Arabian Nights at the Royal Blind School
Dear Supporter,

Welcome to the latest edition of iSite with all the latest Royal Blind news. It’s been a busy few months across the whole of Royal Blind. Pupils at the Royal Blind School were the first in Scotland to try out prototype braille Lego bricks which are being made by the Lego Foundation for children who are visually impaired. You can read the full story on pages 2 and 3.

We are also very proud to let you know that teachers from the Royal Blind School are now providing educational support to children with sight loss on the Orkney Islands. This builds on the success of the programme we already run in mainstream schools in East Lothian.

Residents in our services for older people have been busy christening a new bar and celebrating a 100th birthday to name just a few! Much of the work we do at Royal Blind would not be possible without your support and donations. This helps us to ensure that blind and partially sighted people, including those who have other disabilities, are fully included and lead fulfilling lives – thank you.

I hope you are enjoying reading iSite and hearing about our work. Please get in touch if there is anything you would really like to see featured in the magazine, we would love to hear from you. If you no longer want to hear from us or would like to change the way we communicate with you, please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or email privacy@royalblind.org

Visit www.royalblind.org to find out more.

Best wishes
Davina Shiell, Associate Director of Marketing and Communications

P.S. Did you know there are over 171,000 people living with sight loss in Scotland. Royal Blind supports people of all ages – from babies and toddlers at our pre-school playgroup, children at our school and after school club, young adults in our supported accommodation and respite care, and older people in our care homes. We also run the Scottish Braille Press a leading UK provider of accessible media.

iSite in alternative formats
To receive iSite in large print, Braille or audio CD please contact us on 0131 229 1456 or e-mail marketing@royalblind.org

Royal Blind is a registered charity SC017167 Scottish War Blinded is a Scottish charitable incorporated organisation charity number SC047192

Senior Carer at Braeside wins Scottish Care Award

Pat, who is a Senior Carer, has been a vital part of Braeside House, our care home for older people with sight loss in Edinburgh, for 30 years.

Her charge nurse said: “She works tirelessly on nightshift to ensure high standards of care. She has fully embraced new technology and is a positive team player with a great attitude that inspires the rest of the team.”

In a care home, the night team is not as visible to families and it can be easy to overlook all that they do. Families will often only see the night staff when there is an emergency. Families who have met Pat always comment positively about her and are keen to say how she has supported them at the most difficult time in their lives.

Morag Francis, Head of Care for Older People at Royal Blind said:

“All the staff love to work with Pat. She is flexible and always calm in a crisis. Even after a difficult shift she will have a smile on her face and have something positive to say. She truly deserves the recognition for all she does.”

We are very proud at Royal Blind that Braeside House staff member Pat Gibson won the Positive Impact Award at the Scottish Care Awards.
Royal Blind pupils among first in world to play with braille Lego

The Royal Blind School was chosen by the LEGO Foundation to try out the first braille Lego bricks in the world.

Pupils were delighted to take delivery of the bricks all the way from Lego’s headquarters in Denmark.

Lego have created a new braille version of its famous bricks which have been made especially for young people who have a vision impairment. Each coloured block features a braille letter made from the familiar Lego circular studs, as well as a printed letter. Also included are numbers and some maths symbols. The bricks have been handmade but will go into mass production around the world this year so that children who have a vision impairment will be able to get their hands on them at the start of the Autumn term.

When our pupils first tested the bricks there was huge excitement in the room. Aidan, 14, immediately said: “I can spell D….A….D, with these bricks straight away.” This moment demonstrates why these colourful bricks might be so useful for children who can use braille.

Teacher at the Royal Blind School, Pam Young, points out that as well as learning, the brick design means they can be used by both sighted and vision impaired children playing side by side.

“Children are learning to read braille, it’s a complete mystery to the sighted kids who are alongside them,” she says.

“I think this is a bit of an opportunity for the children and their sighted peers to learn a little bit about braille in a fun way. Now they can play together.”

Pam also says that many parents she speaks to can find it difficult to find toys for their children. There just isn’t much out there for children who are blind or have sight loss.

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Morten Bonde, art director at the Danish toy giant, lives with a genetic eye condition, Retinitis pigmentosa, which is impairing his vision.

“Experiencing reactions from pupils and teachers to braille bricks has been hugely inspirational and reminded me that the only limitations I will meet in my life are those I create in my own mind,” he said.

“We know braille users become more independent, have a higher level of education and better employment opportunities.

“The bricks will be distributed free of charge to select organisations who support young vision impaired children.”

Stine Storm from the Lego Foundation said:

“The Foundation is all about learning through play. This will be a tool that can help to teach braille to children and it will enable a blind child to learn next to a sighted child.

“The demand is huge; we want all pupils who need it to have access to it as an early learning tool.”

Stine said: “We really want it to give braille a boost. It’s still such an important tool for learning and at Lego we hope that the braille bricks will help to bring braille to more young people.”

Lego innovator who is losing his own sight

The braille Lego bricks were designed with the help of a man who is gradually losing his own sight.

“‘I want to ask the people at Lego how they made them,’” says Bo, “‘But can you please tell them that they are magical?’

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Jenny’s Well residents called to the bar

Residents at Jenny’s Well, Royal Blind’s care home in Paisley, can now enjoy popping to the pub for a drink with their friends, in a special pub created inside the care home.

The pub, named Jenny’s Bar, gives the residents the chance to experience a pub atmosphere in a safe environment with staff and family support.

Care Home Manager Steuart Whyte said: “We wanted somewhere for residents to socialise. At the end of the day, this is their home. Having the bar gives them a place where they can relax with their family or friends. It’s great for the residents to be able to go to the bar for a drink and a chat and they can also visit with staff and their families.

“A number of our residents have dementia as well as sight loss. Socialising and listening to music in a pub environment can be very helpful for older people with dementia.”

And the bar is certainly going down well with residents. 84 year old Hannah McGregor said: “I like to have a wee tipple sometimes and it’s nice to be able to sit in the bar with my friends and to have a bit of a chat.”

Meaningful Activities Assistant Carole Little said: “It’s gone down really well with the residents, they are enjoying it. It brings back memories for people, which is an important way of those who may have dementia as well as sight loss to relax.

Steuart said: “The bar is taking shape but we need more things in it to really recreate the feeling of a proper pub. We are very keen to hear from local businesses or individuals who may be able to donate items to Jenny’s Bar. We would love to have a jukebox so residents could play music from the 50’s and 60’s. We also need a fridge to keep donated beer or wine in. It would be amazing to have a beer pump to place on the bar, and some bar stools.

“It would be fantastic if we were able to make Jenny’s Bar look like the pubs that our residents would remember from their younger days.”

Some of the residents love to sing, so Steuart is also thinking about whether a karaoke machine could be a good addition to the bar!

The pub is not licensed but family and friends of residents can donate the drinks.

If you would like to donate an item to Jenny’s Bar please contact Steuart Whyte on: 0141 370 7950 or email: Stewart.whyte@royalblind.org

“I like to have a wee tipple sometimes and it’s nice to be able to sit in the bar with my friends and to have a bit of a chat.”
**Royal Blind helps to make rugby accessible for people with sight loss**

Blind and partially sighted rugby fans will soon be able to ‘watch’ the game in real time – thanks to a groundbreaking new system using braille diagrams and audio commentary.

Blind and partially sighted rugby fans will soon be able to ‘watch’ the game in real time – thanks to a groundbreaking new system using braille diagrams and audio commentary.

Royal Blind has teamed up with Edinburgh Rugby and socially inclusive Edinburgh rugby club, BATs, to test out a brand new braille rugby programme which is helping to make rugby matches accessible for people with vision.

A group of former Royal Blind School pupils and staff tried out the new system during the Edinburgh Rugby v Bordeaux-Beagles match in the Challenge Cup in November. Volunteers demonstrated the position of the ball and the players in real time using a tactile diagram with braille.

A radio commentary of the match plays through headphones so that the person with a visual impairment can listen to the commentary and use the map at the same time. Crucially, the choice lies with the vision impaired person: they can choose whether to have radio commentary or commentary from a volunteer.

David Palencia, PE teacher at the Royal Blind School said:

“Uwe are delighted to be working with BATs and Edinburgh Rugby on this project. It makes a huge difference to a person with sight loss. They can experience the whole atmosphere of the game. It also means they know where the players are on the pitch with the help of the tactile image using braille.”

David added: “Uwe started with just one person doing the commentary and we have now tried the system out at three matches, at each match we are refining what we are doing and learning what is the best experience for a spectator with vision impairment.”

The groundbreaking project, is believed to be the first of its kind. Edinburgh Rugby Head of Community, Ruaridh Pye said:

“Having the braille diagram made a huge difference as I was able to tell where the players were on the pitch.”

If you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer at a rugby match, please email John Evans at BATs rugby club on: john_b_evans@me.com

If you would like to know more about becoming involved with Royal Blind as a volunteer you can email us at: volunteering@royalblind.org or call us on: 0131 446 3154

As part of National Braille Week, Royal Blind pupils handed out braille thank you cards to shops and services in the South of Edinburgh that they use regularly.

Seven pupils handed out the cards to a variety of businesses, including Café Carlucci in Tollcross, Specsavers in Morningside, St Columbus Hospice shop in Morningside, bus drivers on Lothian buses and the soft play centre at the Commonwealth Pool.

Amy is pictured above handing a braille thank you card which was made in the school to the Sainsbury’s customer service desk in Morningside.

The Customer Services Assistant told Amy that she had seen a lot of our pupils over the 15 years she has worked in the area. Amy asked her if there were any plans for Sainsbury’s to include braille on more products. The Customer Services Assistant said she was going to speak to management at Sainsbury’s about this and the company will let the school know if there are any new products featuring braille coming up.

We are very proud of all the pupils who handed out cards for having the confidence to speak directly to local businesses and to highlight how important braille is to them in their daily lives.
Royal Blind pupils try their hand at making poppies at Edinburgh’s Poppy Factory

Four pupils from the Royal Blind School visited Lady Haig’s Poppy Factory at Redford Barracks in Edinburgh. Bo, Rebeka, Jay and Aiden were given a tour of the factory and met several of the ex-servicemen and women who live there.

They also met members of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, including their Shetland pony mascot Cpl Cruachan IV. The pupils had a go at making poppies and worked together with the ex-servicemen to make a poppy wreath.

Royal Blind teacher Pam Young, who accompanied the pupils on the trip, said:

“They absolutely loved the experience of meeting the ex-servicemen. The Haig Poppy Factory made a huge effort to make sure that the pupils, all of whom are vision impaired, could touch and feel the poppies, and even the mascot pony which made the day so memorable.”

Aiden, 14, a pupil at the Royal Blind School said: “I really enjoyed meeting and speaking to the ex-servicemen.”

Jay, 13, said: “I liked chatting with the ex-servicemen and making the wreaths together.”

Rebeka, 12 and Bo, 9, both said: “It was fantastic, we really loved meeting the pony and how the pony’s nose felt. It was fun to make the poppy wreaths.”

The original Lady Haig Poppy Factory was opened in March 1926, employing men who had become disabled during World War I to make poppies for Scotland. The factory currently has a workforce of 40 ex-servicemen, the large majority of whom are registered as disabled. The factory is currently operating from Redford Barracks in Colinton whilst its permanent home in Warriston Road is being renovated.

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Rebeka, 12 and Bo, 9, both said: “It was fantastic, we really loved meeting the pony and how the pony’s nose felt. It was fun to make the poppy wreaths.”
There was live entertainment from singer Alan Weatherhead and a specially made cake featuring photos of Braeside House. The cake was cut by Braeside resident Mary, who has just celebrated a very special birthday of her own, her 100th.

Residents enjoyed prosecco, cake, and a proper afternoon tea. Some children from Royal Blind’s after school club also attended to usher Braeside House a happy birthday.

There was a lovely speech from Head of Care for Older People, Morag Francis, who knows Braeside House very well herself – she used to be the manager there!

Mary was joined by her six grandchildren, ten great grandchildren and many other loved ones. Mary’s daughter Myra said that despite her mum’s age she was on fabulous form for her birthday celebrations.

Mary, who was born in 1919, worked as a nurse for 20 years at Queensberry House Hospital and worked at Bangour Hospital during the Second World War tending badly burnt airmen who had been shot down.

She met her husband Andrew when she was 18. Mary remembers that Andrew taught her to dance. Just after they met, Andrew was sent off to fight in the war for nearly five years. When he returned, Mary was 22 and they got married straight away. In fact, the only time that was available for them to marry was at 9 in the morning!

A highlight of the party was a young piper from George Watson’s School who played for her and the 70 guests.

Two of Mary’s wedding guests from 1942 were at the party. Mary’s sister Nan Moore was a bridesmaid at Mary’s wedding 77 years ago and her cousin Betty, who was a flower girl, both joined the celebrations.

A few years ago Myra and Ian organized for their mum and dad to go on a cruise. Mary has really happy memories of visiting Hong Kong and seeing the Taj Mahal in India.

Singing and dancing is high on the list of Mary’s favourite things to do. She still likes a sing and a dance at 100. Mary is also a pretty mean bowler and regularly wins the Braeside bowling competition.

Art is an activity that Mary has taken up at Braeside. Meaningful Activities Co-coordinator Tony Daley started up art classes for the residents.

Mary says: “I never thought I could paint but since meeting Tony I have done lots of lovely paintings that I show off to friends and family. I am hoping that we will have an exhibition of our work this year.”

Her career as a nurse was a huge passion. One of Mary’s happiest memories is of nursing a very sick man – who had only the strength of a baby – back to being a happy and healthy man:

“When he was well enough to leave hospital and go home again, we both cried with happiness,” Mary says.

And asked what her tips are for a long and happy life. Mary puts it simply:

“Keeping busy and helping others. If you can make lots of friends and help people it makes you happy too,”

Mary requested that guests made donations towards Braeside House instead of buying her gifts. Daughter Myra paid tribute to staff at Braeside who she says have given her mum a ‘new lease of life’ since moving there three and a half years ago.

“It’s wonderful because they stimulate the residents so well and keep them happy and active and their activities are wonderful,” said Myra.

We couldn’t agree more. Happy birthday Mary from all of us at Royal Blind.
Jenny’s Well resident meets his football heroes in his last months

John Pringle shared the footy field with his heroes in August, fulfilling a dream, shortly before passing away.

The football fan lived at Jenny’s Well care home for two years, having become vision impaired in his later years. He passed away in November, aged 82, after a number of health problems.

John will be much missed by his family, his friends, and staff at Jenny’s Well.

During John’s time with Jenny’s Well, staff learned he was huge fan of the St Mirren Saints football club, which plays in the Scottish Premiership.

Care Assistant Karrie Reilly took him to several games with her.

“He really enjoyed going to the games. I would take him in a taxi from Jenny’s Well and he just got so much out of it, as he used to when he was young with his family,” Karrie said.

But Karrie didn’t stop there.

“I thought it would be a lovely thing for John to meet some of the players and the manager,” she said.

In August, John travelled to the football club with Karrie and met the players, the team’s manager and his hero goalkeeper, Vaclav Hladky.

The life-long fan had his photo taken with the team and St Mirren Saints’ manager Jim Goodwin.

The Saints’ CEO, Tony Fitzpatrick, said John’s family had a long history with the team.

“He’s Uncle Charlie played for St Mirren. We have a photo of Charlie Pringle, with the 1916 team, in our hospitality suite at the stadium,” Tony said.

John said he had a good time meeting the team, and he “said cheese” for every photo.

At the first Saints’ match after John passed away, the whole crowd started a round of applause as a tribute to him.

The fans’ passionate support throughout the match was a fitting reminder of the love that John had for his local team.

Andrew Pettigrew was 11 when he joined the Royal Blind School. He had his eyesight until the age of six when he developed Retinitis Pigmentosa. By the age of 10 he had lost his sight.

Andrew is now 18 and has thrived at the Royal Blind School developing a talent for writing both fiction and poetry and winning some prestigious awards like the Pushkin Prize along the way.

Last month Andrew was invited along to the UK Eye Genetics Annual Conference (UKEGG) at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital to speak to ophthalmologists and geneticists about what it is like to be blind, and in Andrew’s case, hearing impaired too.

Andrew talked about the impact that going blind has had on his life saying:

“I tend to try and be upbeat most of the time because I just can’t go through life if I keep thinking about myself with sadness.

“Growing up as a visually impaired kid was tough, especially coping with the reactions of other children. A lot of my friends felt unable to interact with me in the same way as they had done before. For some this meant avoiding me and for others it meant treating me as if I was much younger than I was.

“It wasn’t easy and I remember many nights crying, asking my parents, ‘why can’t I just be normal?’ In some ways it wasn’t my eyes that caused me problems: it was the social consequence of being labelled blind, disabled, an outsider.

“Of course it’s very difficult being blind, and having rubbish hearing, and if there was an amazing medical discovery that would change my life and that of many others, that would be such a positive. BUT I also want to emphasise that given the choice, I would not change time.

“There is a phrase which is often overused but which is still true – every cloud has a silver lining. Without my sight loss, I probably would never have discovered my love of poetry and writing. I probably wouldn’t have learned how to drum or play the piano; and I definitely wouldn’t have met my best friend, Alisa, among a whole bunch of fantastic people.

“If I hadn’t lost my sight, I wouldn’t be the person I am today, and, although I can have bad days, I’m happy being me.

“I might not want to change the past, but I wouldn’t say no to a pair of fully functioning eyes if you were to offer me them.”

After presenting his speech so eloquently, Andreu read the audience a couple of his poems, to great applause.

The feedback from medical delegates attending the conference was very positive.

One said: “I just wanted to say a massive thank you to Andreu for what was just the most amazing presentation to the UKEGG.”

Another delegate said: “We have never had a patient experience session at UKEGG, but your incredibly moving story means that we have decided today to have one at all future conferences. Thank you Andreu.”
Arabian Nights at the Royal Blind Christmas show

Pupils and staff produced a fantastic ‘Arabian Nights’ Christmas show for family and friends at the Royal Blind School. The Christmas show at the school is always a highlight of the year and an opportunity for family, friends and staff to gather together and celebrate the end of term.

Staff put a huge amount of work into the show and the costumes, and the most important thing was that every pupil played a part.

Before the show there was a buzz in the air as pupils and staff got into their costumes and got their make up on.

It was a special show for pupil Bo as he was also celebrating his ninth birthday and was still chatting away about his strawberry birthday cake as the finishing touches were put to his costume.

As the lights went down and the show began, we saw camels appear on stage to set the scene. Conor was our narrator and did a fantastic job. We had market sellers and fire eaters, sheikhs and Ali Baba. There was even an appearance from the Spice Girls!

As the play told, Queen Sultana was disappointed in her husbands, so she decides to marry a new husband each day and have him executed the next morning.

These daily dismissals continue until she marries the handsome storyteller Amir. To keep the Queen’s interest (and himself alive) Amir tells the Queen the story of Ali Baba.

Stefan played the part of Amir and was not only word perfect but also gave a perfect rendition of ‘Always look on the bright side of life.’

Joe who played Queen Sultana had a huge amount of lines to remember and didn’t miss a beat. He learnt all his lines by listening to them on a CD and remembering them which was so impressive.

Rebekka got lots of laughs in a comic role as she warned Amir against marrying Queen Sultana.

Andrew was brilliant in his part as a robber and Amy gave a great singing performance.

Luke played the part of the executioner with aplomb and Namarra was very funny as Milkshake and showed off her beautiful singing voice.

Ray was brilliant on keyboards and Arran, Rocco and Oliver lit up the stage with their fire eating and rug selling in the market!

Music teacher Louisa accompanied throughout on the piano, although she had stiff competition from Ciaran Vassie who played ‘Always Look on the Bright Side of Life’ beautifully on the keyboard.

As the show reached its conclusion and the applause rang out, the whole cast appeared together in a grand finale of dancing which really lifted the spirits of everyone who was lucky enough to be in the audience.

There really is nowhere like the Royal Blind School, it’s when you come to something like the Christmas show that you really feel how special the school is. Each pupil plays their part, regardless of disability or level of vision, and you can feel how much the staff care about every single pupil. It wasn’t just Christmas that was in the air at the show, love was all around too.
Happy New Year! I hope you all had a lovely festive period.

2020 is a hugely exciting year for Royal Blind as we work to help people who don’t have 20:20 vision. Over the next few pages you will read about some of the amazing fundraising challenges we have coming up this year, including our 20 in 2020 challenge.

Why do we need to fundraise? Royal Blind is a large Scottish charity that provides many vital services. These services range from providing a playgroup for babies and toddlers to our Royal Blind School, which provides expert education to children with a vision impairment. We continue to support young adults who are blind or have sight loss through our residential services. Our care homes offer first class care to older people with sight loss and all our staff have training to enable them to help residents live their best life possible.

Yes, we do receive some funds from statutory services and local authorities, however it simply isn’t enough. We rely on funds raised and generously donated from you, our supporters, to allow us to provide the enhanced care that allows someone with sight loss to live their life in a way they want to.

This includes therapies for children at the school, interactive touch tables for our care home residents to keep in touch with their family and Kidscene, our after school club that fully integrates children who have disabilities with children who don’t.

There is so much more we want to do to help those who need us most. But we can’t do it without the support from you. If you think you can put your best foot forward this year and join us at the Kiltwalk, or create your own 20 in 2020 challenge, give us a call and we would be delighted to support you. If a challenge isn’t for you, we are asking as many people as possible to collect 101, 20 pence pieces in 2020, to guess what – raise £20.20!

In return for your support, I promise to keep you updated with stories from those who your generosity is helping so you can hear directly about the impact your donation is making. If you would like to chat to fundraising about a 2020 challenge, give us a ring on 0131 446 3089.

Kerry Lindsay
Sporting greats gather for Royal Blind celebrity golf day

Celebrities from the world of sport joined forces with Royal Blind to take part in the charity’s Annual Celebrity Golf Day at Archerfield Links. 20 teams of golfers and celebrity guests joined together for a day of fun and fundraising.

Footballing legends Frank McAvennie, John Colquhoun, Kevin Kyle, Neil Doherty McCann, David McPherson, Paul Hartley, Gordon Smith, Gary Locke and former Scotland rugby player Derrick Patterson took part in the event organised by Royal Blind.

Local companies paid for team entry into the day at the exclusive Archerfield Links Golf Course in East Lothian and each team was joined by a sporting celebrity.

The day raised an incredible £8,000 for Royal Blind. As well as playing 18 holes at the beautiful Dirleton Links in East Lothian, teams took part in the blindfold golf challenge, sponsored by AKD Electrical Services, as well as a tombola and raffle. They also bid on luxury prizes in an auction.

Head of Fundraising Kerry Lindsay said: “The Celebrity Golf Day is a fantastic event for Royal Blind and a real highlight on our fundraising calendar. It is always a great day.

“We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success, with special thanks to the team at Archerfield, our sponsors Thornton’s Solicitors, J Jordan Steel Fabricators and AKD Electrical Services. “Thank you also to everyone who supported Royal Blind by taking part and buying tickets for the raffle or bidding in the auction. We are already looking forward to next year!”

Forth Rail Bridge Abseil

Three fearless individuals took on the Forth Rail Bridge Abseil in damp autumnal conditions, raising an amazing £6,430 to support people with sight loss in Scotland.

We now have places available for the June and October abseil in 2020 – if you are up for this leap of faith please email us at fundraising@royalblind.org

In 2019, we had 30 people across the country take part in the KiltWalk. Our amazing walkers raised £7,747 – helping to ensure those we support are not living life in isolation and have the opportunity to thrive. The KiltWalk is a great event for all the family, with three distances available across four locations. There is also the added bonus of a 40% top up from the Hunter Foundation on all money raised.

The dates for 2020 are:

- Glasgow  26 April 2020
- Aberdeen  7 June 2020
- Dundee 16 August 2020
- Edinburgh  13 September 2020

Get in touch with fundraising@royalblind.org to find out how to take part.

Funding Events

Many Royal Blind supporters wowed us with their general knowledge at our annual Pub Quiz in October, helping raise £870 to support our work. Thank you so much to everyone who attended, donated prizes and volunteered on the night!

In addition to all our exciting 2020 challenges you can read more about on page 25, we have a full calendar of events for you to get involved with to help support people with sight loss in Scotland.

Our annual comedy night and pub quiz will be happening.

The annual Royal Blind Celebrity Golf Day will again be taking place in August. This is a great day for colleagues or friends who have a passion for golf and having a fun day out. In addition to taking part in the Golf Day there are also many sponsorship opportunities for you to showcase your business in fun and exciting ways. You can find out more by contacting fundraising@royalblind.org

Royal Blind also has places in the Edinburgh Marathon and other challenge events for anyone looking to kick start the New Year with a resolution to pound the pavements and get active.

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Volunteers – why we need you

Volunteers are our everyday heroes. They have the power to change many lives for the better, including their own.

We know that sight loss can leave people feeling isolated. Every day our volunteers help people impacted by sight loss to lead richer and fuller lives.

Today over 171,000 people live with significant sight loss in Scotland, and our services are more vital than ever before. The time and effort given by our volunteers are an essential part of how we respond to this growing demand.

You may already have the skills we desperately need:

• Maybe you love a good natter and can brew a mean cup of tea?
• Perhaps you’re a school run veteran with a spotless licence and boundless experience of driving excited youngsters from A to B?
• Are you that person who’s always thinking up great new ways to raise money for charity, convincing friends, family and colleagues to support a good cause?
• Do you enjoy spending time with older friends and relatives, helping them beat isolation and enjoy life to the fullest?

Our volunteers are a diverse bunch of people, they fulfil a range of vital roles and are united by a shared belief that visual impairment should not get in the way of living life. Whether you’re helping an older veteran to attend one of our friendly lunch clubs, or driving young people to an activity, the difference you’ll make will be significant.

We provide the training and support for you to volunteer with confidence and gain skills for life. You just commit to getting stuck in, having fun and making a difference. Whatever your skills or interests, if you want to join us we’d love to hear from you.

Visit royalblind.org/volunteering or call James Whyte on 0131 446 3154 for more information.

What is the Royal Blind Learning Hub?

The Royal Blind Learning Hub provides teacher training, educational resources, advice and workshops to teachers and other education professionals working with children with vision impairment. Our aim is to support teachers and support staff in all areas of their work with pupils with vision impairment in both mainstream and independent schools.

We offer support through:

• One-to-one contact
We can visit schools directly and provide outreach support.
• Teacher training
Please come along to one of our forthcoming seminars.
• Online learning
Browse our website at www.learninghub.royalblind.org for free resources.

2020
27 February 2020
Using Drama Techniques & Sensory Stories to Explore Real Situations and Provide Opportunities for Inter Disciplinary Learning

12 March 2020
Independent Living Skills for Pupils with Vision Impairment

19 March 2020
Music for Pupils with Vision Impairment & Complex Needs

26 March 2020
Mindfulness

19 May 2020
Canaan Barrie Signing Workshop
A trip to Disneyland is something many of us dream of no matter what our age. For a young person with complex needs and a vision impairment, too often places like Disneyland are just that – dreams, because the amount of organisation needed required to get there is huge.

A Disney adventure for a Forward Vision young adult.

It would take more than mere mountains to deter Forward Vision staff and it was with this in mind that Residential Care Workers Jill and Aston took Kit, a young adult at Forward Vision on the trip of a lifetime to Disneyland Paris.

Kit has Angleman syndrome, uses a wheelchair and needs constant 24-hour support.

Forward Vision is the part of Royal Blind that provides residential care for young adults. At Forward Vision we support young people after they have finished school, enabling them to mix with their own age group and take part in tailor made activities. The young adults we support come from a range of special schools as well as from the Royal Blind School.

The service was established in 2010 by managers from the Royal Blind School who knew there were a lack of appropriate places for young disabled adults with a vision impairment to go when they left school.

Performing magic is all in a day’s work for a Forward Vision staff member and planning a trip like this does require a bit of a magic touch – provided by Senior Residential Care Worker Simon, who planned the trip down to the last detail.

“I knew that Disney would be great for Kit,” said Simon. “Kit loves lights and music and I knew that he would be able to experience all of this in one place.

“I used a travel company called Enable Travel who specialise in providing wheelchair accessible holidays, it was vital that we had the trip planned down to the last detail. I told Kit’s residential care workers, Jill and Aston, that it would be a great trip but that they would be exhausted by the end of the week!”

Kit’s family, who funded the trip, said: “This was an amazing opportunity for Kit and we are so grateful to Royal Blind and Forward Vision for making this happen. Kit is the first member of our family to go to Disney and we are so happy that he has had this experience.”

Here are Jill and Aston’s experiences from Kit’s trip

“On the night before going to Paris we stayed in London for one night. We were able to take Kit on the London Eye, he absolutely loved it and it was great to see the city from so high up!

“We travelled by Euro Star to Disneyland and stayed in the Cheyanne hotel – a Country and Western themed hotel. We had an absolute ball and Kit especially loved the Buffalo Bill Rodeo show we went to see on the first day. There was a live audience and lots of noise and cheering which he enjoyed.

“On the second day we were in the Disney park and we went to a character restaurant. All of the Disney characters come up to the table. Kit was able to meet Woody from Toy Story, Micky Mouse, Mini Mouse and Tigger. Kit really enjoyed touching Woody’s hat and Micky’s face.

“We went to see the parades and the shows and did some souvenir shopping. We brought back Disney cereal bowls for all of Kit’s friends at Forward Vision.

“Kit just loved every minute and the expressions on his face in the photos say more than words will ever be able to.”

On the way back Jill, Aston and Kit came back on the Eurostar and then caught the train back to Edinburgh from London.

Jill and Aston said that they would do the trip again in a heartbeat. We are so proud at Royal Blind to have staff who work here with this fantastic attitude to person-centred support.

Disneyland may be magical but at Royal Blind we know it’s the Forward Vision staff who really know how to perform magic!
The Royal Blind School has been awarded the contract to deliver Orkney Islands Council’s vision impairment education service for the next year.

This builds on the success that the school has achieved with delivering specialist education and support to pupils with vision impairment in mainstream schools across East Lothian.

Pupils with vision impairment at both primary and high schools in Orkney will benefit from the new service provided by the Royal Blind School. The service will provide a wide range of support to pupils, staff and families in the Orkney Islands.

The key areas of delivery will include teaching of specialist skills, access to learning through mediums such as braille and large print, assistive technology, guidance for school staff, social skills and transitions.

Peter Diamond, Head of Education at Orkney Islands Council, said: “Orkney Islands Council is committed to developing a strong partnership working with Royal Blind to deliver an excellent service that will meet the needs for our children who have a vision impairment.”

Hauys Kilday, Director of Services at Royal Blind said: “We are very much looking forward to delivering vision impairment services for Orkney. We will be working in partnership with our mainstream colleagues in Orkney to help children and young people with a vision impairment to develop and reach their potential.”

The service will be delivered by Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairments and other staff who have extensive experience in braille.

We are really happy to let you know about a new project for Royal Blind.

Help us reach more people with sight loss in 2020.

For 20 Challenge help and inspiration visit our website: www.royalblind.org/2020 or go to page 16 for more information.

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