

NCBI News

Volume 13 No. 4. Winter 2010

Incorporating *The Blind Citizen* (1923)



Winners of the 'Make a Difference' VISPA Awards



Winners of the 'Make a Difference' VISPA Awards with VISPA Chairman Brian Allen (front) see story page 14.

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Age-related Macular Degeneration Awareness Week!



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Publisher: NCBI
NCBI NEWS (Incorporating The Blind Citizen 1923) is published four times a year by: NCBI,
Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.
Tel: 01 830 7033 Fax: 01 8307 787
email: info@ncbi.ie
website: www.ncbi.ie
Editor Frank Callery,
Mobile: 087 6724097
email: omegapub@eircom.net
Printed by: PB Print Solutions
Tel: 353 86 2511640.

NCBI is a registered Charity,
registered in Ireland No. 26293
Charity No. CHY 4626

SIGHTLINES

Pre-budget Blues

The following is the text of a rather depressing email sent to NCBI chief executive, Des Kenny. Its sentiments are being echoed by many disabled people across the country.

Hi Des,
I'm feeling rather down these days. I'm not asking for my input this year into any NCBI pre-budget submissions regarding the blind pension, but then, how silly of me! How could any of the erudite mandarins of the Department of Finance be expected to understand the incoherent gibberish of a partially-sighted cripple (I also have to use a wheel-chair, as you remember).

Seriously, though, I am feeling suicidal. Life is becoming unbearable. I have nothing to look forward to except the same penurious frustration. Nothing I do or have done has any value or importance. Each day I have to listen to “specialists” and “experts” who earn in a year far more than I can ever hope to earn in my life time, who say that the country's ills can best be

solved by further reductions in the penurious pittance I receive.

I am, along with all other welfare recipients, such a worthless and valueless person. There are some who might see my demise as a laudable act of patriotism. I would be accepting that my continued existence would only be a burden on the state, at a time when it has far more pressing burdens. But who am I kidding? Most people wouldn't even notice.

But don't worry, Des. I'm too much of a coward to commit suicide. Instead I have to live with the feelings of worthlessness and can do nothing about them. I can write on my blog, but who reads that? I could write to politicians who may or may not reply and who in general are too conceited to listen. The killing part is the fear that things will only get worse.

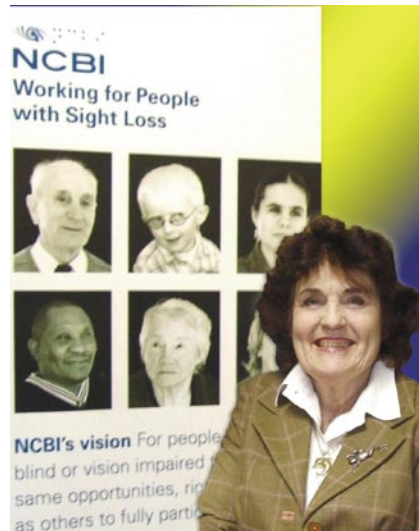
Take care,
Don't worry about me I'm safe and look forward to living in penury. ■

A Christmas message from our Chairman

Firstly as Chairman of NCBI, I should like to take this opportunity to wish everyone associated with the organisation the very best of the season's greetings.

2010 has seen yet another significant increase in the number of people accessing our services, placing ever greater demands on the organisation to increase the quantity of what we do while also maintaining the quality. In light of the current economic circumstances we are now in, regrettably we most certainly anticipate more challenging times ahead in 2011.

However, because NCBI is built on such solid foundations, I am confident that we will continue to withstand these tough and uncertain times. While we face more difficult decisions in the coming year, I believe that NCBI will emerge even stronger as a result and that every obstacle also provides an opportunity. We must all continue to work together in the years ahead to make a positive contribution towards fulfilling the objectives of the organisation and seeking out



**Margaret McDowell,
Chairman, NCBI.**

those opportunities in the midst of any challenges that may come our way.

I wish to extend my thanks to all of our services users, our staff, the teams who do such a great job running the Mrs Quin's Charity Shops and everyone who supports us year after year. Without their dedication and input, none of the progress made in the past would have been possible. Finally, on behalf of the Board of NCBI, I would like to wish all of our readers, supporters, staff and friends a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

**Margaret McDowell
Chairman, NCBI. ■**

Marjorie Quarton celebrates her 80th birthday



Marjorie Quarton cuts her cake.

Every organisation has its own media spin doctor, but here at Mrs. Quin's Charity Shops, we have our own Marjorie Quarton who is responsible for the public relations media, School Clothes Donations and the Mrs. Quin's Bookends Shop in Nenagh.

The "Queen of Spin", as Marjorie is known, has been with Mrs. Quin's Charity Shops for 12 years. Marjorie started off as an NCBI Committee Volunteer and was involved in setting up a number of shops in County Tipperary including Nenagh, Cahir, Cashel, Roscrea and Thurles. Her greatest achievements has been the setting up and running of Ireland's first successful Book Charity Shop and putting the Mrs. Quin's Charity Shop brand name on the media map throughout Ireland.

Marjorie's surprise party was held in the Fairway Restaurant, Nenagh with a number of her colleagues. The shocked look on her face was priceless — the first time Marjorie was ever lost for words! Nor can words describe the contribution Marjorie makes on a daily basis, but commitment, charm and enthusiasm come to mind. — **Barry Magee, General Manager Mrs. Quin's Charity Shops. ■**

NEWS Snippets

Shared Dosh from Jolly Farmer

A joint fundraiser for NCBI and Fighting Blindness was held in The Jolly Farmer pub in Beleek, Co. Fermanagh on Friday 27th August. Over €1,300 was raised on the night for the two charities. A big thank you to everyone involved in the fundraiser. ■

Information materials now available in Braille and audio format

The National Cancer Screening Service www.cancerscreening.ie has developed a suite of information materials for women in Braille and audio format. The two most commonly requested leaflets "About your free smear test" and "About your smear test results" have been produced in Braille and audio.

The leaflets provide general information on the Cervical Check programme and the benefits of screening, as well as the process of having a smear test and what potential smear test results mean. In addition, an "Information Sheet" that is offered to

women at their smear test appointment which details how their results are used and why their consent is needed to take part in the programme is now also available in Braille.

The Braille and audio formats were produced by NCBI's Media Centre in Finglas. It is intended that these materials will assist women who are blind or vision impaired to more easily avail of the Cervical Check programme by accessing the information needed for them to make an informed choice and decision about whether to participate in screening. ■

Camp Abilities

Due to the success of Ireland's first ever Camp Abilities last year, another one is being planned for 2011! Camp Abilities is a residential developmental sport and recreation camp for children with vision impairments or blindness. It will take place in Killarney, Co. Kerry from Sunday the 24th of April until Thursday, the 28th of April. Children who are vision impaired or blind and aged between 8-18, are able to attend. The cost has not yet been determined for next

year however the price will include accommodation, food, and transportation between the activities. Transportation to and from the camp on arrival/departure days, is not included.

Last year, 15 children between the ages of 8-14 got to enjoy participating in the camp and had the opportunity to be involved in activities such as fishing, archery, swimming, soccer, baseball, tandem cycling and rowing. Each child is paired with an adult on arrival to camp to provide assistance and offer encouragement throughout the camp.

Anyone who has a child who would like to attend can contact:

Niamh Daffy
Coordinator of CARA
National Adapted Physical
Activity Centre
Institute of Technology
South Campus, Tralee
Co Kerry
0667145646
www.caraapacentre.ie ■

Don't forget to write to Santa!

Santa will once again be responding to children's Christmas letters in Braille, audio and large print. As



NCBI will be helping Santa out with his replies, children should send their letters to Santa Claus, NCBI Library and Media Centre, Unit 29 Finglas Business Centre, Jamestown Road, Finglas, Dublin 11, by the 13th of December.

Please ensure you include the child's name and address and whether they would like a reply in Braille, large print or audio. Santa will send a beautiful card with larger print and a lovely decoration to be cut out, coloured in and placed on the Christmas tree. There will also be a tactile image included with the Braille and audio versions. This project has been kindly supported by An Post. ■

NCBI Mayo Technology Information and Demonstration Day

NCBI's Mayo office recently held a very successful Technology Information and Demonstration day in Breaffy House Hotel, Castlebar, Co. Mayo on Friday 15th October. The event was aimed at children and young adults with parents, siblings, teachers, and special needs assistants also invited to attend. Anne Duffy and Colleen Mullaney, community resource workers in Mayo organised and co-ordinated the event. Over 70 people attended the event to discuss technology needs, view some of the hardware and software available and meet with others in an informal and friendly environment.

Anne and Colleen had a range of NCBI shop products on display while Francis Kane and Laura Hegarty, I.T. Trainers with NCBI, demonstrated and advised on technology solutions currently available. Guest technology presenter and speaker on the day was Stuart Lawler who talked about using an iPhone, Braille displays, and mobile phone scanning software to a very interested audience. Stuart also discussed using technology as a person

with a vision impairment in education and work situations.

Thanks to everyone who attended and particular thanks to Laura and Stuart for lending their expertise for the day. — Francis Kane
I.T. Trainer & Support Worker
NCBI West. ■

NCBI Christmas Cards



This Christmas, you can send very special NCBI Christmas cards to friends and loved ones, or to your corporate clients! In doing so, you will not only be sending a very special message but you will be helping NCBI to continue to bring its much needed services to blind and vision impaired people in Ireland.

NCBI Christmas cards are now available in packs of 12 and 10 at a cost of €7 per pack. The NCBI Christmas cards will be available from the NCBI Online Shop and from all Mrs Quins Shops Nationwide.

Contact 1850 33 43 53 for more information. ■

NEWS Snippets

Audio Described Performances at the Abbey Theatre September 2010 – April 2011

There are a number of Described Performances taking place at the Abbey Theatre.

September 2010 – April 2011

The Plough and the Stars by

Sean O'Casey

Saturday 18th September 2010, 2pm

John Gabriel Borkman by Henrik Ibsen (New version by Frank McGuinness)

Saturday 13th November 2010, 2pm

Freefall by Michael West

Saturday 4th December 2010, 2pm

Arrah na Pogue by Dion Boucicault

Saturday 29 January 2011, 2pm

The East Pier by Paul Mercier

Saturday 2 April 2011, 2pm

The Passing by Paul Mercier

Saturday 9 April, 2pm

If you would like to book for any of these audio described performances at the Abbey Theatre, you can phone the Abbey Box office at **01 878 7222** or email boxoffice@abbeytheatre.ie

Roddy Doyle to Visit Braille Reading Fun Day

NCBI Library and Media Centre in partnership with St. Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired are holding their annual Braille Reading Braille Day, on Monday the 22nd of November from 9am to 3pm at St. Joseph's Centre.

Our guests of honour this year will be the well known Irish author Roddy Doyle and Braille reader Theia Regan who will both give feedback to all participants.

Now in its third year, the Braille Fun Reading Day promises to be an enjoyable experience for all. Each participant will read a selected article through Braille, with some also reading their own pieces. Those taking part will be given a small gift. Children will get a goody bag and young adults will get a gift voucher.

For further information or

to get involved contact:

library@ncbi.ie ■

Low Vision Workshops for Children & Adolescents

A number of fun and creative low vision workshops will be held in February and March of 2011. These workshops aim to support children to effectively and confidently use portable low vision aids such as hand held and monocular magnifiers for near and distance viewing. The workshops are approx 3 hours per day over 2 days with small group numbers.



Alan Rynne from Co. Clare taking part in a low vision workshop.

Participants will get the opportunity to explore colour contrast and lighting solutions that best suit their needs as well learning about the range of aids that are available. They will learn to use the correct aid for a particular task whether it is reading small print or signs or locating people in the distance.

Games and activities will be organised where participants get an opportunity to practise the skills learned at the workshop. Practical suggestions for everyday usage will be provided and an organised outdoor session will take place to encourage the use of low vision aids as part of developing and assisting independent living skills.

If you feel your child may benefit from further training and support to use their low vision aids effectively please ring **061 310818** for further information or contact your local CRW. ■

AMD Awareness Week

AMD Awareness Week took place from the 20th to the 26th of September. Once again NCBI teamed up with Fighting Blindness, the Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO) and the Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI), in association with Novartis.

Importance of early diagnosis

The aim of AMD Awareness Week is to increase public awareness on how to spot the symptoms of AMD and to highlight the importance of early diagnosis. AMD is the principal cause of sight loss for people over the age of 50 in the Western World. Although it is not as well known as other eye diseases such as cataracts or glaucoma, it is the most common cause of registered blindness in Ireland.

Lifestyle changes

Speaking in advance of AMD Week 2010, Mr. Mark Cahill, Irish College of Ophthalmologists, said, "While age is the main risk factor related to the onset of AMD, we now know that lifestyle changes such as ensuring a balanced diet and blood pressure control can help prevent AMD progression. Overall, early



L-R Avril Daly, Fighting Blindness, Lynda McGivney-Nolan, Optometric Advisor with the AOI, Margaret McDowell, Chairperson NCBI, Mary Kennedy RTÉ, Loretto Callaghan, Novartis and Mark Cahill, Consultant Ophthalmologist at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and the Beacon Clinic.

detection is key. There are now treatment options available for AMD and these have dramatically improved over the past few years but it is important that AMD is diagnosed early to ensure maximum effectiveness." This year, RTÉ's Mary Kennedy worked with the AMD Awareness partners to help encourage Irish people to look after their eye health. Speaking at the campaign launch she said, "These days, getting older doesn't necessarily mean a less active lifestyle. It is so easy

to take good eye sight for granted and yet maintaining it is integral to enjoying our busy daily lives."

Throughout AMD Awareness Week, free testing and information was available to detect the early signs of AMD at a range of participating local opticians, eye doctors, public libraries, golf clubs and other locations nationwide. The week was very successful and NCBI look forward to working with our AMD Awareness partners next year. ■

The Present View

It's that time of year again and to assist you with your Christmas shopping we have come up with a number of gift ideas, all of which are available to purchase from NCBI's shop either online at www.ncbi.ie/newshop, over the phone on **1850 33 43 53** or from our shop at Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9 or NCBI Kilkenny, 7 Ormonde Road, Kilkenny Phone: **056 7786816**. ■

Sound spa machine



Create a peaceful sleep environment with soothing, calming sounds creating a feeling of comfort and reassurance. This small machine features six digitally recorded calming sounds: ocean, summer night, rain, rain forest, waterfall and heartbeat. The soft sounds can help reduce anxiety and unrest and can be adjusted to a 15, 30 or 60 minute auto off timer.

Price: €26. ■

Gift Ideas for Christmas

The Penfriend audio labeller

This product allows people to attach an audio label to everyday products in the home. It is easy to use and allows you to record a label, such as a 'tin of beans' for example, which is read aloud when the pen is scanned over that label again.

The penfriend can be used to label food items, freezer items, film and music collections, household objects or even to organise letters and other paperwork, as well as record shopping lists or leave audio messages.

It can be used as a portable note taker. Record your message and keep track of it by placing the allocated label in a small notebook or in your diary. All you have to do is allocate one of the coded self-adhesive labels and record and store your message on the Penfriend. To playback hold the Penfriend over the label - it announces recordings specific to each label. There is no limit to the length of each message and the pen has up to 7 hours of recording time available.

Price: €82. ■

Small chrome easy-to-see watch with expanding strap (CW76EXP)

This easy-to-see watch has bold black numbers and hands against a white face. It is fitted with a chrome-coloured expanding strap and comes with a chrome case. It also has an easy grip winder for adjusting the time. The watch is splash proof but is not suitable for use while swimming, bathing or in the shower.

Price: €19. ■

Big Print Desk Diary 2011 (DS02)

This diary has big, bold print in easy-to-see font sizes and high quality paper that prevents ink bleeding through. It is spiral bound with strong, red covers which are easy to wipe clean. As well as having a week to view with space for notes, it also has an additional month-to-view calendar on every double page.

It is ideal for home or work use with font sizes 20 to 60 point on the diary pages.

Price: €10. ■

For the Kids

Super saxoflute (M35057)



It's great to be able to build your own instrument and then play it. These 24 plastic pieces can be put together in various combinations to make a super saxoflute or even two different instruments as it includes 2 mouth pieces. The set includes 2 mouth pieces, 2 trumpet ends, and twisting tubes all made of unbreakable ABS plastic. Perfect for children from 2 years of age.

Price: €13.95 ■

Nature lacing beads (M22163)

These chunky easy to handle wooden plant and insect shaped beads will captivate your child and encourage them to think about shapes

and colours as they thread. Watch that the snail doesn't munch your leaf! A great toy for developing early manipulation skills. Suitable from 2 years plus.

Price: €12.95 ■



Basic skills board (M16013)



Learn to zip, buckle, lace, button and snap with this big friendly bear! Each skill is contained on a separate wooden piece for easy practice. There are 6 pieces in total. Perfect from 3 years plus.

Price: €19.95 ■

For the Girls

Travel set magnifying mirror (15x) with tweezers (DM08)



This small portable mirror is ideal for tasks such as eyebrow tweezing and make-up application. It has 15 times magnification to aid with close-up tasks and three suction cups on the back to aid with attaching to a smooth surface, such as a bathroom tile or mirror. This is ideal for taking on holiday and is supplied with a pair of tweezers and a plastic case.

Do not leave this magnified mirror in direct sunlight, either in or outside the home.

Price: €12. ■

Large button mobile phone

This easy to use, big button mobile phone has large black buttons and white numbers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

New Services

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

It has three speed-dial buttons for quick access to your most called numbers. You can send and receive text messages with this phone and store up to 250 numbers within the phonebook. Speak to your local NCBI IT Trainer for information on other types of mobile phones available.
Price: €110.

Talking clock with vibrating alarm pad (CC61)

This talking clock announces the time, date and temperature at the touch of a button. It is supplied with a vibrating alarm pad, which is ideal to position under your pillow as an alternative to the audible alarm as it emits a series of strong vibrations. This also features a choice of three alarm sounds and an hourly time announcement option.

Price: €28. ■

Playing cards



Playing cards come in “easy to see” large print and Braille versions. Prices begin at **€4** and vary accordingly. ■

New service will protect the rights of people with disabilities and make positive changes in their quality of life

Minister for Social Protection, Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D., recently announced that a new National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities will be set up under the Citizens Information Board. The new Service will provide independent, representative advocacy services for people with disabilities and will be in place from January 2011.

Very Aware

Minister Ó Cuív commented, “I am very aware that people’s rights and entitlements are often dependent on access to good advice. This is particularly relevant to those who need someone else to advocate on their behalf.”

Minister Ó Cuív went on to explain: “The new Service will consist of five regional teams replacing the existing pilot projects which have provided assistance to more than 5,000 people with disabilities. The

five regional teams will be managed by Citizens Information Services in Dublin, Westmeath, Offaly, Waterford and Leitrim.” Advocacy Support Workers will be recruited so that more people with disabilities can access and use the general Citizens Information Services while the National Advocacy Service will seek out and respond to more vulnerable people with disabilities.

Protect their rights

Minister Ó Cuív concluded: “The new National Advocacy Service will give a voice to people with disabilities who are isolated in the community or who are living in residential institutions and who cannot represent themselves. The Service will protect their rights, help them gain their entitlements, obtain a fair hearing and make positive changes in their quality of life.” ■

Scrabble



A great game for all the family, scrabble is available in both Braille and large print versions. The large print version features tiles that are

11mm square while the tactile version of the game comes with audio instructions. Price: **€32** for the large print version and **€55** for the Braille version.

For further information about these and other products available from NCBI’s shop log on to www.ncbi.ie/newshop or call us on **1850 33 43 53.** ■

NCBI West Working with NUI, Galway's Community Knowledge

Designing the Future

The National University of Ireland, Galway launched a major project in 2001, entitled the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI), which set out to realise a civic mission as part of its core activities. It seeks to establish NUI Galway as a pioneering institution in the implementation of service learning programmes across all faculties.

Service Learning

Service Learning re-invigorates the civic mission of higher education and instills a sense of social responsibility and civic awareness. It encourages students to learn and explore vital societal issues within and without the classroom by engaging actively with communities

Service learning is similar in some ways to volunteering, but its purpose is unique. Like volunteering, it requires a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of local communities. It enables students to apply academic knowledge and skills in addressing genuine community needs. While students attain academic credit for their learning, both they and the community benefit from the experience.

The key objectives of the Service Learning are to enhance students engineering and technical skills through the project work and to increase their awareness of inclusiveness when designing electronic and computer systems. This fosters a close interaction between the student and the partner organisations and ensures co-operation throughout the project life cycle, from the initial technology and needs review stage to the final

delivery of a prototype system. This is then evaluated by clients of the organisations. At all stages in the project, the student meets with the partner organisation and their clients to present their design ideas and to receive feedback which will inform their final designs.

All under-graduate students in Electronic Engineering at NUI Galway, along with students from other Engineering disciplines, undertake projects in the third year (group projects) and final year (individual projects) of their degree programme. This initiative optionally allows a student to complete a service learning based project in either third or fourth year in partnership with external organisations representing individuals with disabilities. These project modules run for the complete duration of the first and second semester and the expectation is that a prototype system will be completed for use and evaluation by clients at the end of the project.

How is NCBI involved?

For the past number of years NCBI has engaged with the College of Engineering & Informatics at NUI, Galway in facilitating students involved in Service Learning as part of their degree programs. The students are presented with various projects and work with NCBI staff and service users to develop solutions that may assist people with a vision impairment.

This year NCBI is providing support to three projects involving third year students from Electronic Engineering, Electronic and Computer Engineering, Sports

and Exercise Engineering, and Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering.

The first project involves the development of a barcode reader, which will use a person's mobile phone to enable them to receive spoken information about a products nutritional value along with information about the product's ingredients.

The second project involves the development of a portable device, possibly integrated into a mobile phone for use with indoor rowing machines that will provide audio feedback relating to distance travelled, time left, stroke rate etc.

The third project involves the development of a piece of wearable technology that can be worn by a blind or vision impaired athlete that would give them a tactile and/or audible warning if they start to deviate from their course, or if they are off balance.

These projects have just started and there will be updates on how they are progressing in the next NCBI News.

NCBI would like to thank NUI, Galway for their continued confidence and enthusiasm in choosing NCBI as one of their partners for these worthwhile projects as part of their Community Knowledge Initiative.

Thanks to NUI, Galway Community Knowledge Initiative for use of information from their website www.nuigalwaycki.ie
— Francis Kane, I.T. Trainer & Support Worker, NCBI West. ■

Monaghan Branch

Celebrating Fifty Years of Dedicated

Fifty years of dedicated voluntary service were celebrated at a special Golden Jubilee Dinner in the Glencarn Hotel, Castleblaney on Wednesday the 15th of September. Those partaking were people drawn from various walks of life in different towns and villages in Co. Monaghan, who, along with their predecessors, have spearheaded the efforts of NCBI throughout the area since the formation of the first Monaghan county branch on June 27th 1960. The occasion was a significant milestone in the history of NCBI.

Prior to the dinner, Mr. Patrick McFadden, President of the Castleblaney Chamber of Commerce, and General Manager of the Glencarn Hotel, invited the Branch Chairperson Mrs. Margot McCabe (Clones) along with the other officers and guests to a special wine reception hosted by the hotel. He welcomed all to the venue and expressed congratulations to Mrs. McCabe and NCBI on the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary.

Most dynamic

Speaking at the dinner NCBI Chief Executive Des Kenny congratulated all concerned with the establishment, promotion and outstanding progress of the Co. Monaghan Branch of the organisation and said he was absolutely delighted to be in their midst for the Golden Jubilee. He said the Co. Monaghan NCBI branch had always reflected their responses to the changing pattern of needs of people with vision impairment in the county and he felt it was because of this responsiveness that the Monaghan branch continued to exist as one of NCBI's most dynamic branches.

"When the work of the branch started in 1960, our major concern was for the welfare of blind people – people whose degree of sight loss was significant. There was much poverty amongst the blind of 60 years ago and very little opportunity for education and meaningful employment."

"Total blindness amongst younger blind persons has been reducing over the decades because of better health care, new drugs and surgical interventions through new techniques of micro surgery. But while this form of blindness has been in decline there has been a rise in a different form of sight loss and this revolves around the eye diseases of old age."

He added that NCBI was now working with many people in the older age groups, such as people over the age of 70 years, who sustained deterioration in their eyesight from ageing conditions such as macular degeneration and cataracts. He also pointed to the fact that in 2004, NCBI held data on 6,400 people with whom the agency worked. Today there are over 15,000 people experiencing significant sight loss, but who were not blind. "This increased level of work is performed with the same number of front line workers, just ninety two, which was the number we had six years ago."

Investing in eye health care

Des Kenny then went on to say how NCBI's work has had to change, not just because of the increased numbers, but because there were different expectations today from people with low vision. He revealed that NCBI is currently having the "cost of sight loss" study carried out, which will show the importance of the government investing in eye health care and rehabilitation.

"The Central Statistics Office shows us that in 2006, there were nearly 400,000 older persons in the country and it goes on to forecast a three-fold increase in this number to 11.2 million by 2036. Most of these people, living into a longer old age will have sight related needs which NCBI will have to address." He said the invisible element in the hotel function room where they were gathered was the spirit of commitment. "That great commitment continues and is greatly valued by NCBI nationally." Des Kenny concluded by referring to Seamus Heaney's new collection of poems "Human Chain" in which Heaney refers to the importance of each

Service

link in a chain but says that the links are only important because of the strength they give to the chain as a whole. As such, he said the Co. Monaghan NCBI branch was a powerful link in the chain of NCBI's work, nationally.

For the benefit of others

The event was also attended by local T.D. for Cavan/Monaghan Dr. Rory O'Hanlon, who recalled how he was actively involved in the early stages of the work of the Co. Monaghan branch, along with the Cooper family from Carrickmacross. Dr. O'Hanlon paid tribute to all the branch officials down through the years and said he was impressed by the role of NCBI and the tremendous voluntary effort harnessed by those involved for the benefit of others.

Success of the Co. Monaghan branch

The chairperson Mrs. Margot McCabe formally welcomed all those in attendance and said that she was delighted by the success of the Co. Monaghan branch of NCBI. She traced the history of the branch from its foundation at an initial meeting in Hope Castle, Castleblayney, which was organised by the NCBI County Organiser, Miss Dorothy I. Woods, the NCBI Organising Secretary Barbara Knox; and the "Wireless for the Blind" secretary, Molly Rochford Wade.

She recounted how the earlier work involved the employment of a Home Teacher for blind and vision impaired people in the county and detailed the many exciting changes experienced by the branch during the past fifty years. She said that they were indebted to all who had helped NCBI over the years in so many different ways — in the provision of various services such as the "Talking Newspaper", fund-raising, collections, etc. She also singled out for special praise the current Community Resource Worker, Mrs. Catherine Kilgarriff, and their Regional Representative to the Council of NCBI, Mrs. Jean Wilkinson of Monaghan. ■



L-R: Monaghan branch Chairperson, Ms Margot McCabe, Des Kenny CEO NCBI and Branch Secretary Ms Laura O'Mahony.



L-R: Dr. Rory O'Hanlon, long time associate of the branch and Chairperson, Ms Margot McCabe.



L-R: Monaghan branch members Mrs. Mary McCaughey and Mr. Eugene McCaughey at the Golden Jubilee dinner.

Getting it Right on!

VISPA “Make a Difference” Awards

The first ever Make a Difference Awards took place on World Sight Day on Thursday the 14th of October. Members of VISPA, which includes NCBI, Fighting Blindness, The Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind and St. Joseph’s Centre for the Visually Impaired joined forces with Specsavers for the awards, to ensure that those who really make a difference to the lives of people with vision impairments are recognised on a national stage.

The awards were hosted by Anton Savage; known to many as the presenter of *The Apprentice: You’re Fired*.

There were three categories of awards – individual, community and business.

Individual category

In the individual category Eamonn Wolfe, Michael Sutton and Donna Jane Casey were all nominated. Hotelier Eamonn Wolfe from Wicklow was announced as the winner of the Individual Contribution award for his generous efforts to the residents of NAHVI, National Association of Housing for the Visually Impaired, in Donabate. Facilitating and funding a sailing trip to Turkey annually, Eamonn was nominated for giving the vision impaired residents experiences that they will never forget and building their confidence.

Eamonn says: ‘On the first trip to Turkey we were walking into the unknown, I didn’t know what to expect from it and neither

did the young people. I was astonished at their zest for life and the trips have given me so much more back as I watch the groups grow in confidence. The group relished the experience of jumping off the boat and eating octopus caught that morning. It makes me appreciate my sight and the beauty in the scenery. The trip has now become the highlight of my year and I’m truly honoured to have them visit me in Turkey.’

Community category

In the Community category, The Family Resource Centre Hospital in Limerick, Alone and St. Joseph’s school were all nominated. The Family Resource Centre Hospital in Limerick was named as the winner. Four ladies from Colemanswell nominated the Hospital Family Resource Centre for its disability group Step Forward. The Centre provides a fully accessible building for people with vision impairments to meet, share supports and access information and training.

A member of the group, with a visual impairment, said: ‘If it wasn’t for the group and centre, I would not have anything. It has opened doors and supports to me that I would otherwise not have had access to in my community.’

Business category

Finally in the business category, Glaxo Smith Kline, The Goblet bar, Artane and Quinns bar, Drumcondra were all nominated. Glaxo Smith Kline in Dungarvan was the winner of the ‘Business’ category. Mr. Kilcrann from

“314 million people worldwide live with sight loss, affecting everyone from babies to the elderly. Restorations of sight, blindness prevention and support strategies are among the most cost-effective interventions in health care and the urgency to make these interventions cannot be over emphasised”.

Blanchardstown nominated Glaxo Smith Kline due to the assistance, help, and belief that the company gave to his sister, Nuala, who was diagnosed with macular degeneration four years ago. The company’s support for Nuala has enabled her to continue to live and work independently even though her sight is still deteriorating.

We thank all the nominees for the difference they have already made

VISPA chairperson Brian Allen speaking at the award ceremony said, “We have had an extremely tough job judging these entries and we want to thank all the nominees for the difference they have already made in the lives of vision impaired people.

“314 million people worldwide live with sight loss, affecting everyone from babies to the elderly. Restorations of sight, blindness prevention and support strategies are among the most cost-effective interventions in health care and the urgency to make these interventions cannot be over emphasised. With so many sight conditions being degenerative, the clock is ticking and action is needed urgently.” ■



L-R: The winners, Eamonn Wolfe, Martha Potter, Family Resource Centre, Hospital, Co. Limerick, Caroline Casey, Glaxo Smith Kline and VISPA chairman, Brian Allen.



NCBI Chief Executive, Des Kenny, NCBI Director of Services, Elaine Howley with Sean Mc Cauley, Chairperson of Specsavers in Ireland.



The winners, L-R: Eamonn Wolfe, Martha Potter and Caroline Casey

What We Want

Pre-Budget Submission by the National Blind of Ireland to Budget 2011

The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) provides a range of services to people who are blind and vision impaired in the Republic of Ireland. Many of these services are delivered on behalf of the State and are funded by the Department of Health through the Health Service Executive (HSE).

NCBI currently offers services to over 15,000 people living with significant sight loss. We are experiencing an annual increase in our service user base of approximately 12% year-on-year. Over 66% of people with whom we work are over the age of 65.

Refrain from imposing further cuts

A high percentage of our service users have low incomes and, as a result, are reliant on the benefits system as their sole source of income. We urge the Minister to refrain from imposing further cuts on this vulnerable group.

NCBI is against cuts to low vision aids such as hand held magnifiers, prismatic spectacles and electronic magnifier devices, prescribed through our Low Vision Clinics nationally.

NCBI is also opposed to an increase in the threshold in the Drugs Payment Scheme, following the introduction of a 50 cent charge on all prescription items in Budget 2010.

Key Recommendations

a) The introduction of a new Cost of Disability Allowance, which would replace both the current Blind Pension and Disability Allowance and allow claimants to claim certain other payments concurrently if they satisfy the qualifying conditions. A new Cost of Disability Allowance that would remove the discrepancies that currently exist between the Blind Pension and the Disability Allowance.

b) NCBI requests that responsibility for funding of NCBI's library service be transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Introduction of a new Cost of Disability Allowance

NCBI recommends the introduction of a new Cost of Disability Allowance, which would replace both the current Blind Pension and Disability Allowance and account for the extra costs associated with living with a disability. Claimants would still be entitled to claim certain other payments concurrently if they satisfy the qualifying conditions. These payments include:

- Disability Benefit
- Jobseeker's Benefit
- Maternity Benefit
- Adoptive Benefit
- Health and Safety Benefit
- Injury Benefit
- Widow or Widower's (Contributory) Pension
- Widow's or Widower's (Non-contributory) Pension, or
- One Parent Family Payment

Blind and vision impaired claimants of the new Cost of Disability Allowance should also be entitled to claim the following payments, which are currently only available to recipients of Disability Allowance:

- Mobility allowance from the Health Service Executive
- VAT and VRT exemption on the purchase of a car through the Disabled drivers and passengers schemes and
- National toll roads exemption from Revenue
- Higher disregarded means

The advantage of a new cost of Disability Allowance is that it would remove discrepancies that currently exist between the Blind Pension and Disability Allowance.

Council for the

For example the Blind Pension and the Disability Allowance are paid to individuals whose employment capacity is restricted as a result of their disability. However, the current means test means that those eligible for Disability Allowance are more likely to receive a greater allowance than those in receipt of Blind Pension.

Under the current means test a maximum of €20,000 may be discounted as means in considering an application for the Blind Pension. However, if the same person were eligible for Disability Allowance, €50,000 would be disregarded. The means test associated with the Disability Allowance scheme was enhanced to €50,000 in 2007 and this should now be standardised for all areas of disability allowance through the proposed Cost of Disability Allowance.

Transfer of NCBI Library Service to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

NCBI requests that the responsibility for funding of NCBI's library service be transferred to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. By transferring responsibility for funding to this Department, library services for people who are blind or vision impaired would be run on the same capitation basis as the public libraries for that of the general public. Capitation funding could be calculated against the number of people nationally using NCBI services, which could be divided in accordance with the 31 public library districts.

NCBI's library service is the only national library for blind people in Ireland. Its role and services urgently need to be recognised and appropriately funded by the Government on the same capitation basis as public libraries. A transfer of responsibility to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local

Government will go some way towards this and offer an equal right to read, for people who are blind and vision impaired, as sighted people.

Approximately 14,800 blind or vision impaired people rely on the services of NCBI's library. Almost 5,000 registered members use the services on a regular basis. However despite the fact that NCBI's library service is the only national library for blind people in Ireland, it only receives funding from the HSE towards some staffing costs. It does not receive any funding towards the costs of production or purchase of any library stock or the provision of any conversion services. Therefore NCBI's library service relies heavily on charitable donations to fund these activities. ■

Top of the Hill Club and Iona Centre – Trip to Trim

By Hilary Casey, Community Resource Worker, Dublin

Currently, NCBI offers day services for older people at two locations in North Dublin. These run on a Tuesday morning and afternoon in the Iona Centre and Wednesday and Thursday, morning and afternoon in the National League of the Blind on Hill Street (Top of the Hill Club). The members of each club along with staff and volunteers from NCBI recently enjoyed a trip away to Trim where they stayed for two nights at the very convenient and accessible Trim Castle Hotel.

The group of 37 service users along with staff, set off for Trim on Tuesday September 14th. Much anticipation for the trip had been building for weeks so there was great excitement as 5 buses left Dublin full to the brim with people and bags bound for County Meath. We were all delighted to find the hotel so comfortable and accessible and the staff couldn't have done more for us. We had our own conference room set up for meals which meant that people could move around with relative ease, visit friends on other tables and of course there was space for the dance floor which was busy both nights!

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'A game of Chess'

Braille Chess Association of Ireland Open

By Sean Loftus

The 2010 Braille Chess Association of Ireland Open Tournament took place from Friday the 1st to Monday the 4th of October, at the Marine Hotel in Sutton, Dublin. This year marked the silver jubilee of our association and we were absolutely astonished at the level of interest in the competition and that 33 players and 20 supporters would take part. The tournament was organised in 2 sections, with 20 in the open section and 13 in the minor.

In this type of tournament, played according to the Swiss system, the higher graded players in the top half of the draw are paired against those in the lower half. We also ensured that players from the same country did not meet in the first round. In the open section 8 of the 10 games produced the expected result with a win for the player with the higher grade. In the other games Joe McAloon drew with Colin Chambers (England) and I had an unexpected win against Markus Berggren (Sweden). In the minor section there were also two games which did not go according to expectations. Wilfred Van Der Velden (Belgium) lost to Bengt Eriksson (Sweden) and John Carroll drew with Koenraad Lecluyse (Belgium).

In the open, three players emerged on full points. These were Patrik Berggren (Sweden), brother of Markus, Philip Doyle and Ernie McElroy. Philip and Patrik drew their game in round 3, which allowed Ernie to move into outright leadership with a win against Les Whittle (England). In the minor section there were still three players on full points after round 2, but following the afternoon games the young Swede, Fredrik Ljungdahl, was the only player to have won all three games.

For those not playing chess Barry O'Brien organised a coach tour and he certainly pulled out all the stops to make sure that our visitors had a full day's activity. They visited Farmleigh House and Áras an Uachtaráin and after lunch they went to the Guinness Storehouse.

68 people attended our celebration dinner to mark 25 years of the Braille Chess Association of Ireland. Our special guests were Des Kenny, Chief Executive of NCBI with his wife, Terry, and Michael Lavin, Secretary of the National League of the Blind, with

his wife, Teresa. We were also very pleased to welcome Michael and Una Keane with their daughter and son-in-law, Carmel and Noel Kennedy. Mick, now aged 81, played a key role in the setting up of the O'Hanlon Chess Club in 1960 which led to blind players competing against sighted players. He also represented Ireland at international tournaments for blind players between 1964 and 1985.

On the second day in the open there were wins for Patrik Berggren over Ernie McElroy and for Michael Delaney against Philip Doyle. This placed Patrik and Michael in joint leadership on 3.5 points. Markus Berggren joined Ernie on 3 points with victory over David Hodgkins (England). In the afternoon round Patrik drew with Michael and Ernie lost to Markus. Philip Doyle bounced back with a win over Colin Chambers. This moved him up into fourth place, just half a point behind. The feature of the Sunday games in the minor tournament was two more wins by Fredrik Ljungdahl. This placed him in an unassailable lead on 5 points, 1.5 ahead of his nearest rival, Phillip De Coninck (Belgium), with a round to go.

Ljungdahl completed a perfect weekend in the Minor Tournament with his sixth win. Gary Wickett (England) and Martin Kane came joint third and Shane Hall took the grading prize. The battle for the leading places in the open was fought out on the top 3 boards. The Berggren brothers drew with each other, as did Michael Delaney and Ernie McElroy. This allowed Philip Doyle to move into the prize money with victory over Joe McAloon. The grading prizes resulted in more success for our Swedish visitors. A draw with Colin Chambers was sufficient for Hakan Thomsson, but Olle Engstrom needed to win, and this he did in the very last game to finish.

Our grateful thanks go to our tournament controller, Tim Conlan, and his assistants Mick Germain and John Crowley. To Barry and Mary O'Brien and Noreen Cleary. The staff of the Marine Hotel who spared no effort to make our stay so very pleasant. For their support in connection with this tournament: NCBI; The National League of the Blind of Ireland; Irish Blindsports; The Irish Chess Union, and The Leinster Chess Union.

Tournament, 2010



chairman of the Braille Chess Association of Ireland Eamonn Casey, with the four players who tied for first place in the open section, Marcus Berggren, Sweden, Patrik Berggren, Sweden, (winner on tie break), Eamonn Casey, Michael Delaney, Ireland and Philip Doyle, Ireland.



Players competing in the minor event.

Final scores.

Open Tournament: 1-4 Patrik Berggren, 4.5; Philip Doyle, 4.5; Markus Berggren, 4.5; Michael Delaney, 4.5; 5-8 Ernie McElroy, 3.5; David Hodgkins, 3.5; Hakan Thomsson 3.5 (grading prize); Olle Engstrom, 3.5 (grading prize); 9-13 Sean Loftus, 3; Colin Chambers, 3; Joe McAloon, 3; Eamonn Casey, 3; Richard Spele (Sweden), 3; 14-16 Les Whittle, 2.5; Gerard den Otter (Netherlands), 2.5; Laurent Peignein (France), 2.5; 17-19 Bernard Duthoit (France), 1.5; Nenand Antonic (France), 1.5; John Dearie (Scotland), 1.5; 20 Jean-Claud Martin (France), 1.

Minor Tournament: 1 Fredrik Ljungdahl, 6; 2 Phillip de Coninck, 4.5; 3-4 Gary Wickett, 4; Martin Kane, 4; 5 John Carroll, 3.5; 6-10 Regis Gerbaux (France), 3; Shane Hall, 3; Koenraad Lecluyse, 3; Bengt Eriksson, 3; Hernon Sobredo (Sweden), 3; 11 Stan Lightowler (Northern Ireland), 2; 12-13 Wilfried Van Der Velden, 1.5; Ann Casey, 1.5. ■

Sad passing of NCBI staff

All staff at NCBI were deeply saddened with the recent deaths of Diane Kenny and Ann Callaly. Diane joined NCBI almost five years ago and worked as a Clerical Officer alongside the Cork team in Plunkett Chambers, before moving up to the Ballincollig Office. Diane's warm personality and relaxed manner made an invaluable contribution to our work and a huge impact on the lives of those she came into contact with.



The late Diane Kenny.

Ann joined NCBI more than 9 years ago and worked as PA to NCBI Chief Executive Des Kenny. Ann's bubbly personality made a lasting and unforgettable contribution to her work in NCBI.



The late Ann Callaly.

Outside of work, both Diane and Ann were very active and spent a lot of time with family and friends. They will be sincerely missed by everyone in NCBI.

A message from our Chief Executive, Des Kenny: "There is always a great sadness surrounding the death of any person close to us. There is however something especially poignant about the death of young people in the prime of life. Recently we have had to reconcile ourselves to the deaths of two dear colleagues, Diane Kenny and Ann Callaly who will leave their own voids in the lives of those of us who worked closely with them." ■

Customers First

Four easy ways to make your business accessible and bring your customer back for more!

Why is making your service accessible to customers who are blind or vision impaired so important?

1. It makes good business sense

Making your services and premises suitable for people with vision impairments makes it better for all your customers. Better colour contrast and lighting, attention to potential hazards, and awareness training for staff benefits everyone and improves the safety and usability of your service.

2. Reach more customers

Organisations' increasingly understand the importance of reaching a larger customer base by making their service more accessible. It also complies with good corporate and social responsibility practice.

In Ireland today, there are more than 15,000 people who are blind or vision impaired known to NCBI and of this figure nearly 60% are over 65 years of age. It is projected that the number of people affected by blindness or vision impairment in Ireland will grow enormously over the next twenty years as the population ages leading to a significant demand for the provision of accessible services to all. It is important to ensure that your service is extended to this growing customer base.

3. Improve your image

As corporate responsibility and social inclusion become more important, organisations now

understand the Public Relations benefits of providing greater access to facilities and information for customers who are blind or vision impaired. Inclusive design is good practice because it increases usability for all and not only people with disabilities. Accessibility is not incompatible with functionality or aesthetics but instead enhances the experience for everyone.

4. It's the law

The Equal Status Act, 2000 makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone on the basis of disability. If you are providing a service for the general public you must, by law, make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

How to make your service accessible

NCBI provides a range of services to organisations to enable them to make their services accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired, for a small charge.

1. Arrange vision impairment awareness training

NCBI provides awareness training to organisations to encourage a greater understanding of the issues around vision loss and to promote the development of services that are accessible to all.

2. Make your website and other technologies accessible

People who are blind or vision impaired may not be able to access your service due to problems caused by inaccessible websites or poor quality displays and touch screens. NCBI founded the Centre for Inclusive Technology (CFIT)

in response to this problem. CFIT provides information, education and assistance in designing accessible websites and other information and communication technologies to make them usable to everyone. Find out more at www.cfit.ie.

3. Organise an accessibility audit

An access audit of your premises may highlight certain aspects that make it difficult for a person with sight loss to find their way around independently. These include poor signage, bad lighting, ineffective use of colour and lack of suitable markings on steps and stairs. Low cost, simple adaptations can be made to make your premises more accessible and safer to more customers. These include:

- Marking glass doors and providing a handrail on stair-cases.
- Effective use of colour and tactile markings to highlight steps, edges and obstacles.
- Large, clear, well positioned signs.
- Effective use of contrasting colours to highlight handrails, doorframes, door handles and edges of steps.

All of these simple adjustments will make your service safer for everyone to use. NCBI can provide you with further advice and assistance on the most effective way to make adjustments to your premises.

4. Make your information accessible

NCBI Media Centre converts printed information into formats accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired for a range of organisations.

Accessible to Customers with Sight Problems

Braille Transcription

The Media Centre's Braille production team uses a range of technologies including a software programme called Duxbury for the conversion of documents to Braille.

Audio Recording

The Media Centre can record a wide range of hard and softcopy documents onto audio files in audio-cassette, CD or WMA formats. Documents which the Centre has converted into Braille and audio include:

- Annual company reports
- Customer Care plans
- Banking guidelines
- Code of ethics, equality and human resource policy
- In-house communications and newsletters.

Clear Print Advisory Service

Clear Print is a design approach for written information which makes the print easier to read for everyone including people with low vision. NCBI Clear Print advisory service assists organisations to implement clear print design in their printed information.

Clear Print Mark

Our Clear Print Mark acknowledges organisations that use clear print design in their printed information. To achieve this Mark, organisations can submit documents, forms, posters and any other printed information to NCBI's Media Centre, who will advise on its accessibility in terms of clear print principles and recommend changes which will make it easier to read.

Braille Advisory and Proof Reading Service

If you are a sign designer, an architect, a sculptor, an artist, a student, a researcher or someone who is just interested in finding out more about Braille, NCBI Media Centre is happy to advise you about the specifications of Braille.

Audio Description

Audio description is the name given to a narrative track that assists people who are blind or vision impaired when watching a television programme, a movie, or a visual arts performance. If you have produced a DVD or movie about your service, NCBI audio description service can assist in making it more accessible to people with sight loss. By embracing the concept of accessibility, you will be making your service safer and easier to use for everyone.

About NCBI

NCBI is a not-for-profit charitable organization, which offers support and services nationwide to people experiencing difficulties with their eyesight. Around 5% of people using NCBI's services are completely blind, while 95% have varying degrees of usable vision. NCBI promotes full independence of people who are blind or vision impaired and now provides a range of services to people experiencing sight loss in Ireland.

For more information, please contact us at:

NCBI Head Office

Whitworth Road,

Drumcondra, Dublin 9,

Locall 1850 33 43 53

Email: info@ncbi.ie

Web: www.ncbi.ie ■

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On Tuesday afternoon, the group split in two with one half taking a walk around Trim Castle itself and the other half stayed in the hotel for a quiz. That evening after having a very tasty dinner, we enjoyed traditional music from a local group which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

On Wednesday morning we had an early start as the entire group headed to Newgrange and Visitors' Centre. After enjoying a delicious lunch, we watched a movie about the history of Newgrange took a tour around the display and were taken by a guide to the interior of a complete replica of one half of Newgrange. The group found this tour excellent and very much enjoyed the experience of how the light shines through Newgrange on the winter solstice so although Newgrange itself is not accessible to all, the group found that they could see and imagine what it would be like if they were in the tomb on this magical day in December.

On Wednesday evening after another lovely dinner, a second band joined us and much dancing and singing was had by all. Members of the group themselves sang and thoroughly enjoyed the experience and we are hoping to have a repeat performance at the Christmas party!

On Thursday morning after a late breakfast the group started to pack their bags and return to Dublin. A very enjoyable couple of days were had by all. Many thanks to all the volunteers who kindly gave up their time to help make this trip possible and to the staff at Trim Castle Hotel and at Newgrange who helped to make this event such a great success. ■

To the Waters and the Wild...

With Irish Blind Sports

Aviva Stadium Tickets for Blind and Vision Impaired

There are a number of seats reserved for visually impaired patrons at the stadium. I have been asked that if patrons wish to apply for tickets for these seats, could they write to Carl O'Brien at the IRFU at the address below. If you have not applied previously you should include something like a letter from a GP or the National Council for the Blind or from Irish Blind Sports.

Tickets are priced according to the area of the stadium in which they are seated. Ticket for an accompanying attendant is complimentary.

Carl O'Brien, Irish Rugby Football Union,
10-12 Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Tel: +353 1 647 3800 Fax: +353 1 647 3847

Email: carl.obrien@IRFU.IE

Ticketmaster has still to inform us about ticketing allocation for non sporting events. Soccer tickets are available through the FAI Disabled Supporters Club arrangements previously notified in NCBI News.

Rowing

We have been approached by a visually impaired rower, Aron O Dowd, who would like to establish a visually impaired rowing team that could compete in rowing regattas with sighted peers. People with vision impairment can participate in team boats alongside sighted colleagues. The Rowing Union also have been very proactive in wanting to promote rowing among vision impaired and blind people. It's suitable for everyone young and old. Two vision impaired rowers competed in the adaptive rowing team at the rowing world championships in October. Contact Aron on digiboyaron@aol.com or **IBS** at info@ibsports.ie



Waterskiing Enabled

Slicing across the boat wake on skis with your eyes closed – wow! The Carrig Waterski & Wakeboard Club held a Specialised training weekend in October, in conjunction with Irish Blind Sports. Ten blind and vision impaired people aged from 10 years to, well, more than that, took part. The instructors employ a range of techniques, including triple bar, dual rope and boom to accompany each skier out of the water. The more experienced skiers were guided by voice or whistle signals. "It was truly a great weekend, with great company, fab conditions and great fun had by all. We're already looking forward to waterskiing next year!"

— Mark Kehoe. For those interested in participating in the Irish Blind Sports Waterski Weekends at Carrig Waterski & Wakeboard Club in 2011, contact Dave Waldron at d.waldron@ucc.ie. See also www.carrigwaterski.com



Sailing Programme

Blind and visually impaired people went to the National Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire in September to try sailing. A mixed group of children and adults attended and had a lovely day. They sailed in dinghy boats, for one or two people, with verbal guidance provided from the nearby rigid inflatable boat. There was also an opportunity to go out on the open sea in a couple of cruising yachts. We are grateful to all those who have helped during the season to enable us to offer sailing as an activity and hope to build on this in the future. Special thanks to Sandra Garvey Dyson, Ted Squire and also to Pat McCool of Shannon Sailing and to all those who helped out at the National Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire. Next year we hope to offer even more sailing.

Keep the following date in mind for next year — Blind

National Championships 2011,
20th to 22nd May 2011 Suffolk
Yacht Harbour, Levington,
Ipswich, England
Contact Sandra on
wildgoose@iol.ie



Challenge 24@ Work

On Thursday the 9th to Friday the 10th of December, Hilary Casey, an NCBI Community Resource Worker will be completing a challenge to raise funds for NCBI.



The aim of the challenge is to run a marathon over 24 hours while staying in work. "I will run a mile on the hour every hour for 24 hours with a little extra on the last hour to make up a marathon distance of 26.2 miles. It will take place on a treadmill with a back up tread mill just in case! says Hilary, and closer to the event I will set up a page on My Charity.ie".

Hilary welcomes sponsorship — big or small for NCBI and wants to invite you to run, walk or cycle part of the challenge with her. You can take part by running, walking or cycling for a mile or more or take part by running, walking or cycling 2 minutes 40 seconds, 2.4 miles or even 2 hours 40 minutes — whatever you feel you would be able to do. To do so, you must make a donation to NCBI!

A number of people have agreed to run with Hilary for a couple of miles over the 24 hour period and she has a 24 hour time sheet up and running. Hilary says: "I you feel you would like to join me please let me know and I will be delighted to put your name down on a slot. If you are interested you can email me at hilary.casey@ncbi.ie or call me at head office, 01 8307033 and I would be thrilled to speak to you!

"I will be starting in the afternoon on Thursday 9th and finishing the following afternoon. So if you are around in head office over these two days your support would be greatly appreciated". — Hilary Casey.

Spex Days Vision for a Greener Future



Children at St Multose National School, Co. Cork wearing their decorated spex.

NCBI's second National Spex Day took place on Tuesday 12th of October and was a great success, with over 13,000 students taking part in 130 schools across the country. Orla McHale of Scoil Nasiunta Ciaran Naofa, Co. Galway said "This day proved to be a big hit for those children who wear glasses all the time and it was a lovely way to focus on them, in a positive way."

Spex Day is a national schools campaign to promote children wearing their prescribed glasses. Each pupil receives a pair of cardboard "spex" to be decorated and worn on the day, donating a suggested €1 to NCBI.

Sensory Gardens was the theme of the 2010 Spex Day campaign and NCBI worked closely with leading environmentalist and ecologist Dale Treadwell to develop a sensory garden starter kit which each participating school received, allowing them to grow their own sensory garden. This activity was designed to compliment the Spex Day resource pack which includes the, "Finding out about Sight Loss" education pack and enables pupils and teachers to learn about sight loss with hands on, interactive and fun activities.

NCBI would like to thank our generous sponsors, Faber-Castell (who have been on board since Spex Day's first year) for providing packs worth €100 for every participating school and prizes of goodies for our national arts and craft competition. The winners of this will be announced in late November. The Daily Mail, our media sponsors, Bord na Mona, who sponsored our sensory garden packs, Egans opticians and Dale Treadwell who helped develop the sensory garden pack and promote the campaign.

If you are interested in learning more about Spex Day or know a school that would like a response pack log on to the website www.spexday.ie or lo call 1850 33 43 ■

Foyle takes the Cup

Foyle Golf Club brought the Holmpatrick Cup to Derry this year following their success at the annual all-Ireland four-ball challenge in aid of NCBI. This is the first time that the competition — now in its 79th year — has been won by an Ulster team.

Representing the Foyle Golf Club were Stuart Gauld and David Knox who returned a score of 45 on the New Course in the first round and a score of 48 on the Old Course in the second round.

According to Foyle Golf Club Hon Secretary, JJ Logue, “The club was delighted to make it to St. Andrews for the final this year and to bring the cup to Derry for the first time. The competition is a great opportunity to play at such an amazing course and a bonus to be able to raise money for charity along the way.”

The other clubs involved in the final were: Newlands Golf Club (Dublin City) represented by Jeremy Cleary and Michael O’Toole. The Curragh Golf Club represented by Thomas Behan and Frank Archbold; Ballykisteen Golf Club represented by James Keane and Denis O’Brien.

All funds raised from the Holmpatrick Cup go towards developing NCBI services and to developing blind golf around the country. Golf clubs throughout Ireland can take part in the Holmpatrick Cup, which will see the finalists play at St. Andrews in October. The competition, which is run by NCBI, will be celebrating its 80th anniversary next year.

Congratulating the winners of the 2010 Cup, NCBI Chief Executive Des Kenny said he was delighted to see the Cup travel to Derry for the

Foyle Golf Club celebrate success at the 2010 Holmpatrick Cup



Holmpatrick Cup winners Stuart Gauld and David Knox.

first time and hopes to see even more clubs participating in next year’s 80th anniversary competition.

“The Holmpatrick Cup is and continues to be one of the most successful fundraising activities run by NCBI. Not only does it give amateur golfers the opportunity to help develop blind golf in Ireland, which, believe it or not, is a fast-growing sport, it also helps to raise much needed funds to support the work of NCBI. I am delighted that for the first time the Cup has gone to Ulster and I hope that other clubs will be encouraged by the success of Foyle Golf Club.

“As we all know the golfing calendar fills up quickly so I would I would encourage all those interested in taking part in next year’s competition to talk to their club secretary.”

The Holmpatrick Cup can be organised as either a dedicated four- ball competition or run in

conjunction with an existing club competition, with a one-off entry fee of €5 per person. Club qualifiers take place before the end of June, followed by county and provincial finals. For more information or to sign up contact NCBI’s Allison Harvey on **1850 33 43 53** or email allison.harvey@ncbi.ie . ■

Other NCBI Fundraising

Annual NCBI Santa Christmas Draw Nationwide
For more information contact rosin.walsh@ncbi.ie

Annual Christmas Day Cycle
Clane, Co. Kildare December 25th
Contact Fergal Lee on 045 868108.

Fun Runs and Marathons
Can you go the distance for NCBI?
LoCall 1850 33 43 53 or email allison.harvey@ncbi.ie for information on sponsorship cards, t-shirts and support. ■