# Summer 2024 Newsletter

MyVision Oxfordshire

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# **Upcoming Events:**

## Museums and Touch Tours:

Wantage Museum Touch Tour: 26th June

Oxford University Touch Tours:

-Kafka Exhibit at Weston Library: 13th June

-Wildflower Meadows at Harcourt Arboretum: 11th July

-Multaka at the History of Science Museum: 8th August

## ActivEyes Events:

ActivEyes Pub Social: 20th June, 18th July, 15th August

Visually Impaired Tennis: 27th June, 18th July, 15th August

CyclAbility Cycling (formerly Wheels for All): Tuesdays and Friday

## In the Community:

- Kidlington Get Connected Session: 26th June

-Oxford Get Connected Session: 11th July

-Thame Bowls Event: 21st September

## Children and Young People

-Excursion to Science Oxford: 27th July

-Thomley Hall Hangout: 1st August

# **A message from Mark, our CEO**

Having a visual impairment can negatively impact your life, but I firmly believe that with the right adaptations, support, and mindset you can live a full and independent life while playing a part in society, doing whatever it is that makes you happy and fulfilled.

We can spend our lives asking – why me? We could also blame society and others for not understanding us (often justifiably – we’ve all been there!). However, we all have our personal responsibility.

What’s the old saying? ‘When life throws you lemons, make lemonade!’ We all can make lemonade, whatever that is in your life. It could be taking a leap into a career, joining a group you’ve been putting off for a long time, or getting out and exercising more. It doesn’t have to be big or grand, it just needs to be something that fulfils you.

Visual impairment can pose many challenges. Our hope is that our services and support can break down many of those barriers.

This newsletter highlights our exciting new Green Walks project which encourages you to get out and into nature in your local community. We also highlight our Get Connected project, showing the tools and techniques for getting online and using the internet; Chris’s story later on in the newsletter highlights this beautifully.

It doesn’t have to be getting outdoors or going online, but I hope you can be inspired, encouraged, and supported to take that step to live a more fulfilled and independent life. Get in touch – our team is truly inspiring and here to encourage and support you on your journey.

# **Green Walks Project Update**

By Andy Smith

Our green walks project was started after a report by Natural England which showed that people with visual impairments and other disabilities did not access or were unable to access green and blue spaces for recreational purposes. Green and blue spaces were defined as any area of open natural land and/or any body of water.

We started a six-week pilot group in Didcot in January, (naturally a great time to start a walking group). The objective was to find out about what obstacles were in the way of people accessing green spaces and how we can overcome them.

The weather was cold and wet, but our group bravely started setting out for walks around the Ladygrove parkland. Over the six weeks, the group evolved, and they have now branched out to wider areas to walk around in.

The next phase of the project is expansion. We have recently started Green Walks groups in Oxford and in Abingdon. In the summer we’ll be branching our Community Engagement Work into Cherwell and West Oxfordshire which will enable us to create groups in Banbury and Witney in the near future.

If you would like to join our walking groups in Didcot, Abingdon, or Oxford, please contact info@MyVision.org.uk or 01865 725595.

 If you are interested in leading a walk with us, please contact volunteer@MyVision.org.uk or 01865 725595.

# **Have you heard of talking newspapers?**

Finding local news that is not only informative but also accessible can be very difficult. Luckily, Oxfordshire is home to numerous phenomenal talking newspapers dedicated to telling interesting stories and keeping the county’s residents informed, while doing it all through accessible formats.

## **Links and Contact Details for Oxfordshire Talking Newspapers**

-Banbury Talking News: website: banburytn.co.uk. Phone: 07976 233195.

-DAWN (Didcot, Abingdon, and Wantage Talking Newspaper): website: dawntn.org.uk. Phone: 07429 637266.

-Henley Talking News: website: henleytalkingnewspaper.org.uk.

 -Oxtalk: website: oxtalk.org.uk. Phone: 07496 062280

-Wallingford Talking Newspaper: website: wdtna.org.uk. Phone 07976 302136.

-Witney Talking News: website: wtn.org.uk, Phone: 01993 444 986.

National Talking News

-RNIB Newsagent: website: tnauk.org.uk. Phone: 0303 1239999

Join our MyVision Lottery and you are in with a chance of winning up to £25,000 every week! Follow **onelottery.co.uk/ support/myvision-oxfordshire** to sign up.

# **Chris Adams: Navigating sight loss with technology.**

Chris has had glaucoma for over fifty years. It did not have a significant effect on her until about 2014, shortly after the death of her husband. In a short span of time, she went from being partially sighted to being severely sight impaired, with her sight continuing to get worse to this day.

“The thing I miss most is being able to read a book; reading has always been a big part of my life,” she said. “What Jamie (our Technology and Equipment Officer) has taught me has given me a new lease on life. I can use my iPad to read, and it has been a godsend.”

Chris moved to Oxford in December of 2022 and MyVision was recommended to her by an employee of John Radcliffe Hospital. She then picked up our leaflet from our Sight Desk in the hospital and got in touch with us about our services.

“I said that it was very difficult to use my Kindle to read and the people at MyVision suggested that I come in and try out some of the equipment, the iPad in particular. Jamie is one of the most patient, kind, and helpful young men I have met in my life. I do not know how he does it. He is always so helpful and positive.”

“You lose confidence when your vision is impaired, and my confidence was rock bottom. Jamie helped me up with his encouragement and knowledge,” said Chris.

Before getting involved with our Get Connected project and receiving technology training, Chris had very little experience with technology. Chris using her iPad 6 “My husband loved computers and he often handled most technology related tasks. I was quite happy to let him do that,” she said. “When I moved to Oxford, apart from being able to operate some aspects of my Kindle, I didn’t have much knowledge of technology.”

“Since starting my training sessions, Jamie showed me the iPad and how it’s a much better fit for me. What I can do now is photograph documents (which I cannot read at all) and the iPad will read them to me. He also taught me how to use a function called CoPilot. I can input any question and I receive an answer in great detail. Now Jamie will be putting books from the RNIB onto my iPad.”

“I like learning about history and now that I’m in Oxford, I would like to know more about the place where I’m living; the way Jamie is teaching me, I’ll be able to do that.”

Chris feels like her technology training and involvement with the Get Connected project has helped her to adjust to sight loss. “I feel more confident about technology, and I don’t feel rushed; Jamie makes sure that I understand everything and learn at my own pace.”

“I feel so much better because I’m always thinking about what I want to learn about, and now I can go onto my iPad, type in my questions, and get an answer. I have recently learned a lot about local history and local churches.”

Chris has also recently been paired with a Befriending volunteer. Together they’ve been able to go into Oxford and explore the places Chris has been learning about on her iPad in person. “I can’t fault MyVision.

Everything I felt I needed: advice, befriending, technology support, a sympathetic ear; it’s all there!”

If you are interested in finding out more about our Get Connected project, contact info@MyVision.org.uk or 01865 725595.

# **Fundraising Update**

## **Carterton Firewalk**

7 fantastic (and brave!) supporters took part in a firewalk in Carterton in March and raised £2,238! Thank you to Faye, Kayleigh, Aimée, Kai, Amanda, Sally, and Nathan for taking part, and raising essential funding for us. Thanks must also go to Witney Rotary Club for organising the event.

##  **London Landmarks Half Marathon**

Our Service Delivery Manager, Andy, completed London Landmarks Half Marathon in April with his Guide Runner, Sharon. They even came second in the Accessible Half Marathon; what an achievement! They also raised a brilliant £600. Well done and thank you Andy and Sharon!

## **24k Tandem Challenge**

On a rainy April day our 2 tandem cycling teams completed many laps of Horspath Athletics Track and raised £7,454 for us. Despite the bad weather, Moira, Stephen, Tom, and Simon were amazing, and we’re so grateful for their support! If you would like to take on a challenge and raise funds for us, please contact us on fundraising@MyVision.org.uk or 01865 725 595.

# **Introducing Faye**

Faye has recently joined our team as our Children and Young People Coordinator. Faye has been a primary teacher for over 12 years and is bringing her knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm in supporting children and families to the team. She came to the role after receiving support from MyVision for her daughter who is partially sighted.

# **Children and Young People Update**

Faye has begun her role as the Children and Young People’s Coordinator this April and is organising exciting events. Thus far we have already held a fantastic Clip N’ Climb event as well as a Community Art Project. This summer we will be holding an excursion to Science Oxford. Come along to this great centre of scientific exploration in Headington, Oxford. If you haven’t been before, its filled with practical, hands-on activities for all to enjoy. Then, if you are over 13 and wanting to meet up over the summer, join us at Thomley Hall on 1st August at 10am – 3pm. There will be outdoor bouncing pads, teen spaces, music rooms, sensory rooms and more. Finally, it is important to add that Faye is taking a child-led approach in providing a service as she believes it is vital to bring the best opportunities to suit everyone individually. She can’t wait to work with you over the coming months and be there for you and your family.

You can contact Faye at: faye.ohara@MyVision.org.uk

# **Community Engagement Update**

It has been a very busy and exciting spring in our community. We have taken part in so many wonderful events. In April we became art critics and took part in an accessible sound art exhibit at the North Wall. Our Get Connected programme keeps growing and we are reaching more and more local communities. We have launched a Green Walks initiative which encourages people to get out into nature. We had a fantastic audio described cinema day in Faringdon (much popcorn was consumed). Meanwhile, our social groups continue to be a massive success; we have started a new group in North Oxford, as well as numerous lunch clubs throughout the county. Our full social group schedule for the summer is listed on the following page. We have many more exciting events planned for you this summer. Our ActivEyes Group will continue holding the VI Tennis events, as well as accessible cycling, and a monthly pub night. We will be stepping back through history with a touch tour of the Wantage Museum. We will also be holding Get Connected Sessions in Kidlington and Oxford. There will be many other events that we will announce throughout the summer. To stay updated, follow us on social media, check our website, sign up to our e-newsletter, or give us a call!

## **Social Group Schedule**

-Abingdon: 24th June, 29th July, 26th August

-Abingdon Walking Group: 8th July, 12th August

-Banbury: 4th July, 8th August

-Cowley: 27th June, 25th July

-Didcot: 12th June, 10th July, 14th August

-Didcot Walking Group: 27th June, 25th July, 29th August

-Didcot Well-Being Course: 2nd July, 6th August

-Didcot Audiobook Club: 7th August

-Headington: 14th June, 12th July

-Henley: 25th June, 30th July, 27th August

-Henley Lunch Club: 11th June

-Faringdon 3rd July, 7th August

-Faringdon Lunch Club: 18th June

-North Oxford: 4th July

-Thame: 13th June, 27th June, 11th July

-Wallingford: 17th June, 15th July, 19th August

-Wheatley: 4th July, 1st August

-Wantage: 19th June, 17th July, 21st August

# Summer Raffle

# **Grand Prize £500!**

Tickets cost £1 each and can be purchased individually or in a book of 10. Head to our website or give us a call to enter.

MyVision.org.uk/Raffle

All proceeds will go towards supporting visually impaired people in Oxfordshire.

**2nd Prize:** £250 sponsored by Morgan Optometry

**3rd Prize:** £50 voucher for Oxford River Cruises

Special thanks to our sponsors: Optelec, Morgan Optometry, and Oxford River Cruises.

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