



Our Annual Forum, featuring Blind Dave



Blind Dave captivates his audience

Over 100 people braved the winter weather to attend SVI's 11th Annual Forum in November. You could have heard a pin drop as local lad Blind Dave Heeley shared hair-raising adventures and humorous episodes from his latest fundraising challenge the Marathon Des Sables, a six-day, 225 kilometre run, crawl and climb across the Sahara desert. From balancing on precipices to toileting in the desert, Dave's nail-



Dave demonstrates waste disposal difficulty

biting narrative took us at full speed across the scorching, sandy landscape as he and his guides battled to beat the 'French blind bloke' to the finish.

Dave's book is out soon and will be available in audio. Meanwhile, visit our website to hear his talk.

Community Champion

This year's SVI Community Champion certificate was posthumously awarded to Tony

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SVI aims to make living and/or working in Sandwell better for people coping with sight loss.

Registered charity number : 1131021

Donate: If you wish to donate to SVI's Justgiving by Text Account please text SVIG33 and the amount you wish to donate (example: SVIG33 £2) to 70070. All donations will be gratefully received.

Orlebar for his good work for SVI and the blind community. After a moving presentation, Lisa accepted the award on behalf of Gina Orlebar.



Business matters



Stuart
Ashmore

Stuart Ashmore from Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) explained why SVI should consider becoming

a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). This is similar to a limited company but means that SVI remains a registered charity. We will write to members with more about this.

Lindsay Delaney of John Pye Accountants detailed the SVI finances. A statement of accounts is available on request.

With ten exhibitors ranging from specialist IT and independent living equipment, Centro, Blind Veterans and Living Paintings, there was something of interest for everyone.

We value your feedback, so do tell us what you thought of this year's event.

Young people rise to the Challenge



Ready, steady, curry – young people prepare for service

SVI held its first 'pop up' restaurant when a team of young people from the Challenge programme served us with a delicious lunch of samosas, poppadoms and Yemeni curry with rice. The young people did us proud, holding a raffle, selling home-made cakes and even, at very short notice, coming up with a quiz to round the afternoon off when our comedian didn't turn up...and that's no joke!

Challenge and SVI have worked together for some years now, supporting young people to undertake activities in the community. We had previously trained the young people to offer sighted guide assistance, serve

food and explain the clock face method of finding it on the plate. We also taught how to introduce themselves by name to a visually impaired person and not to walk away without saying. They were a great bunch and that's not all, the young people are helping SVI to raise funds through sponsored activities, we'll keep you posted.

Cor, what a year!



Liz and Stuart at Cosford

Active at 60 members really struck it lucky this summer, with sweltering hot days and sunshine for all of our outings. Starting with a spring trip to the Botanical Gardens, then an interesting and informative day at RAF Cosford, followed by the warmest day of the year at Blists Hill Victorian Town...ice creams and a swift half pint at the New Inn certainly went down a treat. Even our September strawberries and

cream tea at the Dartmouth Central club was a scorcher.

A fish and chip lunch at Wednesbury Celebrates in autumn, followed by our Winter Bazaar raising £150 for Active at 60 and a range of festive celebrations, took us to the end of the year. There will be lots more activities and days out to come in 2016.

If you are over 50 and would like to be part of our Active at 60 group, call us on **0121 525 4810**.

Flying made easier

By Liz Hammer, avid traveller



Packed
and
ready
to fly

For those of you who use Birmingham airport, life has become so much easier if you need assistance.

If you need to be met after a taxi or someone has dropped you off, go to the shelters at the short stay car park. To the left of the shelters is a blue intercom box on a post, press the button and let the person know that you require assistance and someone will come out and meet you. They will then help you to check in and board your plane.

And that's not all. I was excited to find recently, while travelling to the Canaries, that they have reinstated the announcements at the airport. When I asked about this, I was told that there had been so many complaints about the lack of them that they were forced to put them back.

So happy travelling to you all!

Owen's big day...oh...and Bill of course!

By Bill Bowen

Centro asked SVI if one of us could do some photos for their new website and passes, so with guide dog in hand it was off to Centro House where we met the photographer who explained what he wanted. With make up on, yes I did say make up, no laughing, it was off in to Brum.



Bill and Owen on the bridge

The first shot was from a footbridge overlooking the city, as we climbed the steps you really feel the bridge move! We had to walk across seven or eight times; I was glad to get down. More shots were taken outside a famous coffee shop...why is the tea always awful? The last photos were of us using the new bus fobs and getting on and off buses. After that we said our goodbyes and caught the bus home. I think Owen really liked all the fuss from the ladies.

I've been told one of the photos is in West Brom bus station, don't all rush for autographs, it's only the back of us, they say it's our best feature.



It's a dog's life!

Join SVI at Portway

Get a gym buddy!



Gym buddies with SVI members

A great big thank you to Portway Lifestyle Centre gym buddies who turn up every Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoons to help SVI members get the most from the equipment. They would love to see you there too. Get in touch with the SVI office or contact Portway direct to arrange your gym induction. With our lovely buddies there to help, you are in good hands.

Fancy a climb?

SVI NICAS qualified climbers are welcome to attend Boulder Central at Portway on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to practice their climbing free of charge – it's a



Qualified SVI climbers

real challenge but very rewarding.

Splash out!

Thanks to Aquafit sessions at Portway Lifestyle Centre, SVI members were able to try a new and different way of keeping active.



Splashing about in the pool

With friendly instructors and a lovely warm pool, keeping fit has never been such fun. Using the weight of the water and floats, the body is exercised but without the strain of standard workouts. We are planning more sessions, so contact us if you are interested.

Find out more

Want to learn more about SVI's health and wellbeing activities?

Call us at SVI on **0121 525 4810**

To contact Portway, call 0300 012 0121, then press 1, then 5, then 1 to reach reception.

Online Today



Sunny gives smart phone tips

SVI in partnership with Action for Blind People's Online Today project welcomed our good friend Sunny Bains and his team to tell us all about new and exciting IT developments in smart devices, tablets and mobile phones. SVI members who attended the workshops had a chance to get a 'hands on' look at I-phones, I-pads and Android devices. From aged 19 to 90, from absolute beginners to techies, there was something in it for all of us. The workshops gave us the chance to look at how smart technology features and apps can make life easier.

Beryl said: "Both my son and myself found the session very interesting and informative. The information provided has confirmed that I need to purchase an I-phone and will be looking to buy one as soon as possible."

Ron added: "The session was very good and it amazed me just how much these phones can do."

The initial workshop was a taster for more to come in 2016.

Sessions continue in January aimed at smaller groups and catering for individual needs.

Sandwell Council assisted collections for waste and recycling

If you can't put out your waste and recycling containers and you don't have someone living with you who can help, then the council may be able to provide an assisted collection.

You will be asked to give details of the disability or health difficulty that prevents you putting your waste out yourself.

If you are eligible, on your collection day the crew will collect and empty all your rubbish and recycling from an agreed place and return bins to the same location.

To find out more or to apply, call the council's contact centre on 0121 569 6625. You can ask for help filling in an application and declaration form. If you meet the criteria you will be added to the

assisted collection list within five working days.

You can get a copy of the policy from www.sandwell.gov.uk.

Affected by sight loss?

If so, there is someone you can call and talk to free and in strict confidence.

Helpline



Sightline Vision is a registered charity telephone helpline – **0800 587 2252**, open from 6pm to 10pm every day. Visually impaired people can call free and speak to one of the volunteers, who are all visually impaired themselves. They will listen to any concerns or worries you may have about your sight loss and how it is affecting your daily life.

They offer a friendly, sympathetic and confidential listening service as well as signposting to local societies and support groups.

Protect your home against burglars

The dark evenings are perfect cover for a sneak-in burglar who spies an open window in an unoccupied room; sees valuables through open curtains or blinds; or tries their luck with an unlocked door.

Don't leave items in open porches, such as curved-handled umbrellas or white canes, which could be used to open doors or 'hook' keys through letterboxes.

When you are in the house, always lock your front and back door – in particular uPVC doors with handles. Burglars know that they are often left unlocked.

Don't leave house keys in the lock or on a side table in view of a window – making it easy for a thief to 'fish' them through your letterbox.



Don't leave house keys in the lock

Secure uPVC doors by fitting a snap resistant cylinder lock, certified to TS007 standard – accredited locksmiths can advise.

Cancel newspapers and milk if you're going away and ask a trusted friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your property, pushing post sticking out of the letterbox inside fully.



Be on your guard and beat the bogus caller

Bogus 'workmen' will claim they need to enter your home to make urgent repairs or check something. They may also offer to carry out property maintenance – often asking for cash in advance without ever doing any work.

If you need work done at your home, get several written quotes from reputable firms before making a decision.

Never feel pressured to allow an unexpected caller access to your home. Call their company from the number in your telephone directory, not the one they give you. Remember, there is no such organisation as the 'Water Board'.

SVI is working with Sandwell Council to set up an individual password scheme to safeguard you against unexpected and unwelcomed callers pretending to be from the council.

Free Wills Month

March 2016 is your next opportunity to get your free will.

Free Wills Month brings together a group of well-respected charities to offer members of the public aged 55 and over the opportunity to have their simple wills written or updated free of charge by using participating solicitors in selected locations around England and Wales.

An up-to-date will written by a solicitor ensures your wishes are respected. It also avoids difficult decisions and legal complications for your loved ones. Free Wills Month allows you to provide for family and friends and leave a gift to your chosen charities too.

The next Free Wills Month campaign will run during March 2016. From 1 March you can call the SVI office, who can let you know details of your closest participating solicitors.

Contact SVI

Tel: **0121 525 4810** Email: info@sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk

Website: www.sandwellvisuallyimpaired.org.uk

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