



Hello!

***The Newsletter from
Henshaws North West***

Winter 2009

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Welcome to the Winter Edition of Henshaws 'Hello' Newsletter.

Every year winter seems to creep up on us and, before we know it, summer (what summer? I hear you say) has ended and the dark nights are here. Let's just hope that in the months ahead we get some crisp, sunny days instead of the gloomy wet weather that has blighted the last few weeks. I suppose we should be grateful that we have been spared the awful flooding presently affecting many parts of Cumbria and hope that the poor people trying to cope with the dreadful effects of this manage to have a happy Christmas.

With Christmas in mind, we've arranged a little thank you for all the hard work put in by our band of volunteers and hope that the superb chinese buffet arranged for December 10 goes some way to showing our appreciation – have a wonderful time!

As usual, in this newsletter we have loads of interesting articles for you and hope you find them informative and entertaining as well. Don't forget that if you have something you feel would be of interest to others, please let us know about it and we can include it in the next edition. Just 'phone us on **0161 872 1234**.

Henshaws News and Events

Henshaws New Web site

Websites are all important in today's digital world - especially for charities like Henshaws - so we need to offer up-to-date information, promote the good work we are doing and encourage our supporters. That's why we have been busy developing a new website!

Our new site (www.henshaws.org.uk) will be your one-stop place to discover what we do in your local area and how you can help us carry on the great work. We'll have easy-to-read information about sight loss, our various services, real stories from the people we support and information about how you can raise money for Henshaws.

Our site will also be accessible to people with sight loss and other disabilities. We've made sure it's compatible with screen readers and has various options to change the way you view the site, including colour contrast, the size of the text and text-only versions of each page.

The site is live now at www.henshaws.org.uk, so please log on and tell us what you think!

Get on the Net!

Hello to all you surfers! Would you like to learn how to surf the net and send emails to your family? We are in the process of setting up a fifteen-week course to do this. The course will take place on Fridays and at the moment we are just taking names, so if you are interested contact Viv Allen on 0161 872 1234.

IT venue needed!

We're on the hunt for a Manchester city centre venue to host a new IT course.

We have funding for laptops, wireless internet and course materials but we cannot afford to hire a city centre venue.

All we need is the use of a room with tables and chairs once a week – there will be six students on the course. To enable the students to get there easily and safely, it is preferable that the venue is close to bus, train or Metrolink routes.

Community Services Manager Mark Belcher says: "90% of employers view people with a visual impairment as 'impossible to employ'. Our course provides people with the first steps they

need on the road to employment or further training and dispels a lot of the myths about visual impairment that are out there.”

We already provide pioneering IT training in communities across Merseyside.

We will give free visual impairment training for the staff of any company able to offer us a room so if you are able to help or would like further information, please contact Mark Belcher on 0161 872 1234 or mark.belcher@henshaws.org.uk.

Carols by Candlelight

Come out of the cold, step into the magnificent Manchester Cathedral and let our Christmas Concert warm your soul.

Carols by Candlelight takes place on Thursday 17th December at 7.30pm; tickets are £10 each and £5 for concessions.

We've prepared another fabulous evening of live music, carol singing, nativity, Christmas readings and performance. All we need now is for you to enjoy it!

Tickets for this fabulously festive affair always sell out so we suggest you book soon by calling James on 0161 786 3661.

Credit Crunch Christmas Cards

Christmas is coming and we've got a great range of cards that will knock the stockings off anyone's mantelpiece...

The cards have all been designed by the people who use our services and every pack sold helps us to support even more.

We know money is tight for many people at the moment, so we're giving you the chance to buy classic designs from previous years at rock bottom prices!

Each cellophane wrapped pack includes ten high quality cards of the same design, with ten white envelopes.

Order your cards by calling 0161 872 1234 or email appeals@henshaws.org.uk

Henshaws Activity, Support and Information Groups

We run all sorts of groups and activities here in the Resource Centre and also around Salford and Manchester. We offer IT training and Clubs that meet in the community in Manchester, Trafford, Bolton, Gorton, Swinton, Walkden, Whitefield and Salford. The Whitefield group is currently seeking new members; for more information about all Henshaws groups and activities please ring **0161 872 1234**.

Arts and Crafts Group

Henshaws Arts and Crafts Group is for anyone who has an interest in or would like to have a try at

- Painting
- Making tactile pictures
- Model making and much more.

The group meets at Atherton House, Talbot Road, Old Trafford every Friday from 11am to 1pm and we are now recruiting for our next term. It doesn't matter if you are not artistic as it is all about having fun and enjoying yourself in a safe and friendly environment. Tea and coffee are available on arrival and throughout the sessions.

If you are interested in joining any of our groups, ring 0161 872 1234.

Henshaws Film Club

The films shown will be by group vote only, so we should please most of the group all of the time. We will present a wide range of film genres from classics to classics in the making.

Please give us a call and give it a go! Come and join us for our first film showing on Tuesday 8th December, starting at 1pm.

Ring Allisdair or Mark on 0161 872 1234 or email info@henshaws.org.uk (subject title Audio film Club).

Choose from the all new 'Star Trek' (find out why Bones is called Bones and its not because he's the Doctor), Terminator 6, or Ice Age 3 all in High Definition and Audio Description.

Readers Group

For those who enjoy a good book, this is a small group led by Carole from Sale Library, who brings in a selection of audio books for the group members to select, take home and then discuss at the following meeting over a cup of tea and biscuits. The group meets on the second Thursday of each month from 1.30-3.30pm. If you are interested, call Janet on 0161 872 1234.

Manchester & District Social Club of the Blind

Come on out! Get socialising!

The Manchester and District Social Club of the Blind (MDSCB) has been in existence for over 90 years and, during that time, its membership and its functions have fluctuated. Its current, ageing, membership is on the low side, so we need more visually impaired people and their partners to join us and return the Group to its former glory. We meet up once a month, where domino competitions, bingo and quizzes are held and there's always a cuppa and a biscuit available. Every effort is made to provide a door-to-door pick-up service for all these visits.

What does it cost? The present membership fee is a mere £1, with all trips and visits being heavily subsidised.

If you would like to give it a whirl, you can find out more by giving Ron Goulden a ring on 0161-798-9137 or emailing him at r-goulden@supanet.com - he would really like to hear from you.

Glaucoma Support Group

This is an exciting and informative group that supports people in a gentle and informal way. If you are affected by this condition or have a relative or friend who is, come along and join us and bring your friends with you.

We meet every two months on the second Wednesday of the month. The next meeting will be for the Christmas meal get together on Wednesday 2nd December. Anyone interested in joining the group in the New Year should contact Mark or Janet at Henshaws on 0161 872 1234.

Macular Degeneration Group

This support group now meets at 2.00pm at Atherton House, Old Trafford on the third Thursday of every other month.

The next meetings will take place on 21st January, 18th March and 20th May. Anyone wishing to know more about the group should call Elizabeth Lomas on 0161 881 7103.

Anyone wishing to know more about Macular Disease should call Janet on 0161 872 1234.

Salford Groups

The I-Spy Group meets every Tuesday from 1.30-3.30pm at the Westwood Community Centre, Grasmere Crescent, Winton, Eccles. The Group Leader is David Cavanagh.

The Swinton Group meets every Wednesday from 1.30-3.30pm at Wardley Community Centre, Ash Drive, Swinton. The Group Leader is Herta Chomley.

The Walkden Group meets every Friday from 1.30-3.30pm at the Guildhall on Guild Avenue, off Memorial Road, Walkden, with occasional visits to the Walkden Gateway.

The Broadwalk Group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 10.30am-12noon at our new base at the Pendleton Gateway. If you are a visually impaired person from Salford, please do not hesitate to contact Fiona on 0161 872 1234.

For further information on any of the Salford Groups please contact 0161 872 1234 and ask for Fiona or Janet.

Social Groups

The Tuesday and Wednesday Groups meet at Atherton House, Old Trafford every week from 1.30-3.30pm for activities such as quizzes, music, games and meals out. We even have an Evening Social Group - If you would like to know more, ring Janet on **0161 872 1234**.

Zoomers Group

This Group meets every Monday morning at Atherton House, Old Trafford from 10am-1pm. It is designed for people who would like to learn more about computers, and abilities range from absolute beginners to those wishing to learn specific skills.

For more information on this computing social group contact Ken Seaman on 07966 747530 or by email: kenseaman13@aol.com

Henshaws Theatre Group

The following is a list of forthcoming theatre trips in January.

The Sound of Music - Palace Theatre, Manchester on Tuesday, January 5th at 7.30pm

Porridge - The Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays on Saturday, January 9th at 3pm.

Oliver Twist - Octagon Theatre, Bolton on Monday, January 18th at 7.15pm.

If anyone is interested in attending any of these trips, please call Maggie on **07770 682481** at least three weeks before the performance.

Art Galleries and Museums Group

Each month, Mary Gifford takes an escorted group to an event at an art gallery or museum in the Greater Manchester area. The next event will be at **Manchester Art Gallery** on **Thursday 3 December**, from **10.30am – 12.30pm**, with a described tour of

the new special exhibition “**Angels of Anarchy**”. “Angels of Anarchy” is the first major exhibition in Europe to explore the crucial role that women artists played in the surrealist art movement. The exhibition contains work by 32 artists, including Frida Kahlo and Lee Miller. These were radical, revolutionary women whose work still inspires, and sometimes shocks. Description will be by Anne Hornsby. The visit will finish with refreshments with mince pies and time for a chat. Where possible, transport is provided for the participants.

Events for the New Year are still to be confirmed. For further information, or if you are interested in finding out more about the group, please ring 0161 872 1234 and leave a message with your contact details, and Mary will return your call.

Henshaws Services

Adult Education

Skillstep

This is a 12 week part-time pre-vocational training course providing the skills needed to seek employment or voluntary work or to progress to further education.

The course runs 3 days per week and includes the following elements:-

Vocational Guidance

Computer Skills

Personal Development

Confidence Building

Office Skills

Work Placement

The course is FREE to visually impaired people and is accredited by the Open College Network.

For more information call Vivianne Allen on **0161 872 1234**.

IT Training

Fancy getting to grips with those new fangled machines called Personal Computers? Want to learn the very basics at your own pace (or maybe you know the basics but just want to use our equipment)? We are soon to start some basic computer sessions including Touch Typing and Introduction to Word Processing – no pressure, no time scales, no exams, just simple informal learning at your own pace. For those who have the skills, but maybe would like some support or companionship, we are also setting up supported 'Drop In' sessions. If you are interested in any of these sessions or know somebody who would be interested in offering support, give Cliff Saffren a ring on **0161 872 1234**.

Light Sensory Room

People of all ages who have sensory or learning difficulties will benefit from the appropriate relaxation and leisure facilities available in our Sensory Room. This experience can help clients to relax, reduces aggression and increases interest in their surroundings. The light room has a waterbed, massage chair and bed, bubble tube, coloured fibre optic strands, soft padded surroundings, and relaxing music.

To book the room call Janet, Jan or Doreen on **0161 872 1234**.

Children & Families

Our ethos is to provide a service for the whole family and we will support any family member or carer whose lives are affected by Visual Impairment. Parents with a visual impairment may need specialist support as families with a child who has a visual impairment may feel isolated and unsure how to cope.

We offer:

Family Support Officers who visit families with children aged 0 to 19 years and give information on benefits, education and local services;

a Family Support Officer at the Paediatric Clinic of the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital;

an Ofsted registered Holiday Club (during school holidays), a Winter Party and an 11+ Youth Group;

social activities for children and families;

the "VIPAR Group" (Visually Impaired Parents), where visually impaired parents can find support;

help with children's schoolwork, delivered in homes where there is a visually impaired family member;

a Baby and Toddler Group, with use of our soft play room, toy library (with specialist advice about play techniques) and our sensory stimulation room, and

information forums and conferences for parents and professionals, covering regular news updates and varied topics such as puberty, the statementing process and benefits.

Our **Parent and Toddler Group** meets every Thursday from 10.00am-12.00noon and on the first Thursday of every month there will be a special event.

For further information call Linda or Zahida on **0161 872 1234**.

Rehabilitation

The Rehabilitation service works alongside all Henshaws services, providing practical help, information and advice on all aspects of visual impairment. In the Manchester area we have two qualified rehabilitation officers providing information on different eye conditions, mobility, daily living and hints and tips to help make life easier for those people with a visual impairment. We have a range of equipment on display for demonstration purposes, including CCTVs, speaking microwaves, liquid level indicators to help with making drinks, talking watches and clocks

and other specialist and non-specialist equipment designed to make life easier.

If you need help and/or advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch with **Michelle, Gary or Glynis** on **0161 872 1234**.

Salford Outreach

If you live in Salford and are over the age of 55, you have your very own Community Outreach Worker. You can have a chat about any problems you are having relating to your sight, and get help with accessing other services in your area. Community Outreach Workers are also responsible for the Support Groups in the City of Salford and run a Salford Outreach Information Support Programme three times a year. These programmes, funded by Salford City Council, consist of two-hourly sessions over seven weeks and are filled with vital information for newly registered visually impaired people.

For more information, call **Mark or Fiona** on **0161 872 1234**.

Your News

New Product News

Communiclock – With the clocks changing twice a year it's sometimes a bit of an ordeal resetting your clock, but not if you have a Communiclock radio-controlled calendar clock. The date and time are set automatically from radio signals and will reset automatically when the clocks change in October and March. By pressing the big button on the top of the clock the time is announced in a natural, male, English voice and, by pressing and holding the button, the day, date and year is announced. The clock is priced at around £25.

BookSence portable Daisy player – The BookSence T50 is a new multi-function portable player which is compatible with a

wide range of audio formats, including Daisy and MP3, allowing access to information, books and music from many different sources. It has a built-in text-to-speech engine to read, amongst others, Word documents, a voice recorder and built-in talking clock. The Booksence T50XT has the additional features of a built-in FM radio, Bluetooth for wireless headphones and 4GB built-in memory. The BookSence is priced between £250 - £362.25

Cold Weather Payment

If you're on a low income, a Cold Weather Payment may be available to help you for each week of very cold weather in your area.

You may be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment for each week of very cold weather in your area if you get Pension Credit or income-related Employment and Support Allowance with a support or work-related activity component in the main phase.

You may also be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment for each qualifying week if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance in the assessment phase and have one of the following:

a pensioner premium, higher pensioner premium or enhanced pensioner premium

a disability premium, enhanced disability premium or severe disability premium

a disabled child premium

Child Tax Credit that includes a disability or severe disability element and/or

a child who is under five in the family

How much will you get?

This year you will get £25 when the average temperature where you live is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days during the period from

1 November to 31 March. Specified Meteorological Office weather stations are used to obtain this information.

How to apply

You don't need to apply as you'll get a Cold Weather Payment automatically as long as you qualify. Tell your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus if you think you should have received a Cold Weather Payment but have not had one.

'Bionic eye' helps blind to see again

The following was an exclusive report by Amanda Crook in the Manchester Evening News on November 20, 2009:

Blind people are being helped to see again with a revolutionary 'bionic' eye.

Three patients at the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital are taking part in a worldwide trial of the revolutionary technology and the result are astonishing.

One of the three patients - a 51-year-old man - was able to read short words for the first time in his adult life; another of the patients was able to see fireworks on November 5 for the first time in 40 years and the third patient has also been able to recognise some letters.

Researchers at the eye hospital said patients were progressing much faster than expected and said some their experiences had been 'very moving'.

The 'eye' uses a camera mounted on a pair of glasses to send wireless signals direct to the nerves which control sight. The brain is then able to 'decode' the message to distinguish between dark and light.

The technology, being used by just 11 doctors worldwide, is designed to help people who lost vision due to advanced retinitis pigmentosa - a deterioration of the retina, the light-sensitive lining of the eye where images are captured and sent to the brain.

About 20,000-25,000 people are affected by the condition in Britain alone.

The implant, developed by American company Second Sight, effectively bypasses the retina by sending messages directly to the brain and aims to restore a basic level of useful vision, in the form of spots of light and shades of light and dark, to people with no effective sight. The camera recognises light and dark and stimulates nerves which send the image down the optic nerve to the brain. Patients then have to learn to interpret the visual patterns produced into meaningful images. After the treatment, patients are given large white letters to read on a black screen computer monitor. Paulo Stanga, consultant ophthalmologist at the eye hospital, said: "The patients are progressing much faster than we at first thought. A lot of work still needs to be carried out, but this is certainly a step forward in the right direction, and very encouraging for both the patient and the scientific community."

Other Business

Expert Patients Programme in Salford

The programme is a free six week course for people who are visually impaired in Salford and aims to provide support and develop self confidence.

The course looks at dealing with pain and extreme tiredness, coping with feelings of depression, relaxation techniques and exercise, healthy eating, communicating with family, friends and professionals and planning for the future.

The course will run from 19th January 2010 until 2nd March and will take place at the Pendleton Gateway, 1 Broadwalk, Salford M6 5FX. Each session runs from 1.00 to 3.30pm and there are limited places, so sign up soon to avoid disappointment.

Call Anne Higgins on FREEPHONE 0800 988 5530 or email anne.higgins@eppcic.co.uk

Action for Blind People - Hotels

An overview of the Windermere Manor Hotel - The Lake District - Set in three acres of beautiful landscaped gardens, just a 10 minute walk from the shores of Lake Windermere, this Victorian country retreat boasts some of the most spectacular views across the lake to the Langdale Pikes and the mountains beyond.

Reasons to stay at the Windermere Manor Hotel:

Excellent facilities for guide dogs (pet dogs are also welcome);

Fully accessible facilities and staff trained in visual awareness;

An extensive and varied menu incorporating local specialities offered in the oak panelled restaurant (formerly a chapel) and conservatory which look out over the gardens and lake;

Many rooms with attractive balconies and stunning views of Lake Windermere, and

Indoor heated swimming pool, gymnasium, sauna and sunbed.

Self catering accommodation is also available.

For details call 01539 445801 or email

windermere.manor@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Missing Link

Jane Tilley at Link Therapies Ltd says:

“Thanks to Trafford Council’s ‘Putting People First’ innovation team for helping me develop an idea that will enhance services to residents.

Having practiced complementary stress management therapies for ten years, I have realised that many residents experience difficulty accessing treatments. Immobility, carer responsibilities, lack of transport or time, age or illness are just some of the reasons why people miss out.

I have formed a company called 'Link Therapies Ltd'. It's a busy but exciting time setting up a mobile therapy service designed to connect with people experiencing such difficulties.

Reflexology, Indian Head Massage, Aromatherapy and Reiki provide a balanced approach to improving quality of life, including social, emotional and physical support and experience within the NHS and teacher training enables me to offer an educational aspect. Tutorials, including 'Stress Management Techniques', 'Conflict Resolution' and 'An Introduction to Reflexology', together with our therapies offer residents access to a truly holistic approach to stress management.

We are also trying to keep prices at accessible levels with treatments starting at £5.

Anybody requiring information about our therapies, suitability, prices etc can contact me, Jane Tilley, at Link Therapies Ltd on 0161 976 3013 or email linktherapies@ymail.com

Visually impaired sailing weekend on the Menai Straits

This report covers the first sailing weekend organized by the UK North Blind Sailing Association and was funded with a grant from the National Lottery.

At around midday on Saturday 10th October a group of visually impaired people and sighted crew and helpers arrived at Plas Menai water sports centre on the Menai Straits.

Many of the group had never sailed before but all were keen to take part in this new experience under the expert tuition of the Plas Menai instructors.

By 2.30pm our group had been kitted out with life jackets and waterproofs and were being ferried out to our boats on the center's safety boat. Once on board, the crews were busy raising the sails and coming to terms with a new language containing words like sheets, halyards, jibs, mainsails, reefs etc. but under the calm guidance of our instructors, all three boats were soon under way and sailing fairly placidly along the Menai Straits.

During the afternoon all crew members took turns at sail handling and helming, the weather staying fine and the winds light, so that by five o'clock all our beginners had gained some measure of competence and teamwork.

At the end of the afternoon our instructors and sighted crew brought us to our anchoring point and picked up the mooring buoys off Plas Menai centre, where the crews took down and stowed the sails, making all safe and tidy for the night and ready for our next day's sailing.

By six p.m. we were all cleaned up and ready for our meal in the centre's large dining room. An excellent, three-course roast dinner served by the centre's chefs went down very well after an afternoon of fresh air and exercise.

After our meal we had free use of the centre's amenities, including the games room, large T.V. room and bar, where we were all soon ensconced, spending a pleasant evening swapping salty yarns about our days experiences - and then to bed.

After a good night's sleep in the centre's comfortable en-suite rooms we all met again in the dining room for breakfast (full Welsh of course!) and then down to the changing rooms to get kitted out for our full day's sailing on the Straits. The weather, although not cold, was wet and dismal and those of us with hangovers were noticeably grumpy in these damp conditions, but there was a decent breeze and the cobwebs of the night before were soon blown away. At about twelve thirty we stopped for lunch. By two o'clock we were back on the water and, to our surprise, the instructors had organized a session of racing around a series of buoys in the Straits. As the weather had cleared and the wind picked up, we had a really enjoyable afternoon's racing. The three crews really got into the spirit of the event and the starts and mark rounding's became very competitive, resulting in some close and exciting finishes!

We all had a very enjoyable and successful weekend, thanks in no small part to the management and staff of Plas Menai, our sighted crews Dave, Terry and Darrell, our on shore support

volunteers, Pauline and Sue and, of course, the visually impaired people, Shelly Benbow, Terri Balon, Bill Milner, Simon Merrills, Mike Williams, Rob Awty, Russell Welsh and myself, Rob Owen.

UK North Blind Sailing Association will be organising more of these events in 2010 and I would be pleased to hear from any visually impaired people interested in taking part. Participants must be aged over 18 and reasonably active; transport, accommodation and sailing instruction will be paid for by our Association.

Rob Owen, Chairman

Uk North Blind Sailing Association

Contact details:

E-mail uknblindsailing@ymail.com Mobile: 077 493 43069

Audio Described Cinema Events

Audio Described Films at the Cornerhouse.

Films available with Audio Description are now screened at the Cornerhouse, 70 Oxford St, Manchester. Although only certain screenings are published in the brochure as being shown with Audio Description and Caption sub-titles, the Cornerhouse may be able to provide audio description at other screenings on request and with advance notice. Further details are available from the Box Office on 0161 200 1500, whom you should also call to reserve your headphones.

The Cornerhouse is happy to report that they now have new "stethosets", for customers who use the audio description facility. This state-of-the-art equipment will enable customers to listen to both the audio description and the regular soundtrack concurrently, greatly improving the overall cinema experience. Additional technical maintenance carried out recently should ensure improvements in overall reception for audio description throughout the Cornerhouse's cinemas.

For information on films showing with audio description see <http://www.cornerhouse.org/film/showattinfo.aspx?id=1> or ring the **Box Office** on **0161 200 1500**, whom you should also call to reserve your headphones.

Manchester Museum – Darwin Exhibition Audio Description Guide

A new audio description guide is now available for the Manchester Museum's latest exhibition, “**Charles Darwin: Evolution of a Scientist**”. The exhibition reveals the man behind the myth and explains the science behind Darwin's greatest discoveries. The exhibition is part of a year-long festival of activities and events for all ages and abilities and runs until 30 August 2010. This audio guide has been developed with the help of Henshaws' Art Galleries and Museums Group.

The Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

Tel. 0161 275 2634.

Manchester Art Gallery - Public Events

Gallery 'Highlights Tour' with audio description by Anne Hornsby.

This described tour of Manchester Art Gallery will be led by a 'Friends' guide and takes place on **Thursday 21 January** from **10.30am - 12pm**, followed by tea and coffee. It is ideal for first time gallery visitors or for people who want an introduction to some of the better-known artworks on display; this tour will feature work from the Pre-Raphaelites to the 20th century.

“Making Conversation” workshops; Wednesdays 10, 17 and 24 February 1pm at 4pm

Join artist Naomi Kendrick in exploring an exhibition of Ron Mueck's life-like sculptures and make your own life-like art with artist Naomi Kendrick. These three workshops are designed as a series so try to come along to all of them if you can. The

workshops are free and designed for both visually impaired and sighted people.

The gallery can provide transport for any visually impaired participants who are unable to get to these events independently. For further details and to book places, please contact **Kate Day** on **0161 235 8855**, or phone the **Information Desk** on **0161 235 8888**.

MEGOBAPP (Manchester Environmental Group of Blind and Partially-Sighted People) is anxious to increase its membership of visually-impaired people resident in the Manchester City area. Its aims are to improve the external and built environment, the removal of barriers facing blind and partially-sighted people, access to information, etc. We also produce an occasional newsletter ("Megonews") which is available in standard and large print, braille and on audio cassette.

If you are interested in joining or would just like to know more, ring either Ron Goulden (tel: 0161-798-9137) or Carole Gausden (0161-688-7223) to find out more.

Recipes

Winter Pot Roast

Serves: 6

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 30-40 minutes per 450g/1lb plus 30-40 minutes

Ingredients:

1 x 1.3kg/3lb lean brisket or silverside joint

Salt

2.5ml/½tsp cayenne pepper

30ml/2tbsp sunflower oil

50g/2oz streaky bacon, cut into cubes (or pancetta cubes)

2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

2 onions, peeled and chopped
2 large carrots, peeled and roughly chopped
1 small celeriac, peeled and cubed or 2 large celery sticks,
chopped
300ml/½ pint good, hot beef stock
1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes
2 bay leaves
30ml/2tbsp freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley

Method:

Place the joint on a chopping board and make several slashes over the surface, taking care not to cut the butcher's string. Season with salt and dust with the cayenne pepper on both sides.

Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and brown the joint all over, along with the bacon or pancetta. Transfer to a large ovenproof casserole dish.

Preheat the oven to Gas mark 3, 170°C, 325°F.

In the same frying pan add the garlic, onion, carrot and celeriac or celery. Cook over a moderate heat for 3-4 minutes then spoon into the casserole dish.

Add the stock, chopped tomatoes and bay leaves. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and cook in the oven for 2½-3 hours.

Garnish with parsley and serve with cauliflower cheese.

For vegetarians use favourite chunky vegetables and chestnuts instead of meat and vegetable stock rather than beef stock.

Christmas pudding (suitable for diabetics)

Ingredients

125g plain flour
125g fresh white breadcrumbs
125g shredded vegetable suet
125g currants
150g raisins
1 tbsp low-calorie sweetener

2 tsp each ground cinnamon and mixed spice
1½ tsp baking powder
4 large eggs, beaten
Finely grated zest of 1 large lemon
Finely grated zest of 1 large orange
2 carrots, trimmed and finely grated
2 dessert apples, peeled, cored and cut into small chunks
150ml milk
Icing sugar, for dusting

Method

1. Lightly butter a 1.4-litre pudding basin and line the base with a circle of baking paper.
2. Mix together the dry ingredients, then stir in the other ingredients until well combined. Spoon the mixture into the basin and cover with a circle of buttered baking paper. Fold a pleat into a piece of foil and arrange over the pudding. Secure with string.
3. Carefully place the pudding in a pan of boiling water, making sure the water comes a third of the way up the side of the basin. Cover, reduce the heat to a simmer and steam gently for 5 hours.
4. Turn out the pudding and serve dusted with icing sugar.

Nutritional info:

Per serving: 331kcal, 14.9g fat (6.8g saturated), 7.2g protein, 45.4g carbs, 24.9g sugar, 0.6g salt

All ingredients can be bought in local shops and supermarkets.

Jokes – with a Christmas theme!

Knock Knock

Who's there?

Mary

Mary who?

Mary Christmas!

What did one Angel say to another?

Halo there!

How do cats greet each other at Christmas?

"A furry merry Christmas & Happy mieuw year!"

What do elephants sing at Christmas?

No-o-elephants, no-elephants!

What does Dracula write on his Christmas cards?

Best vicious of the season

What do angry mice send to each other at Christmas?

Cross-mouse cards!

How do sheep greet each other at Christmas?

A merry Christmas to ewe

What beats his chest and swings from Christmas cake to Christmas cake?

Tarzipan!

Mum, Can I have a dog for Christmas?

No you can have turkey like everyone else!

What did the eskimos sing when they got their Christmas dinner?

"Whalemeat again, don't know where, don't know when"!

What did the big cracker say to the little cracker?

My pop is bigger than yours!

Who is never hungry at Christmas?

The turkey - he's always stuffed!

What bird has wings but cannot fly?

Roast turkey

What's the best thing to put into a Christmas cake?
Your teeth!

We had grandma for Christmas dinner!
Really - we had turkey!

Whats happens if you eat the Christmas decorations?
You get tinsel-itus!

What do vampires put on their turkey at Christmas?
Grave-y!

Poetry Corner

Volunteers

Volunteers are willing to take risks,
Out-of-pocket for some leisure time,
Letting love and joy dictate the tasks
Undertaken for some modest dream.
No one volunteers but for a vision
That never fits but may oblige the truth.
Each finds some ideal with which to fashion
Emblems of how inner grace is wrought.
Relentless need and hunger rule the world,
So must volunteers sustain the good.

Goodwill To Men - Give Us Your Money

By Pam Ayres

It was Christmas Eve on a Friday,
The shops was full of cheer,
With tinsel in the windows,
And presents twice as dear.
A thousand Father Christmases,
Sat in their little huts,

And folk was buying crackers
And folk was buying nuts.

All up and down the country,
Before the light was snuffed,
Turkeys they get murdered,
And cockerels they got stuffed.
Christmas cakes got marzipanned,
And puddin's they got steamed,
Mothers they got desperate
And tired kiddies screamed.

Hundredweights of Christmas cards,
Went flying through the post,
With first class postage stamps on those
You had to flatter most.
Within a million kitchens,
Mince pies was being made.
On everybody's radio
"White Christmas", it was played.

Out in the frozen countryside
Men crept round on their own,
Hacking off the holly
What other folks had grown.
Mistletoe on willow trees
Was by a man wrenched clear,
So he could kiss his neighbour's wife
He'd fancied all the year.

And out upon the hillside,
Where the Christmas trees had stood,
All was completely barren
But for little stumps of wood.
The little trees that flourished

All the year were there no more,
But in a million houses
Dropped their needles on the floor.

And out of every cranny, cupboard,
Hiding place and nook,
Little bikes and kiddies' trikes,
Were secretively took.
Yards of wrapping paper
Was rustled round about,
And bikes were wheeled to bedrooms
With the pedals sticking out.

Rolled up in Christmas paper
The Action Men were tensed,
All ready for the morning
When their fighting life commenced.
With tommy guns and daggers
All clustered round about,
"Peace on Earth - Goodwill to Men"
The figures seemed to shout.

The church was standing empty,
The pub was standing packed,
There came a yell, "Noel, Noel!"
And glasses they got cracked.
From up above the fireplace
Christmas cards began to fall,
And trodden on the floor, said:
"Merry Christmas, to you all."

Questions and Answers

Q. Why does a Bic pen lid top, have a hole in it?

A. If the pen lid top is accidentally swallowed, the hole prevents the airways being blocked and thus allows breathing.

Q. Why did fire houses have circular staircases?

A. The reason firehouses have circular stairways is from the days of yore when the engines were pulled by horses. The horses were stabled on the ground floor and figured out how to walk up straight staircases.

Did you know

The hardness of ice is similar to that of concrete.

Apples are more effective at keeping people awake in the morning than caffeine.

The man who played the voice of bugs bunny was allergic to carrots.

Reindeer like to eat bananas.

Sadly, the time has come to say goodbye until the next edition of Hello, so all that remains is for us to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The next edition of 'Hello' will be coming out at the beginning of March 2010 so, if you have any news, information on other services or any general tips or hints you would like to share give us a ring on **0161 872 1234**.

One other thing – if you receive this newsletter in the wrong format just let us know – we can produce it in large print, Braille and audio CD

ENJOY YOUR WINTER

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