

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 10

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011

This issue was edited by Deb Lewis, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

### Professional Development Activities for Term 3, 2011

<b>Including students who are blind or have low vision in physical education programs</b> Charlie Roberts, SVRC (there is still time to register!)	Friday 22 July
<b>Skill power workshops for visiting teachers, teachers, aides, students etc</b> (BYO lunch and laptop) 1. <b>Computer for low vision users</b> - 10.00am to 11.30am Lyn Robinson 2. <b>MAGic</b> - 12.00 to 1.30pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology 3. <b>Please request a session</b> - 2.00pm to 3.30pm	Wednesday 10 August
<b>Visiting Teacher Professional Development – Term 3</b>	Tuesday 23 August
<b>Skill power workshops for visiting teachers, teachers, aides, students etc</b> (BYO lunch and laptop) 1. <b>Duxbury for schools and VTS</b> - 10.00am to 11.30am Lea Nagel & Maria Elford, SVRC 2. <b>Please request a session</b> - 12.00 to 1.30pm 3. <b>Please request a session</b> - 2.00pm to 3.30pm	Wednesday 31 August
<b>Dot power:</b> Literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 6 September
<b>Blind Cricket – all welcome!</b> (See issue 8 for information and forms)	Friday 23 September

The program for 2011 is available at: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Acalendar2011.doc>

### Term 3 Professional Development

You will probably have noticed the “**Please request a session**” time slots in the timetable above – so if you have a burning desire for a workshop on a VI- or access technology-related topic, please be in touch – we’d love your suggestions and in the past couple of years have run a number of very well received sessions – BECAUSE YOU REQUESTED THEM!!!

Suggestions can come from Visiting Teachers, aides, class/subject teachers, parents, students or anyone really! So don’t be shy!!!

Phone: 9841 0242 or email [svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au).

### Inside This Issue

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## June JVIB

Inside the June issue of JVIB, you'll find:

- Instruction in Areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum Linked to Transition Outcomes for Students with Visual Impairments by Karen Wolffe and Stacy M. Kelly
- Evaluating the Empowered Curriculum for Adolescents with Visual Impairments by Darren S. Levin and Erin Rotheram-Fuller
- The Impact of Visual Disability on the Quality of Life of Older Persons in Rural Northeast Thailand by Steven La Grow, Supaporn Sudnongbua, and Julie Boddy
- Movement Kinematics of the Braille-reading Finger by Barry Hughes

## Macular Degeneration: Low Vision Aids and Technology – A Guide

The Macular Degeneration Foundation, in collaboration with NSW Department of Health, has produced a new publication called Low Vision Aids & Technology – A Guide.

Low Vision Aids & Technology – A Guide provides information on the different types of aids, equipment and technology which can assist those with low vision in many different settings from home to work.

The guide answers key questions often asked by people with low vision, their family and carers. It also provides examples of how aids and technologies have helped many people with a vision impairment to achieve the goal of maintaining quality of life and independence.

To order a copy of Low Vision Aids & Technology – A Guide please call 1800 111 709.

Download the PDF from: <http://www.mdfoundation.com.au/LowVisionAidsandTechnology.aspx>

## Talking Clock

Visiting Teacher Emily White has been sending us vision impairment tid bits – and here is her latest – it's the Orb Talking Clock. She writes, "I'm not necessarily the biggest fan of talking clocks but if it sparks an interest in time and encourages kids to be on time, then it's better than nothing!".

It runs on 4 x A4 batteries and costs \$13.95 (Canadian).

Buy online from the Braille Bookstore:

<http://www.braillebookstore.com/view.php?T=Orb+Talking+Clock>

## Eye Handbook – for your Phone!

Developed at the University of Missouri Kansas City in 2009, the Eye Handbook has some great features for all who work with people with vision impairments.

It is a free application that works on your iPhone or android devices and includes:

- testing eg Snellen, colour vision etc
- vision symptoms
- eye atlas and much more

When searching, look for "Eye Handbook" – it is the Cloud Nine Development version.

For further information, visit: <http://bmctoday.net/glaucomatoday/2010/10/article.asp?f=the-eye-handbook>



## Term 2 Dot Power Day at SVRC, 21 June 2011

Report by Lea and Marion

Dot Power Day was a wonderful, fun-filled day of interaction with braille and tactual materials. Thirteen children ranging in age from four to nine attended the day. Our main literacy aim for the Dot Power Program is to encourage as much reading and re-reading of predictable text as possible. The predictability and repetition is to help give children self-confidence as they read, and to promote a light, flowing motion of all of the fingers over the braille text. We also encourage the children to develop social connections with each other, and practise the specialised skills that they will need at school.

The children all worked very hard, and enjoyed the day immensely. Some comments from the children included:

“I want to sleep here tonight.”

“I am coming back tomorrow.”

“Can we have Dot Power on a Saturday so that I can bring my sister and brother?”

The children began the day with a review of previous Dot Power days by singing the associated songs. They learned a new song, “Are you sleeping” and sang this beautifully as a round. The children will all receive a CD of their singing on the day. Children were then presented with some musical notation for rhythm. As a full group, the children learned to read, clap and sing some notation that represented crotchets, quavers and rests. Impressively, by the end of this part of the program, all of the children could follow the rhythms and clap them together. Two of the children continued with braille music in the afternoon and were able to write rhythms using the braille music code.

After investigating rabbits at recess, children read a book called “My little bunny”. This book had tactual illustrations of a rabbit in four different poses, and discussion was encouraged about the differences and similarities of the illustrations.

The children enjoyed eating lunch together at their table and some free play with instruments and each other. Some of the children especially enjoyed pretending to be rock stars with a guitar each. Their Bieber impersonations were impressive!

After lunch, they illustrated the front cover of their “My little bunny” book. The group then came together for some more singing and playing of instruments. All the children joined in with great enthusiasm, following the song book and finding the correct page for each song.

Please contact SVRC staff if you want to know more about the program or how to further assist your littlies in their development of braille skills. The next Dot Power day is in Term 3 on September 6 and will involve the younger children (pre-school and prep).

Right: Students enjoying our new path



## Audio-described Performance

One of Benjamin Britten's most admired works, the tender, witty comic opera, *Albert Herring* is a musically inventive coming-of-age story perfectly suited to the intimate surrounds of the Playhouse. Unable to find a worthy girl to be crowned May Queen, a small town elects the unquestionably virtuous Albert Herring instead. This lively, poignant chamber opera filled with comical characters charts the meek and stumbling Albert's journey from a fearful and submissive son, to one who steps out into the world, and is transformed.

Approximately 2 hours 45 minutes including one interval.

Sung in English with subtitles

**Audio Described Performance:** Monday 25 July 6.30pm

**Bookings:** To book tickets please go to: <http://www.theartscentre.com.au/whats-on/event.aspx?id=2361>

**Tactile Tour:** The Tactile Tour will begin at 5.30pm, meeting place is Door 1 at 5.20pm. To register for the Tactile Tour, please contact Melissa Harris, Education Manager at Victorian Opera on (03) 9012 6652 or email [melissah@victorianopera.com.au](mailto:melissah@victorianopera.com.au)

## Gymnastics Training – Moonee Valley

Essendon Keilor Gymnastics Academy provides opportunities to participate in the sports of Gymnastics, Trampolining and Cheerleading to children and young people throughout Moonee Valley. A 20-week program is being developed for children who are blind or vision impaired to participate in gymnastics activities. This project will be lead by "junior coaches" who will be participating in a youth leadership / mentoring program – using this project for practical experience to help develop leadership skills. The Junior Coaches will be overseen by qualified gymnastics instructors.

Director Christy Hemphill believes that this program will not only benefit the children with low vision who will participate in the program, but will also benefit the Junior Leaders.

For further information, please contact Christy: [christy@ekga.com.au](mailto:christy@ekga.com.au)

## Braille Proficiency Exam

Source: Christine Simpson, Chair - Australian Braille Authority

The Australian Braille Authority invites you to consider undertaking the TransTasman Braille Proficiency Certificate examination.

These examinations, held concurrently in Australia and New Zealand are jointly conducted by the Australian Braille Authority (ABA) and the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT). In 2011, examinations will be conducted during the period 3 October to 16 October with candidates electing to sit it during either week 1 (3 to 9 October) or week 2 (10 to 16 October).

Further information as to how you can register for these examinations will follow in early July, so keep an eye out for it! In the meantime however, you may like to visit the ABA webpage at <http://www.e-bility.com/roundtable/aba/publications.php> from which you can learn more about the examinations and download practice papers.

The Braille Proficiency examination tests a candidate's ability to transcribe into braille various types of printed material, usually some prose, a recipe and a short poem. This is followed by a passage of braille for transcription into print, and finally a passage of braille to be proofread.

## Space Camp: Making a Difference (and not just for students with vision impairments)

Adapted from: Jason Fountain's blog, which was posted in June 2011 but describes an incident that occurred in 1994 ... <http://jasonfountain.blogspot.com/2011/06/opening-my-eyes.html>

Have you ever had someone make such a profound statement to you that it forever affected the way you view life? That's the backdrop for this story.

Working at Space Camp taught me much about life. In fact, the experience eventually led me to go back to school to receive my certification for teaching.

The real lesson that I learned from interacting with the high school kids at Space Camp was diversity. We had kids from all over the United States and the world. In fact, Space Camp hosts several focused week-long camps: Hearing Impaired Space Camp, Visually Impaired Space Camp, and International Space Camp to name a few.



During Visually Impaired Space Camp week, I gained a much deeper appreciation for the challenges that individuals face in the world. These kids were beautiful in many ways and had an insatiable appetite for learning and sharing their joy for life.

During this week I was taught a powerful lesson about my own prejudices.

Escorting my group from the Habitat (living quarters) to the main activities area, I was having a conversation with one of the visually impaired campers who could not see at all. In reference to another camper, she said, "She is a beautiful girl."

In my moment of discomfort, I said, "Yes, she is beautiful on the inside."

The camper said, "No, she is beautiful." This was not said in a condescending way to me at all – it was simply stated as fact. This visually impaired student just saw the other girl the way that she truly was – it had nothing to do with appearance.

When she said this, it stopped me in my tracks. How dare I qualify beauty? I felt two simultaneous emotions: idiocy and enlightenment. Idiocy at my ignorant qualifying statement and for being so little as to not see her beauty; and enlightenment at what I had just learned from this visually impaired high school student.

A slight shift occurred on the inside of me that day. I've tried not to be so quick to judge someone by their abilities or disabilities. I've tried to silence that judgmental self and "see" people as they truly are. In a subtle way, this comment deeply affected me and has stayed with me since that day.

**[Dan Oates comments of the Space Camp experience: Our kids will always have more of an impact than we will ever know!]**

## Blind Architect

Adapted from: <http://www.arch4blind.com/profile.html>

Christopher Downey, RA, is an architect, planner and consultant who lost his sight in 2008. Today, he is dedicated to creating more helpful and enriching environments for the blind and visually impaired.

Chris earned a bachelor of environmental design in architecture from North Carolina State University and masters of architecture from the University of California, Berkeley. His 20-year career has encompassed a broad range of award-winning projects from custom residences to Great Lakes Aquarium in Duluth, MN, and the MIT's Rotch Architectural Library. He is currently consulting with the SmithGroup in association with The Design Partnership on the design of the Polytrauma and Blind Rehabilitation Center for the Veterans Administration Palo Alto Health Care System. He is a registered architect in California.

Chris writes: "Both the visually impaired and the sighted rely on information and architectural cues to navigate the built environment. As a consultant, I draw upon my experience as an architect to help design teams and client organizations to create enriching environments for the visually impaired and, not coincidentally, the sighted as well.

I work as a member of user engagement team, designer, or client representative. I use my unique perspective to facilitate greater clarity in the overall design and better integration of critical tools for the blind – such as way-finding and access to information – through more thorough consideration of tactility, touch, smell, temperature, sound, and new technologies. I also help to craft design processes that are more responsive to the needs of blind clients and end-users.

Great architecture for the blind and visually impaired is just like any other great architecture, only better: it looks and works the same while offering a richer and better involvement of all senses.

## Vision Australia Winter Holiday Program

**Who:** young people attending school, aged 5 – 15 years

**When:** Monday 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 10:00am – 3:00pm

**Where:** Vision Australia, Bendigo, 92 – 100 McIvor Road, Bendigo VIC 3550

**What:** Recreation activities, Orientation and Mobility, Social skill development, Preparing and cooking lunch

**Cost:** \$8 per person per day (to cover lunch)

**RSVP:** by 29<sup>th</sup> June to Steve Monigatti, Alex Adams or Sam Winzar on (03) 5445 5700

## Ozzie Dots: Feedback from Samoa

Ben Clare is currently living and working in Samoa and writes the following:

Just a quick one to let you know Aussie Dots is being well used here in Samoa! My most recent student was a 14-year-old boy who mysteriously lost his sight last year. Due to limited time and his wanting to return to school ASAP, I ran a 3-week intensive braille course for him. This fellow had never even heard of braille before the course started but by the end, he was confidently writing it and reading the Aussie Dots books pretty quickly!

Thanks again to you and everyone involved in the production of this program and also for donating the books to us here in Samoa.

## CERA Research Project: Impact of vision impairment for education of young people

Update from Education Officer, Marion Blazé

As most of you will know, the Centre for Eye Research Australia is currently conducting research assessing the impact that vision impairment has on young people. Jennifer Hassell, of CERA has spoken at two of our PD days regarding this project. This research has the necessary permission of the DEECD, Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital Ethics Committee, SVRC, CEO and at each EVAC, we obtain signatures from parents who are willing to involve their children in the study. No child is asked the survey questions without this permission being signed first.

The process has so far involved Annette and myself asking children the survey questions when we have visited the school to conduct our normal functional assessment following EVAC. It is now time for some students to be asked these questions again, because it is twelve months since they were asked them the first time. This was always the intention of the research: to ask the questions when children were first identified as vision impaired, and then twelve months after they have received some intervention.

Visiting Teachers will be sent a copy of the survey and asked to fill it in with their students during a visit. A stamped and addressed envelope will be supplied so that completed surveys can be posted back to CERA.

If there are any questions regarding this process, please contact Annette Godfrey-Magee or Marion Blazé on (03) 9841 0807.

## Braille Music: Happy Fingers Book 2

Happy Fingers: Easy Songs for Braille Music Readers, Book 2 is now available for free download at <http://www.ctdcreations.com/braille/happy-fingers.html>

This is the second book in the Happy Fingers series, collected and edited by Christina Davidson and Karen Gearreald. Book 2 introduces sharps and flats, repeats, first and second endings and melodies that will challenge braille reading skills. A new section entitled “Notes to Students and Teachers” has been added to summarize the music terms and concepts presented in each song.

**Songs include:** America the Beautiful, Yankee Doodle, Dona Nobis Pacem, Hush Little Baby, Are You Sleeping, America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee), Skip to My Lou, Home on the Range, Jingle Bells and This Old Man (Theme & Variations).

The songbook is FREE and available in BRF format (braille) and PDF (printed music notes). Permission for use is granted to all who promote braille music literacy. Sales in any format are strictly prohibited.

## Bullying Resource

“A Guide to Dealing with Bullying: For Parents for Disabled Children” is a booklet written for families. It contains information about spotting the signs of bullying, the action you can take, your child’s rights and stories and tips from other parents. Though it is UK resource, much of the general information is valuable and applicable.

To read this PDF file, visit: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/bullying.pdf>

## A Better Start for Children with Disability – Funding for Under Fives

Under the Australian Government's new *Better Start for Children with Disability* (Better Start) initiative, children aged under six years who have been diagnosed with moderate or greater sight or hearing impairments including deafblindness, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome will be able to register to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (to a maximum of \$6,000 per financial year).

From 1 July 2011, funding will be available for services such as speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology and orthoptics. Families will have until their child turns seven to use the early intervention funding.

The Better Start initiative also includes a one-off payment of \$2,000 for eligible families living in outer regional and remote areas. As access to services is limited for these families, this payment will assist with travel, home visits and similar expenses.

Eligible children can register for the Better Start early intervention funding by contacting the Registration and Information Service, managed by Carers Australia, from 1 July.

A number of new Medicare items are also being introduced as part of the Better Start initiative. The new items will be available for children up to the age of 15 provided their treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13. Families will be able to access the new Medicare items from 1 July 2011.

The Medicare component of the Better Start initiative is being implemented by the Department of Health and Ageing and further information will be available at <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au> and <http://www.health.gov.au>.

For further information about the Better Start initiative, please call 1800 989 530, visit <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/betterstart> or email [Better.Start@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:Better.Start@fahcsia.gov.au).

**Apparently (from Marion Blaze's investigations), funding is for up to \$6,000 per year and 35% of this can be used for equipment or technology provided that a therapist has recommended it.**

## 2011 Miles Franklin Award: Books Available in Alternative Format

Information provided by Chair of the Australian Braille Authority, Christine Simpson:

The Miles Franklin Award is Australia's most prestigious literary award and in 2011 it has been presented to Kim Scott, author of "That Dead Man Dance". Shortlisted books this year also included Chris Womersley's "Bereft" and Roger McDonald's "When Colts Ran".

These three titles are available on loan from the Vision Australia library in braille and DAISY formats and Christine encourages us all to read them!

## Goalball @ SVRC

On the 24<sup>th</sup> June, a group of students came to the SVRC to learn to play Goalball or to hone their skills. Ranging from Grade 2 to Year 9, the students spent time with Goalball gurus Rob Crestani and Luke Lescohier learning skills and then playing a tournament.

Goalball is a very competitive sport which can take players to Olympic level! See photos below which show the throw and the defense.



## Art4Blind Kids 2011

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June, Michael Donnelly presented a one-day seminar and workshop opportunity to explore options, strategies and issues related to working with and teaching a student who is blind or has low vision in Art and Craft. Participants had the opportunity to create some artwork under goggles to simulate vision impairment and appeared to find the expedience surprising, rewarding and valuable. Michael took the group through classroom setup, interesting Art sessions, materials, visiting galleries and opportunities to touch art in the public arena.



## Wanted: Piano Teacher

A piano teacher for a print/braille user in the Roxburgh Park area is sought – please contact Toni Chilton if you can help out: [Toni.Chilton@visionaustralia.org](mailto:Toni.Chilton@visionaustralia.org).

## How's Hector?

From Annette Godfrey-Magee and Marion Blazé

Many people are asking: Our much loved Hector is continuing to “fight the good fight”, and the latest news is positive. Hector emails us very detailed (and technical) reports every fortnight. The last contained the excellent news that his secondaries have virtually disappeared and his primary tumour is decreasing. Hector also appears to be much better and has become an enthusiastic iPad user. Thanks to the generosity of many of you, he has an iPad which he uses for book reading and his diary of the many appointments he needs to keep.

Thank you to all who have asked after him.

## New Kitchen

Visitors to the SVRC will enjoy the improved kitchen facilities – or the results of them – scones!!! We now have an oven and new cupboards – funded through the Accessible Buildings Program. Please come and enjoy with us!



## Staff News

- **Lyn Robinson** is currently enjoying the French countryside during her 6-week sojourn in Europe! Can't wait to see the photos!!!
- We farewell **Helen Caldow** who has been working on the Support Skills Program this year and know she won't be far away – she will continue working in Eastern Metropolitan Region as a Visiting Teacher.
- **Charlie Roberts** will be back from his three months in South America – hopefully with more stories of his adventures! He returns to Support Skills on a Friday, and to Southern Metropolitan Region as a Visiting Teacher.
- **Lynette**, who was a volunteer at the SVRC for over year, now has a full time job in marketing – and we wish her all the best!

## Please Return our Goggles

The SVRC goggles are out on loan to someone – can they please be returned – thanks!

## Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Marion Blazé, Geoff Bowen, Dan Oates, Lea Nagel, Mike Steer, Garry Stinchcombe and Joanna van der Nagel.

If you have something you would like included in “The Bulletin” please email Lyn Robinson [lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au)

To read the Bulletin Online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Abulletin.shtml>