

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 9

Friday 20th June 2008

This issue was edited by Lyn Robinson, Resource Teacher, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities Term 3, 2008

For workshop sessions, please BYO laptop.

Professional Development Event 2008	Date
Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day	Wednesday 13 August
SPEVI Day - Professional Development Day for those supporting students with vision impairments - teachers, aides, therapists, parents etc Held at Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong	Monday 6 October

To see the annual program and to download programs for professional development activities, go to: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/pd2008.htm>

With the end of the term approaching this is the ideal time to have a fun packed edition of the bulletin with lots of ideas for the holidays. I hope you enjoy this bumper edition of the Bulletin!

School Holidays: Inclusive Recreation Respite Program

Glen Eira City Council is pleased to be able to offer young people with a disability the opportunity to be involved in its Inclusive Recreation Respite Program. This Program offers children aged 12–18 years the opportunity to sample a range of recreation and sporting activities during the June–July school holidays. Each session is based at a local club or venue with a different sport featured each day. Sports such as soccer, netball, football, croquet, lawn balls, dance and lacrosse will be offered.

All activities will be adapted to suit each participant's ability so no prior experience is necessary. A number of support staff will be available on the day, however if the participant has high support needs you will need to indicate this on the registration form. Please note — lunch will not be included as part of this program so please bring a packed lunch for sessions running over the lunch time period. There is no cost for the program. Transport is not provided.

If you know someone who would like to take part in this exciting respite program, please complete the indemnity and registration forms which are available from Paul Holtschke, Recreation Access Officer, Phone: 8290 1185 or email pholtsch@stonnington.vic.gov.au or if you would like a copy of the forms emailed, contact me at lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au.

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Family Connect

When parents learn their child has a visual impairment, it can be overwhelming. Parents wonder, Will my child fall behind at school? or Will my child make friends? or Will my child have a successful career? With only 93,600 visually impaired school-aged children in the U.S., over half of whom have additional disabilities, it's easy for families facing vision loss to feel alone. To help these families connect with each other and give busy parents, grandparents and other caretakers a place to find comprehensive resources and support 24 hours a day, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI) today launched FamilyConnect(TM), an online, multimedia community for parents and guardians of children with visual impairments.

FamilyConnect gives parents access to message boards where they can talk to other parents, compelling videos featuring real-life families, parenting articles, a blog, a glossary of more than 30 eye conditions, and links to local resources.

A recent NAPVI/AFB survey of parents of children with visual impairments showed that parents/guardians turn most commonly to physicians (82%), educators (76%), and web sites (65%) for information and support regarding their children's vision problems. This is consistent with national statistics from the 2006 Pew Internet & American Life Project that show 80 percent of American adult Internet users have searched for health information online.

For parents living in rural areas with fewer resources, the web is particularly important to finding relevant, trustworthy information and the right services. . When I talk to parents of visually impaired children they almost always ask about three things: they want to talk to other parents who have children with the same eye condition as their child, they want access to the latest health and education information, and they want to know what the future holds, said Susan LaVenture, Executive Director of NAPVI. FamilyConnect offers parents all these things -- and more -- in one place.

In addition to joining a community of parents, visitors to Family Connect can create a personal profile and receive information on news and events based on their child's age, eye condition, and location. The goal of www.familyconnect.org is to provide connections and support. By providing accurate information and creating a forum for meaningful discussion, families and their visually impaired children will feel empowered to reach their full potential.

About NAPVI: The National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI) is an international membership organization serving families in the U.S. and in 55 countries. (Australia has its own chapter formed in 2005). NAPVI helps parents to find information and resources for their children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities. NAPVI provides leadership, support, and education to assist parents in helping children reach their potential. .

Source: American Foundation for the Blind <http://www.afb.org>

Related Web Sites:

Family Connect <http://www.familyconnect.org/parentsitetime.asp>

NAPVI: National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments
<http://www.spedex.com/napvi/>

AAPVI: Australian Association for Parents of Vision Impaired
<http://www.aapvi.org.au/national/contacts.html>

German Scientists Develop Bionic Eye

German researchers today reported that a 12-year project to develop a wireless implant that can restore vision to the blind has been successful.

The researchers unveiled details of a fully implantable visual prosthesis for patients who have lost their sight through diseases of the retina.

Sufferers of retinitis pigmentosa have light sensitive cells in the retina destroyed, but the connection of the nerve cells to the brain remains intact. The scientists have bypassed the defects of the retina by means of a visual prosthesis.

The system comprises the implant and an external transmitter integrated in a spectacle-frame.

The implant system converts the image patterns into interpretable stimulation signals, and data and energy are transferred to the implant by a telemetric link.

Nerve cells inside the eye are then stimulated according to the captured images. The intact cells are innervated by means of 3D stimulation electrodes that rest against the retina like small studs.

"For normally sighted people this may not seem much, but for the blind it is a major step," said Dr Hoc Khiem Trieu from the Fraunhofer Institute for Microelectronic Circuits and Systems IMS in Duisburg.

The project was funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research.

Source: <http://www.itnews.com.au/News/NewsStory.aspx?story=77439>



Cheap Spectacles Online

Having done a bit of research for a family recently, I have found that there are a growing number of online companies selling prescription spectacles very cheaply. Just try Googling 'cheap spectacles' and search in Australia and you'll no doubt come up with more. Here are some I found:

AusSpecs (Australian Spectacle Wholesalers) frames and prescription lenses from \$55 to \$118

<http://www.ausspecs.com.au/index.php>

Glasses Online Quotes \$65 to \$280

<http://www.glassesonline.com.au/>

Stingy Specs have a range of frames for \$29;

frames and lenses packages start at \$54

<http://www.stingyspecs.com.au/>

Eye Glasses Online quotes \$55.50 to \$128

<http://www.eyeglassesonline.com.au/>

Of course, you need to go to your optometrist or ophthalmologist for the prescription first, and then choose frames and the package online. Thanks Marion for sharing the results of your research. Some of the web sites look very interesting indeed!

ART DECO: 1910-1939

Melbourne Winter Masterpieces, Art Exhibition
Ground Level, NGV International, 180 St Kilda Rd
28 June to 5 October 2008

This winter 2008, the National Gallery of Victoria is the exclusive Australian venue for a major exhibition of the celebrated and popular style, Art Deco. The exhibition is the most popular program ever mounted at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, which houses one of the world's great collections of Art Deco. The exhibition comprises over 300 works and covers all artistic media from painting to photography, fashion to film and architecture to jewellery. Spanning the boom of the roaring Twenties and the Depression-ridden 1930s, Art Deco came to epitomize all the glamour, opulence and hedonism of the Jazz age. It was the era of the flapper girl, the luxury ocean liner, the Hollywood film and the skyscraper.

VISUAL DESCRIBING TOURS

Saturdays 26 July, 30 August, & 27 September, 11.30am
Meet Information Desk, NGV International

BOOKINGS

No bookings are required for these tours.

Exhibition fees apply, free for carers.

Enquiries regarding tours 03) 8662 1555

TICKET PRICES

Full Price: \$22, Concession: \$18,

Concession entry for Senior Cardholders on Wednesday

Source: Arts Access Update <http://www.artsaccess.com.au/attend/index.cfm?a=detail&id=218>

FREE TICKET COMPETITION

To win one of 5 double passes for entry to see **Art Deco: 1910 - 1939** and to join any of the accessible tours listed above contact **ease** to indicate your interest. Winners will be selected Thursday 26 June 2008. Preference will be given to members who are either Blind / Vision Impaired or Deaf who wish to trial the accessible tours detailed above.

Phone Arts Access: (03) 9699 8497

Accessibility in Mathematics

Access in Mathematics is an issue for a wide range of students with disabilities. The following may be of interest to those of you looking for ways to make Mathematics more accessible for students who are blind or have low vision.

Here are a few sites that use MathML (instead of graphical images). Screen readers can handle these sites fine, but you will need to install a free IE plug-in called MathPlayer which is available from: <http://www.dessci.com/en/products/mathplayer/>

After installing MathPlayer, try out some of these sites:

http://www.onemathematicalcat.org/algebra_book/online_problems/table_of_contents.htm

<http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/18/18.013a/textbook/MathML/index.xhtml>

http://www.emteachline.com/eng/arithmetric_1_/base/0/v0.xml

For resource articles on how to make math accessible, take a look at the accessibility solutions section of the Design Science website at: <http://www.dessci.com/accessibility>

Source: Steve Noble, Director of Accessibility Policy, Design Science, Inc.

Premier's Reading Challenge – Update

Due to the tireless efforts of Helinka (and other members of The Team), we now have a comprehensive list of the titles from the Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge that are available from the Statewide Vision Resource Centre in alternative format (braille, large print, audio, etext).

For your interest, there are around 4,000 titles on the VPRC list, of which the SVRC holds over 500 titles in one or more alternative formats - that is approximately 13% of the titles that the students can choose from in order to participate in the Challenge. No, it's not ideal - but the percentage is up quite a bit from the selection available for students last year - which was a tiny 1%. Some of the titles that have been produced for this year's Challenge are the result of additional funding allocated by the Student Wellbeing Branch in 2007 - this additional funding that was very much appreciated, indeed.

For students in Prep to Year 2 there is a variety of books produced with illustrations as PowerPoint presentations and as the text in each book increases, they are presented as Word files, some with illustrations. All resources on the list are available for loan by students with vision impairments who are supported by the Statewide Vision Resource Centre - please request a copy via your Visiting Teacher or direct to the Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Below: Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge display created by Taryn.



Goalball

The goalball season is about to start. Goalball is an exciting sport involving two teams of three people and what looks like a cross between volley ball and soccer. As explained by Robyn Stephens from the Goalball Association “Games are usually quite competitive and exciting to watch. Two teams play on either end of the 19x9 metre court. Players are blindfolded with a blackened ski mask to make the game fair. The object is to throw a 1.25 kg ball past the opposing teams.”

The winter season will start on the 5th July 2008 at the Junior Gym at Scotch College. For more information please contact Robyn on Mobile 0417 159 106 or email robyn.stephens@vu.edu.au

Adapted & Inclusive PE

From Leanne: Here's a great website where you can buy a range of adaptive products for inclusion in PE and Sport: <http://www.sportime.com.au/>. Follow the Physical Education menu to the adapted and inclusive PE link. There is an excellent variety of balls, bats, blindfolds and more. The Jingle Trainer is a fun equivalent for a volleyball, but jingles, is bright yellow and is a little lighter which makes it move more slowly and land more gently. My favourite piece of equipment is the Polybat set – you can add the side panels to your existing table tennis table, modifying the table so that it can be used for swish (but without the middle board). Thanks to Emily from Vision Australia school for this useful information!

Online Games

RadaR is a new online game for children who are blind or vision impaired. RadaR is not only very entertaining, but also educational. It teaches the children to safely 'surf the Internet' - via keyboard commands. RadaR has been developed by Sonokids.

A very special feature of RadaR is the beautiful audio-story, with real voices, sound-effects and songs. For the Australian RadaR comedian Dave Hughes, Nine news presenter Eva Milic, blind radio presenter Amanda Tink, and Hollywood actor Brian Cox are a few of the famous voices behind the main characters: Mik the dolphin, Max the bat and Mo the mole. These three animals have in common that they do not rely on their eyesight to find the way, but 'see with their ears' instead.

Their adventure proves to be symbolic for the virtual world and online communication. After listening to an episode of the audio-story, the player will do an interactive training 'mission' on the computer. While playing RadaR, unknowingly the player builds his or her own website and after successfully completing all missions, the player will have a personal website, for keeps, powered by Sonokids' accessible content management system MaX 4.0.

Want More Audiogames?

Sonokids has set up and maintains an international, multilingual webportal which is fully accessible for children with a vision impairment. On the Sonokids web site you will find accessible audiogames such as Shoot the Banjobusters, play a drum-solo or remix your own pop-song. All audiogames are fully compatible with assistive technology such as JAWS.

You can visit Sonokids at <http://www.sonokids.com>

Source: From Quantum Technology's Newsletter Livewire June 2008

Play and Learn

Learn the alphabet, numbers, colors and typing games for young children. Clear, large graphics and some sound. Sure to please the little ones! Worth a try at

http://www.literacycenter.net/lessonview_en.htm#

Gimmick or Ambassadors for Blind People?



Above: Michael (left) and Darnell - blind and partially-sighted Big Brother contestants

Much discussion abounds about two of the contestants in the U.K. Big Brother house, reporter Damon Rose, who is himself blind, writes...

Even in the run-up to the Big Brother launch, with national papers reporting the rumours, there was internet buzz between blind people. A young blind woman posted to the messageboard of the BBC's Ouch! disability website: "I hope he or she is aware that they are representing the visually impaired community and give us a good name. I hope that they don't have awful blind habits, such as rocking or not looking at people when talking to them. I would like to hope that they will be normal."

She was hoping for a good portrayal, one that wouldn't negatively affect what others think of her when they meet her in the street or see her in front of them at a job interview. The worry is that that becomes the prevailing public view. There are very few blind people in television. If there was a "good" one one week and a "bad" one the next, it just wouldn't matter as much. If it is a bad portrayal that is the last chance for another five years.

On the mainstream messageboards, among Big Brother fans, the reaction went along the lines of "let's all vote him out now, we know he'll get the sympathy vote if he stays in" or "as I suspected, yet more weirdoes. What will the producers do next?"

Michael, 33, from Ayrshire, was thrown into a house with eight other excitable contestants, with new people being added every five minutes as the launch show continued.

Five days in, if he's been able to track and remember the voices of the other 15 housemates, he's a better man than me - I've certainly not achieved this as a viewer.

Albino contestant

In fact, blind friends and I have often commented that it's not worth trying to listen to the first week of Big Brother as you just can't tell one person from another - all loudly clamouring for airtime at that early stage. And Michael is in the midst of it whilst also trying to orientate himself in the house without injuring people with his cane. I don't envy him. And then there is Darnell, a black British albino man originally from Ipswich. It isn't universally known that if you have albinism, the preferred term in the community, it also spells sight loss. So there are two people with significant vision problems in the house. Count them. It's never been heard of before.

What a great format to throw disabled people into. I'm now able to sit at home and inspect others as they come to terms with their own lack of knowledge around blindness. But perhaps more interestingly, I'm sitting there watching Michael, who I suspect could well be over-egging the situation, taking advantage of the fact they assume blind people can do very little.

Damon Rose is editor of Ouch! the BBC's disability magazine

From: BBC Online http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7446016.stm

TypeAbility: The Typing Program for the Blind!

For both children and adults who need to learn to type, TypeAbility is the easiest, most enjoyable and most affordable of all typing programs. TypeAbility requires the JAWS screen reader, either the full JAWS version, or the JAWS demo. TypeAbility is also compatible with MAGic 10 or 11, Freedom Scientific's screen magnification program for the partially sighted.

TypeAbility is currently being used at the Vision Ed program at North Rocks (RIDBC) in Sydney and by school districts around the US, to teach blind and vision impaired students keyboard basics. Teachers are amazed at how engaged the students become while doing their lessons, with constant feedback and encouragement given directly by the program.

Typeability teaches the full keyboard including function keys and number pad. It has different operating levels starting from young children through to adults and is compatible with JAWS versions 6 through 9. TypaAbility is available from T & T Consultancy Australia Pty Ltd. Contact them on 02-9499 5075.

Source: Quantum LiveWire June 2008

Mini PC

Asustek Computer's Eee PC is the latest thing to hit the technology headlines. A small compact computer sometimes referred to as a subnotebook computer, the three Es in the name stand for "Easy to learn, Easy to work, Easy to Play" at least that's what the advertisement says.

The "Eee PC" mini computers, are priced between \$350-600 depending on the model. The new "Eee PC1000" has up to 2GB of memory, 40GB of storage and comes in a neat small package with a 9-10 inch screen. It is powered by a re-chargeable battery with a charge of up to 7 plus hours. It can be used with Linux or a scaled down version of Windows XP. Acer has also just brought out a mini PC called "Aspire One". It comes with a Linpus Linux Lite operating system, which Acer says reduces the start-up and shut-down times.

Why would a person with a vision impairment want a mini PC I hear you ask? The answer lies in the ability to plug the mini PC into a larger monitor. Technically you could plug it in to a 42 inch LCD TV if you wanted. If used with voice software it may be just the thing for the tech savvy vision impaired computer user needing a very portable wireless computer.



The picture above shows the EeePC and a packet of tissues for size comparison.

Braille Puzzle Competition

With thanks to Jim from the U.K.

1. What is the longest word, in terms of the number of cells, that can be read the same way upside down as the right way round? A short example is the word "then", written in grade two. The answer is a word of five cells - see if you can work it out!!!
2. Can you think of a word of nine letters made up of four single-cell contractions?

There is a prize of a memory stick for the first person who can work out the correct answer to either question!

SVRC News

There are several SPEVI functions coming up so check the flyer at the end of this bulletin. Included is the draft program for the Term 4 SPEVI Professional Development Day.



The picture above shows some of the happy crew learning braille at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre. From the left is Ben, Helinka, Dawn and Taryn. Some of the staff who have helped us this term will be leaving soon and we would like to take the opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and creativity!

Rita's student Michael will be travelling to Space Camp this year independently - good for him (and we look forward to the photos and stories)!

Finally

Thanks to Deb Lewis, Marion Blazé, Annette Godfrey-Magee, Lea Nagel, Michael Kelly and all those who contributed to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to the fabulous team of proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

If you have something you would like included in 'The Bulletin', or you would like to receive the bulletin by email please contact:

Lyn Robinson (who can be emailed at lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au).

SPEVI Victoria News- Dates for your diaries.

SPEVI 2009 Biennial Conference “Challenges and Choices” Adelaide 4th to 9th January:

For more information, contact Jessica Bosnakis on 08 8354 2285 or email Jessica@aomevents.com.

AND More Victorian Activities

Term III – Friends of SPEVI gathering

Date: Friday, August 1, 4.30pm until about 6.00pm

Venue: Guide Dogs Victoria, Chandler Hwy, Kew

Format: 4.30 drinks and nibbles 5.15 Guest speaker and panel

Theme: Our VI students overseas

Cost: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members

We hope to include reports on students doing Gap years, studying at Yale and Harvard, attending Space camp or SCORE camp and more. Also find out about the AER Conference.

Term IV – SPEVI Day

We have traditionally devoted the first day of Term IV to a “combined agencies” Professional Development Day. This year we have a theme – looking at prematurity and its implications for our students.

Date: Monday, October 6, 8.30am to 4.30pm

Venue: Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong

Theme: Prematurity, vision impairment and development

Cost: tba

For more information, contact your SPEVI Victorian Counsellors:

Lil Deverell: Orientation & Mobility Instructor with Guide Dogs Victoria. Phone: 03 9854 4444
Mobile: 0418 370 312 or email lil.d@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

Garry Stinchcombe: Assistant Head of School, Vision Australia School. Phone: 03 9808 6422
Mobile: 0419 528 180 or email garry.stinchcombe@visionaustralia.org

Marion Blazé: Education Officer for Vision, Statewide Vision Resource Centre, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development. Phone: 03 9841 0807 Mobile: 0409 860 251 or email marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au