

## The Bulletin

Number 15, Thursday 22 October 2019

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### Welcome Message

From Marion Blazé, Manager SVRC

After a very busy school holiday doing what we do, SVRC has hit the ground running for Term 4, 2019! Last week we were interviewing new staff for Support Skills, visiting schools for functional vision assessments producing more eText and braille, meeting with executives from Vision Australia, attending EVAC and running a Support Skills day. This week we had 20 school personnel (and 2 VTs) attend a professional learning day about preparing to include a student who uses braille. One comment from a participant: 'I came today really worried about how we were going to do this, and now I'm really excited about having a student who is blind at our school'. Then we had a group of our staff off for 'Merit and Equity training'. We welcomed a student doing education support training on placement this term.

We also say farewell to one of our longest-term staff in braille production, Sue Sharp. Sue has been at SVRC for nearly 25 years and has worked tirelessly in production of braille, braille Maths and eText. Sue's skills and efficiency will be sadly missed, but we hope retirement will bring new opportunities and adventures.

### Senior Victorian of the Year Nomination: Garry Stinchcombe



Garry Stinchcombe has been nominated as this year's Senior Victorian of the Year. The announcement of the winner for the category of Senior Victorian of the Year will be made at Government House next week. Garry's nomination is "mentor for the blind"

Throughout his career, Garry encouraged and inspired hundreds of students with blindness or low vision to reach their full potential and become active members of society. He not only gave encouragement and guidance to the young people he taught, but also to their friends and families. [Read more: Australian of the Year](#)

## Dates for Your Diary

**Tuesday October 15 2019:** [Preparing your school for inclusion of a student who uses braille](#)

Providing practical support for school staff preparing to welcome and include a new student who will be learning to read using braille.

**Tuesday November 26 2019** [EXPO – Assistive technology for students who are blind or partially sighted](#)

Showcasing and demonstrating a range of assistive technologies that can promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind or have low vision. Free

**Tuesday 10 December:** SVRC Christmas Morning Tea – **all welcome! Please RSVP**

**12-15 January 2020:** [SPEVI Conference in Adelaide](#)

**Tuesday 11 February 2020:** [Educational support of students who are blind](#)

Providing practical strategies for classroom teachers and ES staff to promote inclusion and achievement for their students who are blind. \$92.00

**Monday 17 February 2020:** [Introduction to new visiting teachers \(vision\)](#)

Supporting new visiting teachers (vision) to implement effective strategies to promote including in the schools they work with. Free

**Tuesday 18 February 2020:** [Educational support of students who have low vision](#)

Providing practical strategies for classroom teachers and ES staff to promote inclusion and achievement for their students who have low vision. \$92.00

**Tuesday 25 February 2020:** [Educational support of students who have low vision](#)

Providing practical strategies for classroom teachers and ES staff to promote inclusion and achievement for their students who have low vision. \$92.00

**Tuesday 3 March 2020:** [Educational support of students who are vision impaired with additional impairments](#)

Providing practical strategies that teachers and ES staff can use to support students with a vision impairment and additional disabilities. \$92.00

**Wednesday 11 March 2020:** [Including students who are blind or have low vision in physical education](#)

Providing fresh ideas and practical strategies to enable teachers to support the inclusion of students who are blind or partially sighted in physical education. \$92.00

**Thursday 19 March 2020:** [Educational support of students who are blind or have low vision in mathematics](#)

Providing practical strategies that maths teachers can use to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind or have low vision. \$46.00

**Tuesday 21 April 2020:** [Teaching and learning with braille music](#)

Providing practical strategies that music teachers can use to promote inclusion and achievement for students who are blind. \$46.00

**Note:** For upcoming professional learning at SVRC along with programs, registration & online payment, visit the SVRC [professional learning page](#).

## Support Skills Update

From Lea Nagel

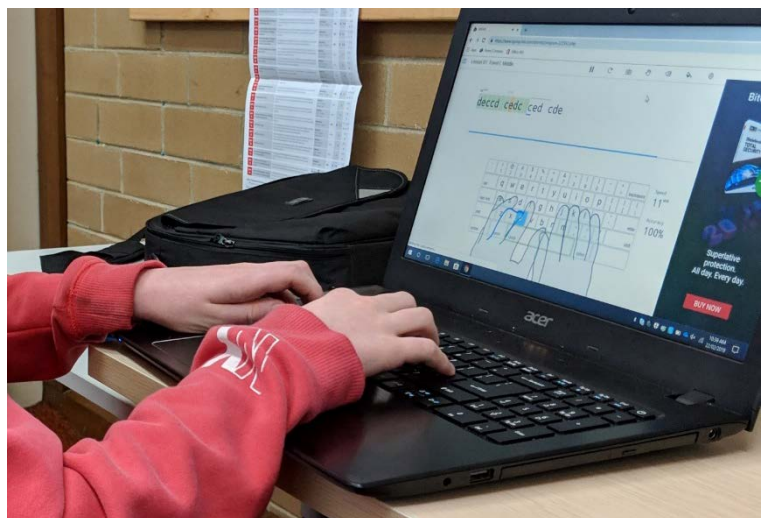
We have had a great Term 3 at Support Skills. The students have really enjoyed the gymnastics held in the Donvale Indoor Sports Centre next door. The tech teachers and trainers have done an amazing job at keeping up with the new technology from the Equipment Boost as well as the diverse needs of the students. Clay has been fashioned into amazing and diverse masterpieces, then fired and glazed (see photos). Envious odours have emanated from the kitchen with the guidance of Occupational Therapists from Vision Australia. Orientation and Mobility with staff from Guide Dogs Victoria has covered a range of tech and needs. Drama and music workshops have been enjoyed by some students, while others have enjoyed song-writing workshops using the music mixing desk. Braille music has been expanded with the addition of Braille Music Editor + Brailiant + JAWS. Social Skills continues to be a hoot, with a side dish of great ideas and advice shared by the group. Careers and research skills have been explored and practised. We have mostly survived the snap-freezings at evacuation drills for each of the six groups (We must remember to do these in Summer next year!).



It has been wonderful to welcome new staff: volunteers, teaching and training, replacement and contract. Some of these are ex-Support Skills students. It's always excellent to see what our alumni are up to and where they are going in life, armed to some extent with skills that they learnt at Support Skills.

All of these experiences for the students would not be possible without the dedication, concentration and organisation of Emma who works away behind the scenes, and more recently Brooke as well. Thanks to Matt and Marion for their support of the program.

Photo (right) shows student learning touch typing using an online typing program, Typing Club.





## Careers Day at SVRC

From Marion Blazé

Wondering what is next for you after secondary school? What skills should your son or daughter be developing right now so that they can one day obtain work? Not sure what direction to take for course or career? Curious what support services exist to assist in the transition to work? It is never too early to be thinking of employment pathways!!

SVRC are holding a Support Skills day focused on CAREERS on Friday, November 8, 2019, 9.45am to 2.45pm. Come and hear from peers who are blind or have low vision about transitioning to further education and employment, their strategies for success and what is possible. We are inviting two Support Skills groups and their families to this day, but it is open to a LIMITED NUMBER of students who do not attend the Support Skills Program. Family members are invited to participate with their young person, too. If you are interested in attending, please email Marion at [blaze.marion.g@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:blaze.marion.g@edumail.vic.gov.au) with the following details:

Name (of student), School, Year level, any dietary requirements, Visiting Teacher's name, name of any adults accompanying student (family member/s or VT).

## Space Camp USA in September 2020 – Meeting

From Marion Blazé

Ever thought about going to Space Camp? Every couple of years there is a team of young people with vision impairments who fund-raise and go to Space Camp in Huntsville Alabama. Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired People (SCI-VIS), is the one week of the year that Space Camp is set up to include students with vision impairments from all around the world. In 2018, three students and two Visiting Teacher chaperones made the trip after a long year of fund-raising and planning. SCI-VIS usually coincides with our September school holidays.

We are having an information meeting at SVRC after Careers Day, at 3.45pm on November 8, 2019. If Space Camp interests you or your family, please come along and find out more. If you are interested in being a VT chaperone, this meeting will also be for you!

## CVI Community Australia

Information provided by Dr Bronwen Scott, Co-founder of CVI Community Australia and O&M Specialist to SPEVI listserv

I'm excited to let the SPEVI community know about a new initiative started by myself and Heidi Zec, who is the parent of a young child with CVI. Heidi and I met late last year and were motivated to begin the [CVI Community Australia webpage](#) and closed facebook group. Our vision is to create a community where parents, health and education providers and the wider community can connect and share knowledge and ideas, to ensure that Australian children with CVI benefit from the latest research and best practice. Our mission is to provide accurate, up-to-date information through the website and to connect individuals via regular blog posts and a community discussion forum. In the future, and dependent upon request, educational activities may include play groups and educational seminars and/or webinars to the medical and educational communities, and to parents and wider community.

Heidi and I will be presenting on this initiative at the 2020 SPEVI Conference in Adelaide.

## Things I Have Learnt from Support Skills Students (and their teachers)

By Marion Blazé

We all learn so much from having the students in on Fridays, that I thought I should share some gems with readers of this issue of The Bulletin.

### ***Touch typing***

As Visiting Teachers and parents of students with vision impairments, we all know the benefits of being able to use a keyboard without looking. It makes us more efficient because we can look at the screen or at text we are copying from, and looking at our fingers just slows us down! But for our students/children with vision impairments, it is also an activity in which we can be productive and not suffer visual fatigue.

Also, using key-commands, instead of using visual menus and the mouse/trackpad, is another non-visual way we can be more efficient, and avoid visual fatigue.

From our experience of the students we see at SSP days, I know that these are skills/habits about which they need constant reminders. We are forever placing a piece of paper or a handkerchief over hands so that eyes will stop watching them on a keyboard! And many a SSP session is spent exploring key-commands.

One of our teachers at SSP gave the following feedback about a student, which would be helpful for any of our students with vision impairments:

Use the 'Typing Club' app, and a keyboard on your iPad to practice touch typing (typing without looking). Cover your hands to prevent yourself from checking your fingers. Using this technique in our session, your typing showed real improvement.

Here are some goals for you to work on between now and your next session to improve typing in both accuracy and speed:

- Completing one-two sessions of 'Typing Club' at least once a week
- Improving accuracy to at least 90% (currently sitting around the 85%)
- Increasing words per minute to at least 10 (currently sitting around 7WPM)

Why not check on your students' touch typing and key command skills, and set them some goals for improvement in Term 4?

Here are a few key-commands to try with your students:

Control O – open

Control N – new

Control A – select all

Control C – copy

Control V – paste

Control X - cut

Control P – print

Control S – save

Control Home – go to top of document

Control End – go to end of document

Control Z – undo

## More From Support Skills

The poem below was written in a drama session by three SSP students, about people's attitudes to disability.

What is normal?

Normal is the definition of a perfect human being.

Perfect people aren't real and real people aren't perfect.

Normal is nothing.

But normal is everything.

To those who only skim the surface and don't dive deeper.

What is special?

Special is what they say when they mean different.

The word they use to single out others.

Do we want to be different?

Yes.

Do we want to be singled out?

Never!

They think that we're just a child, always needed baby sitter and, who aren't able to walk on their own.

Without a hand a hand to hold.

I want to break free.

Would you say that to a "normal person"??

Instead of learning the metric system. Get educated on those around you.



The photo (above) shows some of the sculptural heads made from terracotta clay during Support Skills art sessions recently.

## Natural Reader 16

From Geoff Bowen, Psychologist SVRC

[Natural Reader 16](#) is a program for Mac or PC that will read documents to you. The speed of reading can be varied from a standard “normal” speed to four levels slower and nine levels faster. By using this you can train yourself to listen faster and faster. “Fast listening” is a very useful skill for anybody but particularly useful for all students with vision impairments, particularly those students who need very large print and can only read for short periods of time (i.e. 10 to 15 minutes) before becoming exhausted. If you combine fast and accurate touch typing with “fast listening” you can access and respond to the curriculum with efficiency and with considerably less fatigue. Some braille competent students are using this approach, combined with a refreshable braille display along with *JAWS* or *NVDA*, to complete their studies and only using hard-copy braille when they are studying subjects such as mathematics, music and foreign languages.

The free version of *Natural Reader 16* does the following:

- Unlimited use with Free Voices
- Miniboard to read text in other applications
- Pronunciation Editor
- Works with PDF, Docx, TXT and ePub

You can buy more advanced options and one of these options is the capability to convert any file to an mp3 so you could carry around the file on a device and listen to material at any time.

There are many other speech-to-print options available other than this one. I use *Natural Reader 16* free version myself and already I have “quicken” up my listening significantly.

## Sound Matters Music Workshop

Registrations for the next [Sound Matters](#) workshop are now open. We will be working with piano and percussion players from the Australian National Academy of Music.

**Date:** Tuesday 15 October, 10.30am – 11.30am

**Where:** Melbourne Recital Centre, Primrose Potter Salon

**Cost:** Free

**Register:** <https://fs28.formsite.com/mrc18/n0itni6h3h/index.html>

**Contact:** Caitlin Gilmour, Learning & Access Coordinator T: (03) 9207 2658 E: [caitlingilmour@melbournerecital.com.au](mailto:caitlingilmour@melbournerecital.com.au)

## Code Jumper

Humanware is partnering with the American Printing House for the Blind to distribute Code Jumper in Australia.

Code Jumper provides an engaging way to allow students who are blind or have low vision to learn computer programming at an early age. This is done by creating a physical representation of the key coding constructs, such as sequences, loops, selection and much more.

Shipping starts January 2020. For more information about Code Jumper and to add your name to the waiting list, please visit: [codejumper.com](http://codejumper.com)





## Interesting Articles from the Field

With thanks to Emily White for sending in these links!

### ***Lewis & Clark student helps advance with Usher's syndrome research at OHSU***

Source and to read further: <https://news.ohsu.edu/2019/09/24/lewis-clark-student-helps-advance-with-ushers-syndrome-research-at-ohsu#.XZP74LUrTdo.twitter>

Junior biology major works to 'solve my own problem and also help others'

By [Erik Robinson](#) September 24, 2019 Portland, Oregon



*Lewis & Clark College student Brendan Creemer worked this summer in a lab at Oregon Health & Science University on a method to improve the ability to use stem cells as a possible treatment for Usher syndrome. Creemer has the genetic disorder, that causes progressive vision loss and deafness. (OHSU/Erik Robinson)*

As summer internships go, **Brendan Creemer** had more than a passing interest in the subject at hand ... Creemer has Usher syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes progressive vision loss and deafness.

Creemer spent much of the summer in the laboratory of Oregon Health & Science University neuroscientists **Martha Neuringer, Ph.D.**, and **Trevor McGill, Ph.D.**, working on a method to improve the ability to use stem cells as a possible treatment for Usher syndrome.

### ***The doctor who's blind and deaf: Medical student, 25, uses a special Bluetooth stethoscope (and patients love her folding cane)***

Source and to read further: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7518285/Deaf-blind-Medical-student-25-refuses-let-disabilities-stop-NHS-doctor.html>

Born deaf in both ears, and with vision of less than 5 per cent in her left eye and none in her right,



Alexandra Adams has a Bluetooth stethoscope connected to her hearing aids.

"I have less eyesight than most, but more insight than many. That insight and empathy is the most important thing you can give patients." she says.



## Vision Australia's Strategies for Resilience & Confidence in Children

**When:** Tuesday 22 October 2019 (during Children's Week)

**Where:** Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong

### What's on for children 10.00am to 12.30pm

Your child (aged 6 to 12 years) is invited to learn resilience and perseverance through play and fun activities such as Lego building, gardening and mindfulness activities. Programs will be run by Vision Australia's paediatric occupational therapists, physiotherapist and orientation and mobility Specialist. John Poke, who runs a gardening segment on Vision Australia Radio, will be there to lend the children his 'green thumb' with their gardening activities.

### What's on for parents 10.30am to 12.00pm

An exclusive seminar by Georgina Manning, counsellor and psychotherapist, on '5 Secrets to develop Confidence and resilience in children.' Georgina has many years of experience working in schools supporting children and parents to reach effective social and emotional outcomes.

#### Parents learn:

- Practical strategies to support your child to build confidence
- Effective parenting strategies that foster resilience
- How to teach your child positive and effective thinking habits
- Setting limits at home with technology and encouraging free creative play
- Fundamental life skills that all children need to be happy, confident and successful

#### Parents are supported to teach their child how to:

- Lessen their anxiety
- Cope with life's ups and downs
- Develop independence and persistence
- Become more resilient and confident
- Develop independence and self-efficacy
- Solve problems independently and deal with conflict
- Approach life with a positive outlook to create success

**Bookings:** Free event but bookings are essential.

Email [Kooyong.admin@visionaustralia.org](mailto:Kooyong.admin@visionaustralia.org) or call 9864 9524

### A-League 2019-2020 Season Draw

Please request a copy of the season draw in braille if A-League is your thing!

Ed: I think it is football with the round ball AKA soccer!



## **Active Teens – Term 4**

Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria's Active Teens programs are relaxed and social programs, and participants are welcome to invite friends and family to join in, regardless of their level of vision. The Active Teens programs are designed to be fun and to help teens to stay fit and healthy.

For more information or to register for any of the programs listed below, please contact Allie on 0438 396 233, or email [activeteens@blindsports.org.au](mailto:activeteens@blindsports.org.au)

### ***NEW PROGRAM! Active Teens GET ACTIVE program at CARDINIA LIFE, Pakenham***

Cardinia Life will be running a 6 week program offering participants the chance to experience 3 different activities on offer at the leisure centre.

This program is designed for teens who are blind or have low vision, but open to all ages over 12 years. Bring a friend or family member and join in!

We are currently taking expressions of interest to find out who is interested in this program, and what activities you would like to do.

### ***Active Teens blind and low vision FOOTBALL at Casey Stadium, Cranbourne***

Did you know that blind football is a paralympic sport, and that low vision football is played at the international level?

However far you want to go - join in and have fun while you learn new skills!

Time and Dates: 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm from Sunday 20 October to 1 December (it will not run on Sunday 3 November)

Venue: Casey Stadium, 04 Terry Vickerman Building, 65 Berwick-Cranbourne Rd, Cranbourne East

Cost: \$50 per family per term (including siblings or friends of the participant)\*

\*Each additional participant will be required to pay a one off fee of \$25 per calendar year to cover the cost of registration with Football Victoria.

### ***Active Teens TABLE TENNIS program in Kooyong***

The Victoria Vision Impaired Table Tennis Association (VVITTA) invites teens to join in their fun and (sometimes) fast and furious Active Teens program on Saturdays from 1 pm.

Time and Dates: 1 pm to 3 pm on Saturdays 19 October to 21 December

Venue: Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong

Cost: \$2 per session

### ***Active Teens TENNIS programs***

The Active Teens tennis program will be returning to **Wyndham** with a 4 week program in Term 4, but we are moving to a new venue: Eagle Stadium in Werribee.

Dates: Sundays 17 November, 24 November, 1 December and 8 December (time to be confirmed)

Venue: Eagle Stadium

Cost: \$30 PER FAMILY per term

We are also taking Expressions of Interest for a 4 week tennis program based near Bentleigh.

## Paul Delaney – Star Man

Source: Phia Damsma via the SPEVI listserv

Formerly from Adelaide, Professor Paul Delaney, who has albinism, is a leading astronomer in Canada, a Professor of Astronomy at York University in Toronto, despite having a severe vision impairment. In this video (2011) he explains how he became a professor of astronomy despite the vision problems associated with albinism.

I particularly like his advice to parents and educators: “if a child has a goal, a dream, a desire, give them every opportunity to be successful, and worry about the reality of it later on...”.

Link to video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiMLmn61hLQ&hl=en>

## "How I Learn" Website

From BCA Parent News Group

[How I Learn](#) is a free tool to help young people with disabilities to advocate for their learning needs at school, offering them greater control over how they're taught.

The How I Learn website empowers students with disabilities to document their learning and accessibility needs in one place.

One youngster who has been trialling the How I Learn website is Emily Prior. Emily is 12 and has cerebral palsy. “It has given me more control of the way I like to be taught and lets the school know they are doing the right things to support me,” she explains.

Her mum says that, as a parent, it gives her reassurance that the school is doing all it can to make Emily's educational journey easier.

The initiative was made possible through grant funding by the Non-Government Centre Support For Non-School Organisations. It was developed by VisAbility Speech Pathologist Monique Ziegelaar with input from students, therapists, schools and disability awareness and inclusion specialists.

## How Do Blind People Enjoy the Mona Lisa?

From ANZAGG Facebook page

Most art museums forbid touching the art pieces. So how does a blind person experience famous works of art if they cannot touch them?

Take a look at this YouTube video: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-49518054/how-do-blind-people-enjoy-the-mona-lisa>

## USB Pouches for Polaris

Di Bennet has made this nifty little pouch (right) which attaches to the Polaris and stores students' USB keys.

Di has very kindly offered to make them for anyone who wants one!



## Friendship Between a Couple of Fifth Graders

Excerpt from an article in the [18 October 2019 edition of The Age](#) which describes the friendship between Jarrah and his sighted friend Mathilde.

"Before I lost my vision, Mathilde wore a rainbow scarf so I could see her through the crowd of shadows. When we are together, she keeps talking so I know she hasn't left me. She tells me if she's going anywhere and that she'll be back. That's important because I might just be walking along talking to myself, which I do. Mathilde and her family also raise money through GoFundMe to buy the technology and stuff I need to get ready for high school.

The only time we had a little disagreement was when she shushed me in assembly. The teachers were giving her the death stare and I thought she was angry at me. When I came back to school after getting a second prosthetic eye, Mathilde made sure I didn't trip. I knew I could cope going back to school because I knew Mathilde was still my friend. She's never decided not to be my friend."

## Alternative Format Requests for 2020

It's that time of the year again – time to bother your schools for the materials needed in alternative formats in 2020, **particularly Maths books**. We have 30 braille-reading students in secondary school in 2020 and that is potentially a lot of Maths books!

Further, we are finding that lots of the publishers give schools access to the **PDFs of text books** on booklists so please ask your teachers for the PDFs on a flash drive or via DropBox etc.

When planning for Christmas holiday reading, please see our updated [Catalogue of books for primary and secondary students](#).

When requesting materials, [please complete a request form](#). If you are requesting a text book, we'll need chapters and dates.

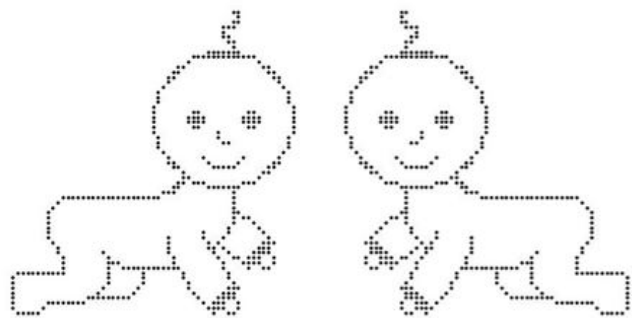
[I know you all know the drill – but it has to be said ... Ed]

## (Baby) News from Transcription

**Taryn**, Braille Transcriber and Ozzie Dots Illustrator EXTRAORDINAIRE, has had her babies – Quade Adrian (2.850kg / 6lb 3 oz) and Keenan Claude (2.365kg / 5lb 2oz) on Tuesday 1 October.

We wish Taryn, Adrian, young Curtis and new baby boys all the very best!!!

(Ed – yes, the illustrations – right – are part of the library created by Taryn!)



## Finally

Wishing everyone a very happy Term 4! And all the very best to students sitting VCE exams this year – let us know how you go!

– Deb Lewis (Ed) [lewis.debra.d@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:lewis.debra.d@edumail.vic.gov.au) who loves your stories, feedback, ideas, links and suggestions! So keep them coming!