle
6. Whitney Houston
7. Richard E Grant
8. Master of ceremonies
9. Antonio Banderas
10. The Nightmare Before Christmas
11. Rex Harrison
12. Paris
13. Marlon Brando
14. Yul Brynner
15. Baron Georg Von Trapp

## **Contact details**

**Helpline and office** 01206 548196  
(Jonathan Dixon, Carol Massey, Christine Pratt, Denise Sanders and Steve Massey)

**Eye Clinic Liaison Officers** 01206 548196  
Christine & Denise (Colchester + Tendring hospitals)

**Read House** 01255 673654  
(Janet Plant, General Manager, Tina Cox, Admin Assistant)

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However, donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

## Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity  
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

***Thank you!***

**Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.**

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Post Code.....

**I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.**

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:  
Essex Blind Charity  
Read House, 23 The Esplanade  
Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU.

## Are you on our mailing list?

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Cassette Tape..... Memory Stick.....

Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

**You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.**

# Useful Telephone Numbers

## Colchester Eye Clinic contact numbers

To book or change a NEW appointment only  
01206 286870 / 286871 / 286872

To enquire about or change a date for SURGERY only  
01206 286874 / 286875

To book or change a FOLLOW UP appointment only  
01026 286860 – Mr Sheldrick and Mr Mukherjee  
01206 286863 – Mr Patel and Mr Bansal  
01206 286856 – Mr Dimitriou and Mrs Gordon  
01206 286769 – Mrs Shenoy

For any enquiry relating to Secondary Optometry  
01206 286868

For any enquiry relating to Orthoptics  
01206 286866

For the EMERGENCY EYE CLINIC only  
01206 286882 – we do not accept self-referrals unless the patient is already under our care or has a pink card for the same condition.

If anyone would like to contact the department by email the address is [chu-ftr.ophtalmologydepartment@nhs.net](mailto:chu-ftr.ophtalmologydepartment@nhs.net)

# Essex Sight Centres

## **Brentwood**

Brentwood Library  
New Road  
Brentwood CM14 4BP  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month  
10 am to 1 pm

## **Chelmsford**

Chelmsford Library  
Market Road  
Chelmsford CM1 1LH  
Every Friday 10 am to 1 pm

## **Clacton-on-Sea**

CADOWs  
Old Road  
Clacton on Sea  
CO15 1HX  
Every Thursday 1 pm to 3.30 pm

## **Colchester**

40 Osborne Street  
Colchester  
CO2 7DB  
Open Mon - Fri 10 am to 2 pm  
Wednesday late opening to 4pm

## **Frinton on Sea**

Read House  
23 The Esplanade  
Frinton-on-Sea CO13 9AU  
Mon-Fri 1pm - 4.30pm (by  
appointment tel: 01255 673654)

## **Maldon**

Maldon Library, Carmelite House  
White Horse Lane  
Maldon CM9 5FW  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month  
10am-1pm

**For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.**

**Email: [services@essexsight.co.uk](mailto:services@essexsight.co.uk)**

**For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:**

**General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant: on 01255 673654**

**Email: [janet@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:janet@essexblind.co.uk)**