

Welcome to our Autumn edition of In Touch. While the summer has been a mix of Olympic glory and political change, here at Southend in Sight we are planning for the future of the charity in terms of our building, finances and the services we provide.

At the helm of our charity for almost 9 years has been our CEO Lucy Martin. We are thrilled that she was recognised by the High Sheriff of Essex, David Hurst, at the annual garden party, held at Garon Park in June. The pair are pictured below, with Lucy receiving her certificate and David dressed in his full regalia, complete with ceremonial sword.



The event was attended by current and past Mayors of Essex, representatives from the Fire, Police, Ambulance and judicial service as well as other charities and volunteers. Lucy was recognised for her years of service to the local community – a very great honour given the company she was in.

During Lucy's time as CEO, she has built on the years of experience the charity has working with local blind and partially sighted people, expanding services to include children and young people. On receiving the award, Lucy said: "It's a privilege to be able to work and volunteer for my community, but I

must give credit to the wonderful teams of people around me who make it all possible."

That is an ethos that we very much adhere to at our charity – team work really does make the dream work!

# Team Talk

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Fundraising & Comms. Manager**

Our Centre team somehow thought the summer might be a little quieter and afford them some time to catch up, but that has not proven to be the case! The sunshine has led to an increase in the need for glare glasses and upcoming holidays have made our tech team busier with the thirst for knowledge on how to download audio books and keep in touch with family.

We have managed to keep our drop-in sessions on a Wednesday manned, despite staff and volunteer holidays. We have a steady flow of people using these as a first point of contact, a general chat about their sight loss or a quick fix for some equipment. Our volunteers Jackie and Maria really do enjoy meeting and greeting the new and familiar faces that pass through our doors every week.

Remember that we are here to support you whether you are newly diagnosed, have experienced a deterioration in your sight or you are known to us and have a question to ask. Our staff and volunteers are warm and welcoming and are here to help. Please call us on **01702 34 21 31** for advice and information.

Dean continues to provide Talk and Support along with our trusted band of volunteers for local people living with sight loss. We are also running two projects with Cadent and Independent Age, designed to ensure everyone is receiving the benefits they are entitled to and to offer tips on gas safety and saving energy in the home. If you do receive a phone call from Dean about this, it's not a scam or hoax, we are just making sure you are all safe and well!



Georgie's trip with her group of intrepid travellers over the top of the O2 was a great success, as shown in the photo left. From navigating the train, managing busy tubes, coping with harnesses and clips, plus a busy O2 arena, it was an unforgettable experience.



We also managed some summer holiday fun for our children with horse riding in Belfairs Park.

For most, it was their first time on a horse, or even up close to one. The staff at Belfairs Riding School were very patient with our group, ensuring the right size hat and pony for each child, even matching horse and human hair colour!

The children grew in confidence as they were led on their stroll, finishing off the morning with a well-earned ice cream at the Woodlands Café.

Our bowling group are taking a break over the busy summer holiday period, meeting up for a lunch, a walk on the pier and a picnic instead. When they return in September, they hope to recruit some new members with the offer of a free taster session. The bowlers meet every Thursday at CJs bowling alley in Hockley from 11am. If you would like to find out more and join in the fun, please call Anne on **01702 34 21 31**.

All Southend in Sight's regular activities are included on our yellow flyer sent with this newsletter, but if you are interested in trying out a new activity – Goalball – a Paralympic sport for blind and partially sighted people – then you are in luck. New monthly taster sessions are starting in Chelmsford on Saturdays from 11am to 2pm. Please call our office for more details.

Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer has seen an increase in patients over the past few months. In addition, the diagnostic appointments being offered at Orsett Hospital are helping to decrease waiting times and are starting to make a difference. Tracey is on hand for any patients at Southend Hospital Eye Clinic, offering both practical help and emotional support. Please call **01702 34 21 31** and we can message Tracey on your behalf with your query.



# Celebrating Our Volunteers

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Fundraising & Comms. Manager**

Twice a year we celebrate with our volunteers and thank them for their loyal and continued support of our charity. At the latest celebration, held during Volunteers' Week, we thanked several of our current and past long-standing trustees.

Colin and Stephanie Cooper, Mike Smith, David Wacogne and Philip Warburton were all presented with certificates and a gift by the current Chairman of the Trustees, Russell Cable, and were thanked by him on behalf of the charity for their many years of service.

CEO Lucy Martin said: "Several of these trustees have been volunteering for Southend in Sight for almost 50 years. They give up their time selflessly and work behind the scenes to ensure the sustainability of the charity and for this we are all grateful. We thought it was high time they received proper recognition for all they have contributed."

The photo shows Stephanie, David, Philip and Colin receiving their awards from Russell, centre.





To further appreciate one of our volunteers, we organised for The High Sheriff of Essex, David Hurst, to present Colin Cooper with a certificate in recognition of his 61 years of service to the local community. Colin has been involved with our charity for 6 decades, initially as part of the Flag Week collections, also serving as Vice Chair of the Trustees for a period of time. On receiving his award, Colin said: "I have enjoyed all those years volunteering for the local visually impaired and will continue to do so for as long as I am able." The photo shows Colin

receiving his award from The High Sheriff at a recent event in our Centre.

In other volunteer news, two of our "gang" were selected as finalists for the very first Southend Volunteer Awards, held at the Roslin Beach Hotel in June.

From Southend in Sight, Jackie Blackledge was put forward for the Lifetime Achievement Award and Mary Forsdyke nominated in the Health and Wellbeing category.

Jackie has been volunteering with our charity for the last 28 years. Living with sight loss herself, she has been an inspiration to the many people visiting our Centre needing expert advice and information over the years.



Mary has been volunteering with us for 9 years, offering emotional and practical support through regular phone calls to local blind and partially sighted people, as well as being a familiar face at many of our activities.

Our thanks to both Jackie and Mary for all they have contributed to our charity in their volunteering roles. The awards received almost 200 nominations from charities across Southend, so we are extremely proud of the fact they reached the final selection. The

photo above shows Mary and Jackie at the awards ceremony.

# Top Tips for Macular

**Written by Coral Carter.**

Our thanks to Coral Carter for sharing her top tips with us, especially for people living with Macular. As many of you know, Coral was the Leader of the local Macular Society for many years.

Firstly, a list of items and equipment that Coral has found useful to help her remain independent:

- A portable lamp for dining out, to use in the kitchen for food prep, for reading and close up work.
- Black and yellow masking tape around steps in the home and garden.
- Coloured tape or “bumpons” for the cooker, microwave, washing machine and tumble dryer settings.
- Colourful dots on your remote controls are a great help too.
- A white symbol or awareness cane for when you are out and about. You can always put white tape on your usual walking stick. The general public are more aware of you and may well approach you to offer support.
- A yellow awareness/partially sighted badge on a lanyard.
- Talking clocks, watch, microwave and scales are all useful items for around the home.

Some further tips for keeping safe:

- Small flexible cords can be used to fasten purses, keys and bus passes (with the use of a pouch) to the inside of your bag using a safety pin. That way, if you drop anything, you won't have to fumble around trying to find something when you are out. It works for Coral – try it!
- Try to find a bag with a light interior as you will find things much more easily.
- Keep a contact phone number and medication list in your bag, just in case.
- You may find a small bag with your essentials in (phone, keys, wallet) easier to manage.
- Coral finds using a contactless bank card much easier and less stressful when out shopping. That way you are not asking for help to identify coins and notes.



More top tips for around the house:

- You might find it useful to use your mobile phone to take a photo of cooking instructions or labels. These can then be enlarged, making it easier for you to read.
- Small torches and light up magnifiers in a handbag or pocket may be useful.
- There are many kitchen aids available, but one of the most useful is a liquid level indicator so you can safely make a cup of tea – very important!
- You could colour code your wardrobe so that you don't go out in mismatched outfits (who says black and navy don't go together?)
- Bold pens in black and other colours are a good choice. Try using different colours to separate columns and key words.
- Try using white nail polish to paint the keyhole on your front door. That way you won't have to fumble trying to get your keys in the lock.

Coral concludes that you may find it helpful to start putting these suggestions in place before you actually need them. That way you will be used to the changes you will need to adjust to in the future.



If you are living with Macular and would like details on how to join the local Southend branch, please call Julie Powlette on **01702 87 38 86**.

If you would like to purchase any of the items mentioned by Coral in her top tips, please call our office on **01702 34 21 31**. We have many of the items for sale at our Centre, as featured in our photo – lanyards,

bumpers, talking watches and clocks, magnifiers and liquid level indicators – and many others as well.

# V.I.P Banking

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Fundraising & Comms. Manager.**

We know that many people living with sight loss can find banking and monetary transactions difficult. In recent months we have had a few enquiries from the people we support on what help is out there for VIPs (visually impaired people) who want to independently keep track of their finances.

We would advise first and foremost that you book an appointment with your nearest branch and speak to them face to face, if this is possible. If not, we suggest that you call your bank, explaining that you are visually impaired and asking what adaptations they have available.

From our own research, the level of support does vary from bank to bank. However, here is what we have found commonly available:

## **Audio Cash Machines.**

Audio cash machines (also known as audio ATMs or talking cash machines) can help you safely and independently withdraw cash and use other services, such as getting your balance, topping up a mobile phone and ordering statements. You will need to insert your own headphones (any with a standard 3.5mm jack plug, like the one on a phone or MP3 player, will work) into the audio output socket on the front of the cash machine and listen to the options. An audio guide will then talk you through the available transactions. The cash machine panel will include Braille labels, as well as raised numbers on the keys and a funnelled entry point for your card.

## **High Visibility Debit Cards.**

Some of the banks are offering high visibility debit cards with a bright stripe and arrow to indicate the leading edge of the card that you insert into a cash machine or chip-and-PIN reader. They also come in a range of high-contrast colours that make it easier to locate and read the text on your card.

All high-visibility cards have a larger security number on the back of the card (CVV) and a notch to show which end to insert into cash machines or chip-and-PIN readers. Then you just use it as you would any other debit card.



## Audio Accessible PINsentry Card Reader.



Some of the banks offer an accessible PINsentry card reader to help you access your Online Banking account.

It's larger than a standard device, so it's easier to hold. It has a bigger screen and ergonomic key pad. You can use headphones or the built-in speaker.

The photo left shows our demonstration large PINsentry card reader from Barclays (other banks are available). This is available to “have a go” on in our Centre.

## Other Adoptions.

Most banks offer large print, braille and audio options for receiving your statements and correspondence. You will need to let your bank know your preferred format.

Many also offer signature guides to help with signing documents, large print cheque books and paying in books as well as coloured overlays that can help to make text clearer and more comfortable to read. They can be used both to change the colour of paper and a screen.

## Trusted Person Card.

Some banks offer a “Trusted Person Card” if you need some support but don't want to hand over control of your finances. This is a debit card linked to your personal current account. You can give it to someone you trust to shop for essentials or to withdraw money on your behalf.

Don't forget that Southend in Sight can help you gain more confidence getting online through an appointment with our tech team. Please call us on **01702 34 21 31** to book an appointment.

# Exhibition Time

**Written by Catherine Hodgson, Fundraising & Comms. Manager.**

Our annual exhibition will take place on **Wednesday 30 October 2024** at **The Ekco Club, Thornford Gardens, Southend, SS2 6PU**. This popular event gives local visually impaired people the chance to try out equipment before making a purchase and meet with suppliers face to face. Our new venue worked well last year as it is familiar to many of those who attend our social activities, has ample free parking, is close to a bus stop and we are able to provide some refreshments for those attending.



As with the last few years, to minimise numbers at any given time, we are asking anyone that is thinking of attending to book an hour time slot: **10am to 11am, 11am to 12pm, 12pm to 1pm, 1pm to 2pm**. Please call our office on **01702 34 21 31** to register your booking. We found this system has allowed our suppliers, staff and volunteers to spend more time demonstrating equipment to attendees, as shown in the photo above.

As we go to print, we have the following suppliers confirmed to attend:

**Associated Optical.**

**Cobolt.**

**Humanware.**

**Optelec/Enhanced Vision.**

**Professional Vision.**

**Sight and Sound.**

**Vision Aid.**

We also welcome representatives from the local **Talking Newspapers** and **The Macular Society**, along with the **Rehabilitation Team from Southend City Council and Essex Cares Ltd (ECL)**. Our exhibition is a popular event, so please do remember to call and book your place.

## **AGM.**

We will also be holding the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Southend in Sight after the exhibition from 2.45pm onwards. Anyone is welcome to attend, but only official members have voting rights. Please call us on **01702 34 21 31** to register your attendance.

### **A statement from the Board of Trustees ahead of the AGM:**

It has recently been confirmed to the Board of Trustees that our building at 117 Hamlet Court Road requires significant investment.

The Trustees are assessing if the investment in the building:

- is aligned with the future ambitions of the Charity
- is good value for money and directly benefits the local visually impaired community
- will allow our building to be fully accessible.

We are now investigating the options for future premises and may be asking you for your views and opinions on location and facilities.

Please be assured there will be no change in terms of the support, services and activities we provide for local visually impaired people.

Whilst there may be some changes afoot at the Charity, we hope that we can build on our recent successes and find, in the long term, a centrally located and accessible space that helps us build a community asset for local people needing our help.

We will, of course, keep you all updated on our progress as and when we have any further information to share.



## **Southend in Sight – your local sight loss charity.**

Registered Charity Number: 1069765

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### **Our Charity values:**

- Excellence
- Community
- Empowerment
- Support
- Integrity

**Your vision is our vision**

