

Autumn / Winter 2009

Devon *Link*

Large Print

The regular magazine for people with physical and sensory disabilities in Devon

Alice paints a wonderland

**visually impaired young artists
exhibit their work**

- see page 34

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Heartwarming stories

AS I WRITE this, I've already dug out my hat and scarf ready for the first hint of 'proper' winter. I don't mind the cold, as long as I'm wrapped up for it. After all, winter can be fun. Think back to the snow Devon had last year, when the masses descended on Dartmoor seeking the slightest hill to sledge down – some adventurous types even took skis and snowboards!

Ok... so Haytor may not be Mont Blanc, but the UK fascination with snowsports is rapidly increasing, mainly due to cheaper ski package holidays to Europe, and the development of more artificial and real snow slopes around the country. If you have always fancied trying out a snowsport yourself – turn to page 36 to find out how to get started. You may even get motivated reading about the British Disabled Ski Team, who are aiming for medals at the 2010 Winter Paralympics in Canada.

If music, rather than sport, is more your thing, on page 45 we feature a young Exeter man who is achieving his dream of becoming a radio DJ, despite his severe disabilities. Bram, aka DJ Eye Tech, was diagnosed with Locked-in Syndrome following an accident 10 years ago. He cannot move or speak, yet he has already established his popularity on the airwaves, broadcasting his Eye Life music show using the latest eye tracking computer software.



Editorial

Like Bram, visually impaired students from the West of England School and College are also fulfilling their artistic ambitions – their paintings were recently exhibited to all and auctioned for sale at a city arts festival. 17-year-old student Alice Bray features on our front cover – turn to page 34 to read about her and the other students involved in the project.

It goes without saying that the ‘inspirational’ theme of this issue is enough to warm anybody’s heart!

All that remains for me to say is I wish you all a very merry Christmas and I’ll see you in 2010!

Best wishes,
Sarah



Positive future for hearing and sight service

THE FUTURE OF a resource centre which helps hundreds of north Devon residents with sight and hearing impairments is looking positive thanks to a £17,000 grant from Lloyds TSB Foundation.

The See Hear Centre in Barnstaple, which offers a free support and advice service to anyone with sight or hearing loss, was given the cash for staff costs to ensure that a sensory equipment service can continue confidently for the future.

The centre offers demonstrations of equipment designed to make life easier for people with sight or hearing loss and a 'try before you buy' scheme. The staff also visit community groups, taking equipment out to people who cannot visit the centre.

Staff can also advise employers and other organisations such as the police, pension service and local theatres on how they can cater best for people with hearing or sight impairments. The See Hear Centre, which was set up in 2003, relies on grants and is part of the disability charity Living Options Devon.

See Hear Service Manager Sue Bennett said: "We are very grateful to Lloyds TSB Foundation for its support. The centre

relies on grants, legacies and donations to provide the valuable service that we do.

“In the first six months of 2009 we saw 257 new clients and helped 329 repeat customers. In 2008, we helped 1,031 people which illustrates how important the work is that we do.

“It can be hard to understand how important a service like the See Hear Centre can be for people who have sight or hearing problems. It also impacts on their family and friends but we can help everyone involved with the advice and support we offer.”

Brian Imeson, who lives in Challacombe, was one of the founder members of the See Hear Centre and still serves on the Advisory Group.

Mr Imeson, who is registered blind and uses a guide dog, said: “The centre really is a lifeline for people with sight and hearing loss. It is an asset to the community and is now an established part of the community, both with organisations like hospitals and its users.”

See Hear Centre

19a Alexandra Road

Barnstaple

EX32 8BA

Tel / fax: 01271 373236 Textphone: 01271 326607

Email: seehearnd@livingoptions.org

Carers are pampered at celebration lunch

OVER 100 carers from across Devon enjoyed a celebration lunch on 9th October at Isca House in Exeter. The event was hosted by Carers UK and Devon Carers Link, along with Devon County Council Adult & Community Services (ACS) and NHS Devon.

The emphasis was on a relaxed, informal event where carers could meet other carers and also chat about any issues face-to-face with senior members of staff from the hosting organisations.

The day's line-up featured a buffet lunch, a singing workshop, a demonstration of voice-activated software, and guest speakers including MP Ben Bradshaw and the Chief Executive of Devon County Council, Phil Norrey.

Carers were also able to indulge in a spot of free pampering thanks to Exeter College beauty therapy students, who gave the carers neck and shoulder massages, and ACS Systems Officer and part-time beauty therapist Natalie Goddard, who treated them to mini-manicures.

Phil Norrey said: "We know that being a carer can have a real and negative impact on health and general wellbeing so events like this are vital to give carers a break and spend time enjoying themselves."

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For more information about support for carers in Devon, contact Devon Carers Link on 0845 6431341 or email carersplus@westbankfriends.org

News from Teignbridge

Church leads way with new ideas

Plans are underway to bring use of a Dawlish church into the 21st century, in response to the local need for somewhere to hold events and social meetings, as well as church services. One of the new activities on offer at United Reform Church is Boccia (pronounced 'boch-uh') – a competitive Italian game that can be played one-on-one, in pairs, or with a team of three. The aim is for players to throw balls as close as possible to a target ball (much like French boules). What makes the game special is that players have to be seated, so wheelchair-users or those who cannot stand comfortably can easily take part. One church member who has been a wheelchair user for some time said it is the best game she has ever played, because it is such good fun for everyone. Players are charged a small fee which also covers the cost of a cup of tea or coffee.

If you would like to take part or find out more about Boccia and the other activities on offer, please ring Mrs Rosemary Holmes or Reverend Roger Whitehead on 01626 889098 or 01626 862620.

Ian has sights set on Paralympics

Football lover Ian Land from Dawlish took part in the European Championships for disabled football in Geneva, where his team came fourth out of the 11 teams taking part. Ian was also awarded 'man of the match' for scoring a hat trick in the first game against Germany. Ian was selected for the team of 14 from 300 hopefuls who attended trials held at the University of Warwick. He is now training hard and is hoping to be able to participate in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

New Carers Link

A new carer's support group has started up in Dawlish, on the second Tuesday of each month. Meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Brunswick Street. The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity for carers to meet socially and relax for a short time, away from their caring responsibilities. This will hopefully help carers to feel less isolated, and gain support through meeting and talking with other people who understand the pressures of caring. Information and advice on carers issues is also available at the meetings.

For full details contact Liz Potts on 08456 431341 or email carersplus@westbankfriends.org



New benches will provide a welcome rest

Public benches are to be installed along The Avenue in Newton Abbot, so that people can rest weary limbs when walking in and out of town. The seating will be welcomed by people living in nearby sheltered housing, who like to stay active but find the homeward march tiring. At a local town council committee meeting, Councillors Shirley Maddicott, Mike Hocking and David Corney-Walker offered to pay for the benches out of their community funds, which are distributed at their discretion. The councillors believe the benches are a brilliant idea, and it shows that the council are listening to their community. Hopefully residents we will be able to test out the new benches soon.

Diana Frost

diana.devonlink@btinternet.com



Deaf people are missing out on benefits

A NEW REPORT from RNID, *Who Benefits?*, shows that people who are deaf are missing out on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) because their benefits claims are being rejected unfairly.

Previous research conducted by RNID in 2001 showed that many deaf people were not receiving DLA because they had had their claims turned down. *Who Benefits?*, shows that this situation has not improved in the last seven years, despite an internal push from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The report reveals that while there has been some improvement, the majority of issues identified in 2001 are still pertinent today, and in certain cases, the situation for deaf claimants has actually worsened.

Findings include:

- Over half of those questioned who claimed DLA had had a claim turned down previously, yet 91% of appeals by BSL users are successful
- 65% of respondents said that DWP staff aren't deaf aware, with 31% saying they had been sent a letter they could not understand
- 66% said that most of the questions on the DLA form were not relevant to deafness

Jackie Ballard, RNID Chief Executive, said: "The process of claiming DLA and AA is failing deaf people. The sums of money involved aren't immense, but they can and do make a real difference to people's lives. Whilst the DWP has tried to remedy some of the problems identified in 2001, it is disappointing that many of the issues remain."

For more information visit the RNID website at www.rnid.org.uk. For a copy of the report call 020 7296 8229.

News from West Devon

Young Carers in Okehampton

The 2001 census estimated that there were at least 175,000 people under the age of 21 in the UK, acting as carers to family members and taking on the practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. The Young Carers Project in Okehampton offers support, activities and trips to young carers in the area and meets every Friday between 3.30pm and 5.30p.m. in room 13 at the Youth Service Building.

If you would like to know more, Katherine Mullan, the project manager, can be contacted on 01822 612555.

Vision Aid Overseas

Pam Adams, an optician from Whitchurch, Tavistock has recently completed her fourth trip to Ethiopia as a volunteer for Vision Aid Overseas. The charity is dedicated to helping people in the developing world whose lives are blighted by poor eyesight, particularly where spectacles can help. Pam led a team of qualified volunteers and during the two weeks of their stay they saw 2,000 people with eyesight problems, many of whom they provided with glasses that have been donated from the UK. I have taken several pairs of glasses to be recycled and now I know what happens to them.

To learn more about this fascinating charity visit www.vao.org.uk or ring 01293 535016.

PhD for Yelverton resident

Visiting historic houses can often be difficult or impossible if you have limited mobility or are a wheelchair user. However, research carried out by Michael Pearn, a former resident of Yelverton, should help to alleviate these problems. Michael was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Exeter this summer for his research on improving access for people with disabilities at historic sites such as Lanhydrock House and Morwellham Quay. Michael, who has had cerebral palsy since birth hopes that his research will help show how to improve access with minimum impact on the historic buildings.

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Tavistock library appeals for volunteers

Devon libraries, in partnership with the WRVS, operate a scheme called Books on Wheels. This a free home library service for people who can't get to their local library.

Volunteers bring a selection of books, audio tapes, DVDs, CDs and videos on a regular basis. More volunteers are needed in the Tavistock area.

If you can help phone the library on 01822 612218 or Tavistock Volunteer Centre on 01822 618224. To find out about the scheme in your area contact your local library or email devlibs@devon.gov.uk

Pat Mayston

devonlink@mayston.eclipse.co.uk



News from East Devon

Sallyann's book is well worth a read

'If Wishes Were Horses' is the first novel by Sallyann Sheridan, wheelchair user for ten years, and a member of Honiton's Writers Circle. Sallyann's book was launched at a reception for around 60 guests at the Bay Hotel, Lyme Regis (featured in the book) in September. The thriller, set along the Jurassic coast, has already received great reviews and has been nominated for The Guardian Literary Award. When she isn't writing novels Sallyann writes about calligraphy, painting and inspirational life styles, and also teaches writing to enthusiastic would-be writers across the UK and Europe. Her novel, which would make an ideal Christmas gift, is available from Amazon, Tesco, Waterstones and all good book shops.

Jo champions disabled sports

Honiton born athlete Jo Pavey, Commonwealth silver medalist in Women's 5000m, is president of The Exeter and East Devon Sports Association for the Disabled (EEDSAD) which has been running for 20 years. Members get together with a team of volunteers to participate in a wide variety of sports, from sailing to basketball; wheelchair racing to swimming and many sports in between. Sport and exercise are important to everybody, not only for the physical benefits they bring but also the mental stimulus and the social side

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too. EEDSAD have recently opened a shop to help raise funds for the equipment needed by members of the group.

For further information, contact group secretary Tony Proverbs at 12 Bishop Westall Road, Good Shepherd Drive, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4JR, or ring 01392 425095.

St Loye's Nursery relocated to West Hill

St Loye's horticulture department has moved to West Hill Garden Centre near Ottery St Mary. This follows the relocation of St Loye's College from their Topsham Road premises last year. The centre, run by Chris Owens and Barry Dawson, offers training for up to 20 people with various disabilities. Trainees can work towards recognised horticultural, forestry or environmental qualifications.

The centre helps people to find work experience placements and employment following completion of courses. As you can see from my photos, extensive greenhouses and poly tunnels allow various types of horticultural techniques to be taught – from planting on hay bales (an old Victorian method) to raised beds. The whole site is as near organic as possible and there's a great emphasis on working with nature. Planting encourages bees, butterflies and birds as well as hedgehogs, which of course love slugs! It's a great place for an afternoon out, and when I visited in September I stayed far longer than intended. A lovely woodland walk makes it even more appealing to visitors, and there are future plans to restore the wildlife pond.

You can also sample a wide variety of the homegrown produce – available from the shop.

For more information visit the website www.stloyes.org.uk or ring 01392 255428. The nursery can be found at West Hill Garden Centre, Exmouth Road, West Hill, Ottery St Mary EX11 1JZ, on the B3180.

Patricia Clow
patricia.devonlink@yahoo.com

St Loye's wins award

EXETER CHARITY St Loye's Foundation has won an award for financial management, joining other high profile winners such as Comic Relief, Macmillan Cancer Support and the British Red Cross at a prestigious awards ceremony in London in October.

The award was presented to Chairman of Trustees Sue Hobbs, who said: "We are truly delighted with this award. We are demonstrating that our new business model of delivering meaningful training to people who are disadvantaged through disability or ill-health is paying real dividends."

The Third Sector Excellence Awards recognises the most innovative achievements within the charity sector.

News from Exeter

Ailisha embarks on teaching dream

Former Exeter resident Ailisha Melhuish, who was diagnosed with severe epilepsy when she was seven years old, is one step closer to achieving her dream of becoming a teacher. Earlier this year Ailisha passed her fast-track A-level in English Literature, which she needed in order to start her teaching course in September.

The 28-year-old, who is also dyslexic, left school aged 14 because of her epilepsy. Ailisha, who returned to education in pursuit of her lifelong ambition, said: "I'm very driven to show that people with epilepsy or any form of disability don't need to be held back by their disability." While living in Exeter, Ailisha ran a website support group for people with epilepsy – helping people from as far away as the US who felt housebound by their disability.

Event raises cash for Amelia and Molly

The parents of two girls both diagnosed with the rare condition cone rod dysfunction, hope to raise enough funds to take their daughters to Disneyland. Amelia, 10, and seven-year-old sister Molly both have the rare and incurable genetic disorder that will eventually leave them blind. Parents Sheila and Sean, from Cheriton Bishop,

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are trying to raise £10,000 to take the girls on a holiday of a lifetime. The girls' aunt, Julie Maine from Exeter recently organised a fundraising event at Exeter Castle – which included live music, a hog roast, auction and raffle.

The event, held in September, was an outstanding success and the family raised over £8,000.

Becky is an inspiration

Becky Downing may have Fredericks Ataxia but it hasn't affected her sense of humour. The 24-year-old, who lives near Polsloe Bridge in Exeter, was diagnosed with the degenerative condition when she was 16 and a student at Exeter College. The progressive nervous system disease, which affects one in 52,000 people in the UK, causes lack of balance and co-ordination and the slurring of speech. Becky said: "On a bad day, I get a bit frustrated. Then I laugh my head off at myself because it is so silly." Becky keeps herself busy with three voluntary jobs – working for brain injury charity Headway, Shopmobility and Ataxia UK. She started the local branch of Ataxia UK four years ago, and runs it with her mum and her mum's partner. The group, which attracts members from Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, meets every other month.

**For more information about the group, email
Becky at becs2737@yahoo.co.uk**

Jackie Oldham jackie.devonlink@btinternet.com

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Help your local ambulance service help you

DO YOU HAVE views on how the South West's ambulance service is run? Have you got comments to make about your own experiences, or those of your family or friends, of using emergency, urgent care or patient transport services?

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SWAST) is seeking opinions on its plans to become an NHS Foundation Trust, in a public consultation which runs up until 6 December.

Taking part in the consultation means you can have your say on SWAST's proposed governance arrangements – in other words, how they make sure that high performance and clinical quality standards continue to be met, patients and staff are kept safe, and best use is made of taxpayers' money. As part of the NHS Foundation Trust application process, SWAST is also aiming to recruit 17,000 members who are representative of the communities they serve. This is a further opportunity for people to support SWAST's life-saving work and get involved with service development.

For more information about NHS Foundation Trusts and membership, or the various ways to get involved in the public consultation, you can visit www.swast.nhs.uk/ft or contact Consultation Co-ordinator Lynne Paramor on 01392 261509.

News from Torbay

Knitters appeal

Local couple Crissa and Cy Toms are appealing to knitters to help make garments for soldiers in Afghanistan. They also send knitted blankets and items to Romania for the charity Sight Savers International.

If you can help either by donating wool or offering your knitting skills please ring Crissa on 01803 297288. Copies of garment patterns are available.

Charity song for ex lady jockey

Sarah Gaisford, who broke her back at a horse-race meeting in December 2007, has had a charity song released about her. Devon musicians Owl House were inspired by Sarah's determination and zest for life, and asked Ashburton-based songwriter and musician Pat Gunning to write a song about her.

'Lady of the Fair' was launched at Sedgemoor Hotel, Bovey Tracey on 28 September. On the day Sarah joined in by playing the guitar, and found it very moving. Sarah is keen to try a new technology called Re-Walk which helps people with spinal injuries to get up and walk again. The user initiated robotic suit uses sensors and onboard computers. Sarah

said: "I'm keeping fit and busy standing up, which is very important to keep my bones strong, and maybe I'll be able to do some canoeing as my upper body is very strong." All proceeds from the song will go to the Sarah Gaisford Fund, set up to fund the Re-Walk suit and help others in the future.

Carers UK

The local branch of Carers UK, which meets every month, are keen to invite carers or any person who has a carer to join them. The regular meetings are enjoyed by all.

If you live in the Torquay area, and would like to come along, please ring 01803 554192 for details of future meetings.

Memory box for dementia

Carers in Brixham have decided to create a memory box for local people with dementia. The idea, which was raised at a recent carers forum, was inspired by a Torquay care home doing something similar. People have been asked to collect household items from the 1930s to the 1960s, along with general items of interest for the box. Carers in Brixham are also asking for donations of memorabilia from Brixham's past including: old photos of streets, shops, Uphams Ship Yard, trawlers and the Old Golden Hind. Also sought after are posters of carnivals, theatre productions, holiday camps and the stuffed whale that was on display during the 1950s.

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Rose Coulton, who cares for her mum Vera Furness in Brixham, said, "There are different types of dementia but most people experience a degeneration of their short-term memory, and begin to feel cut-off and isolated as the world they know in the present begins to disintegrate. Long-term memory often remains intact for many years, and having the sights, sounds and scents of things from the past can be a comfort." If you have any memorabilia which could be used, please drop it in to the Youth Enquiry Service, New Road, Brixham, open 9.30am – 4pm on weekdays.

Diana Frost

diana.devonlink@btinternet.com

New booklet for parents

WORKING FAMILIES (formerly Parents at Work and New Ways to Work) have launched a new booklet for parents of disabled children wanting to return to work.

The publication was written with input from working parents of disabled children. Sections include:

- What sort of job?
- Where to find jobs
- Filling in application forms and writing CVs
- Going for interviews
- Time off and flexible working
- Self-employment
- Care
- Finance

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The booklet also includes a list of useful organisations and web sites.

Individual copies of the booklet can be obtained by sending Working Families an A5 stamped addressed envelope (for 76p) to:

**Parents of Disabled Children Project,
Working Families, 1-3 Berry Street, London EC1V 0AA.**

For more information about the support Working Families can provide to parents of disabled children, contact Janet Mearns, Disability Adviser on

020 7017 0072 or

janet.mearns@workingfamilies.org.uk.

Website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Centre of excellence for football in Devon

DID YOU KNOW that the Devon Football Association (FA) runs a 'centre of excellence' for players with disabilities aged 13-17?

Run by Devon FA coaches, it is free to attend and is aimed at players with physical, sensory and learning disabilities. The centre gives players the chance to represent Devon against other counties from the South West.



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A series of trials took place in September in Tavistock, South Molton, and Ashburton, before weekly training sessions began.

This season may have already started, but if you would like to find out more about the centre for the future, contact David Carpenter, Disability Football Development Officer, at

**Devon County FA,
Coach Road, Newton Abbot,
TQ12 1EJ.**

**You can ring David on 01626 323560 or 07912 089838,
or email david.carpenter@devonfa.com**

In association with Devon FA, South Devon College are also starting wheelchair football coaching sessions. Manual and power wheelchair users of all ages are welcome – the next session takes place at 5pm on 15 December at the college sports hall. Again, contact David for more details.

News from Mid Devon

Riding for the Disabled gets a leg up

Residents of the village of Plymtree, near Cullompton, raised money for Riding for the Disabled at their Country Fair and Horse Show on the August bank holiday this year. The show has become an annual event and was well sponsored by many local businesses.

To get involved in the future, contact Teresa Smith, at 10 Little Normans, Plymtree, Devon EX15 2LP, or ring 01884 277138.

Crediton & District Access Guide update

The well-received Crediton & District Access Guide, first published last year is about to be updated. Amendments are due to start anytime and the revised edition should be ready soon. Production of the guide depends entirely on volunteers, who gather the information – it is an extremely useful directory for people with limited mobility.

Anyone wishing to reserve a copy please ring Yvonne Pope on 01363 773557.

Prescribed exercise leads to children's book

When local grandmother and ex-teacher Sue Bloomfield was advised to take regular exercise for a connective tissue disorder some years ago, she started walking her border collie, Cariad, in the woods. Inspired by the flora and fauna, Sue started writing poetry and drawing what she saw. Eventually this led to a book of 17 poems and illustrations, published recently. 'Woodland Inspirations' can be ordered from www.custombooks.biz/suebloomfield. £3 from each book sale will go to the Raynaud's and Scleroderma Association.

Carers at the castle

Following the success of last year's harvest lunch, Devon Carers Link hosted the event again in October, at Bickleigh Castle in Tiverton. There are several Carers Link groups around Devon; in mid Devon a meeting is held in Crediton on the fourth Monday of every other month, between 2pm - 3.30pm, in the Dokkum room, Boniface Centre, Crediton. In Cullompton meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every other month, again between 2pm - 3.30pm, at Cullompton Rangers Football Club, Speeds Meadow.

Call 08456 435 071 or 08456 435 074 for more information.

Hemyock proves itself as a village that cares

Congratulations to Hemyock, which won the prestigious title of 'Calor Devon Village of the Year 2009', thanks in no small part to the caring attitude of the local Blackdown Support Group. The community caters for all ages and abilities and should be proud of the priority it gives to people with disabilities. After the regional finals were held during October, parish council chairperson Heather Stallard said, "I was thrilled at the result and that Hemyock won the village award for Devon, because it truly deserved to. Thanks to the many people who made the village special and those who made presentations to the panel of judges."

The Blackdown Support Group can be contacted via The Surgery, Station Road, Hemyock, EX15 3SF. Alternatively ring 01823 681036 or email bsgbarbara@ns.net

Patricia Clow
patricia.devonlink@yahoo.com

News from North Devon

Use it or lose it!

Holsworthy's Hospital Hoppa bus service is under threat because it isn't being used enough. The wheelchair accessible bus offers a service between Holsworthy Hospital and the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple, via Torrington Hospital. The trial service, which was launched back in June and is due to continue until the end of March 2010, makes four return trips per weekday. Those wishing to use the service should register 48 hours in advance by ringing North Tamar Community Transport Association (NTCTA) on **01409 259001**. The subsidised single fare costs £5 and a return is £10 – for an up-to-date timetable ring NTCTA.

Caytlan walks for charity

Caytlan Wells of Parracombe was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis when she was only two-years-old. Despite her painful condition Caytlan has been walking and swimming to build up her stamina in preparation for a 5k sponsored walk in aid of UK charity Dreamflight. Caytlan wanted to help Dreamflight – which sends disabled and seriously ill children on holidays of a lifetime to Florida – after she herself enjoyed a Dreamflight trip to Orlando.



Michael is a winner at World Transplant Games

Michael Foster has just returned from the World Transplant Games in Australia with two gold and three silver medals. Michael, from Holsworthy, had a heart transplant 16 years ago and started athletics soon after. He has also completed 20 marathons, and recently raised £7,000 for the British Heart Foundation by walking from John O'Groats to Lands End. He said:

"The most important thing is letting people know how badly organ donors are needed."

For more information about organ donation visit www.uktransplant.org.uk or ring 0845 6060400.

Jackie Oldham
jackie.devonlink@btinternet.com



News from South Hams

Beach wheelchairs

Bigbury-on-Sea Sands and Burgh Island on the South Hams coast are well-deserved popular places to visit. And now beach wheelchairs provided by the Wheels for Bigbury Beach Group mean that the beach is accessible to those with limited mobility. There is no charge for use of the wheelchairs but a small deposit and identification may be asked for. The Venus Beach Cafe and Discovery Surf are providing a base for the wheelchairs. To avoid disappointment before visiting, remember to check the state of the tide and ring **07813 639622** to check for wheelchair availability.

Ataxia in Trafalgar Square

A place on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square enabled Bev Ashby, a sculptor from Harbertonford, to highlight the condition of ataxia, which has affected two members of her family. Ataxia is the loss of co-ordinated body movements and can affect vision, hearing and speech and the ability to walk. The sculpture was a cast of a figure wrapped in bands, and Bev also talked about ataxia while she assembled the figure on the plinth. Seven other people from Devon have won places as participants in Antony Gormley's ground breaking project that involves ordinary people filling the empty plinth.

Fare Car Scheme in Kingsbridge

The Fare Car scheme is a shared public transport service operated by private hire cars. Passengers book and pay separately, but share the advertised timetabled journeys for a fare, approximately equal-to or slightly above the normal bus fare for the distance travelled. The service usually operates between rural areas and towns, dropping off passengers at key places such as hospitals and shopping centres. Devon County Council launched the first wheelchair accessible Fare Car in Kingsbridge in August – the service runs between outlying villages and the town on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Phone Ivy Cabs on 01752 895658 up to the day before travel to book. For more information ring 01392 383481 or visit www.devon.gov.uk

Pat Mayston
devonlink@mayston.eclipse.co.uk

Young artists exhibit work

The efforts of five young disabled artists were rewarded when their paintings were exhibited and auctioned at a recent city arts festival.

THE STUDENTS – who attend the West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight and additional disabilities – produced artwork that was inspired by the natural environment.

Part of a project called ‘employability as an artist’, run by their teacher Linda Williamson, they studied plants and flowers, laying particular emphasis on the organic textures, patterns, shapes and colours. The paintings were exhibited during October and November at ‘Freefall’, the first Exeter Phoenix Youth Arts Festival, where young artists get the opportunity to showcase their work.

Linda commented: “I am in awe of what the students have achieved. Despite their disabilities and visual impairments, they have created such a wonderful collection of artwork, which we are proud to exhibit.”

The students – Cassie Charleson, 17, Karl Traylen, 18, Alice Bray, 17, Sarah Conway, 17, and Kiri Williams, 17 – worked with Exeter sculptor Veronica Gosling, exploring the tactile nature of her work. Popular blind Devon artist Barrie

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Goodfellow (whose artwork appeared on the Spring 2006 cover of *Devon Link*) has also been a huge inspiration for the students. He came up with the idea to turn the artwork into an exhibition, and said: "I was very impressed by the standard of work on display. It was original and expressive and the enthusiasm of these students was quite infectious. They will go on to do great things in the art world."

The West of England School and College is the leading regional centre for the education and care of children and young adults with little or no sight. Each student has a personalised curriculum that combines education, health, care, therapy and mobility, with the aim to challenge each learner to develop independence and succeed academically and socially, whatever their ability.

Help raise funds!

Although the art exhibition has now finished, you can buy packs of gift cards featuring the student's artwork – which make an ideal stocking filler for Christmas. All profits from the sale of the gift cards will go towards specialist equipment, facilities and activities for the young people at the school and college.

Call 01392 454334 for more information.

www.westengland.org.uk





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British Disabled Skiers aim for the top!

Here in the UK we may not have the Alps or the Rockies at our disposal, but this hasn't stopped the British Disabled Ski Team from keeping up with the rest of the world in competitive snowsport...

WHEN COVERAGE from the 2010 Winter Paralympic Games hits our television screens next spring, many of us will watch in admiration as athletes compete on the snow-covered slopes in Canada.

Jane Sowerby, member of the British Disabled Ski Team (BDST) is living proof that having a disability needn't prevent you from trying, or even excelling at, a snowsport.

Jane's own skiing career followed an accident in April 2003 that left her with a broken back. After a simple trip, a fall and an unlucky landing, she found herself completely paralysed from the waist down.

Jane spent the next few weeks worrying that life as she knew it was over. The struggle with adapting to a future in a wheelchair began, which brought new challenges to face and overcome:

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“It took me a while to realise that you need to focus on the things you can, rather than can’t do.

“Then I found skiing, which turned my life around all over again. I went on a trip to Winter Park, Colorado, organised by The Back-Up Trust.”

In Colorado Jane learnt how to use a mono-ski – a moulded fibreglass seat attached by a shock absorber to a single ski. The skier holds poles with ski tips fixed to the end to help balance and initiate turns.

As she says: “I was instantly hooked. The feeling of leaving your wheelchair behind and hitting the slopes is indescribable.”

Jane’s passion for skiing intensified, and in November 2006 she attended a BDST assessment and selection camp. After showing instant skill and ability she was selected to join the BDST development squad.

After a phenomenal first year with six podium finishes, Jane was selected for the main BDST team. Currently ranked third in Europe, Jane is looking forward to competing in the 2010 Winter Paralympics in Vancouver with her team mates:

“The British Disabled Ski Team have been steadily climbing the world rankings since the 2006 Winter Paralympics in Torino; the 2008/09 season saw an impressive 13 medal haul and 23 top ten finishes. “This included two World Cup medals from Sean Rose; the first ever by a British disabled skier.”

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Exeter-born Dave Chugg is the BDST Team Manager. As a wheelchair user and ex ski-racer, he knows exactly how much hard work it takes to compete against the best in the world:

“Great Britain is not exactly an alpine nation. Our athletes, by rights, should not stand a chance against the Austrians and Germans.

“The fact that they are out there winning races and taking on the worlds’ best is testament to their skill, dedication and sheer hard work.

“Watch out for them performing in Whistler next spring, we have some real medal chances.”

And Jane is keen to encourage everyone, no matter what their ability, to give snowsports a try:

“The fundamental point is that anyone, regardless of their disability, can take part in and enjoy the thrill of snowsport. “Some of the benefits include greater self confidence, improved co-ordination, increased independence, improved social skills and better self esteem.”

The popularity of skiing and snowboarding has increased over the past few years – no doubt in part due to the increasing accessibility of cheaper winter sports holidays on the continent and further afield.

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The number of artificial and 'real' snow slopes emerging across the UK in recent years has increased our fascination with the cold white stuff even more.

If you've ever felt like trying out a snowsport yourself, but thought that your disability would hold you back – think again.

National organisation Disability Snowsport UK (DSUK) has been encouraging and enabling disabled people to experience the joy of winter sports for nearly 30 years. Whatever the individual's disability, DSUK strives to provide exciting and life enhancing activities for those who need adaptive equipment and / or special instruction and support.

Highly qualified and experienced instructors keep up-to-date with the latest developments in adaptive skiing and equipment. Regional DSUK groups meet up around the UK.

**To find out more visit www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk
DSUK also organise and run activity weeks abroad.
For more information contact the DSUK Development Officer at rachel@disabilitysnowsport.org.uk**

Thanks to Jane Sowerby and Disability Snowsports UK



Give it a try locally!

If you fancy dipping your toe in the water (or ski boot in the snow!) a little closer to home, the Exeter Adaptive Ski Club holds sessions at the city's dry ski slope at Clifton Hill Sports Centre. The club meets between 5.15pm and 6.30pm every Friday from 1 October to 31 March.

You will need to let the club know what your disability is and have clearance from a doctor that skiing will not harm you. All users of the slope must also be a member of Exeter Ski Club for insurance purposes – current fees can be found at www.exeterskiclub.org

For more information call Denise Leeper on 01626 774081 or 07816 759020.

Buy a calendar to help the team!

Help the British Disabled Ski Team on their way to the 2010 Winter Paralympic Games in Vancouver, by purchasing the official team calendar...

THE BRITISH Disabled Ski Team (BDST) are looking to send seven athletes to the 2010 Winter Paralympics in Vancouver,



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and are preparing to make a big impact. The athletes are largely self-funded – and the biggest fundraiser this year to help them reach their goals is the 2010 BDST calendar.

The calendar contains some incredible glossy photos to give people an insight into the world of disabled ski racing.

The BDST have just returned from a successful Winter Games in New Zealand and are currently taking advantage of the UK's indoor slopes for slalom training. They start off the season in Austria, before competing against some of the best in the world at the Europa Cup races in December.

2010 begins with World Cup races in Europe, before the British athletes are united for training in the US, leading up to the Paralympics in Vancouver in March. All that training costs a lot of money!

The BDST calendar costs just £6 plus postage. Each calendar purchase will directly contribute to the team's success.

Please go to www.disabilitysnowsport.org.uk or call 01479 861272 to purchase a calendar.

If you would just like to make a donation, visit www.justgiving.co.uk/britishdisabledskiteam2010



Grant to help you study

Last year, Devon Link correspondent Jackie Oldham graduated from the University of Exeter. Here Jackie tells us how the Disabled Students' Allowance made studying much easier and helped her achieve her degree in Theology.

BEFORE I MADE the decision to embark on my degree, I decided to enquire about the Disabled Students' Allowance. First, I had to arrange for a doctor's certificate to be sent to the local education authority. Then, after what seemed an incredibly long time, I was summoned to the University of Plymouth to attend an assessment.

During the two-hour assessment I had to answer questions about how I planned to study. It was well worth doing, because they eventually awarded me £6,000 worth of computer equipment and software!

The software included 'Inspirations' – described as 'the premier tool to develop ideas and organise thinking', and 'Read & Write' – a toolbar that works with many Windows based applications, including Microsoft Word, email, internet, spreadsheets and databases, and provides outstanding literacy support.

I was also offered specially adapted one-handed keyboard, which I decided not to use, and a voice recorder, which proved invaluable. This went with me to every lecture and I found it incredibly useful, because my note-taking is quite slow. With a lecture fully recorded I could go home and transfer it from the voice recorder to my computer, to use whenever I needed it for my assignments.

As I no longer need them, I am offering my copies of Inspirations and Read & Write to a good home. If you think you would benefit from this groundbreaking software, email me at jackie.devonlink@btinternet.org or write to me at the usual Devon Link address. The first readers to express an interest will receive my copies.

How to get financial help with studying if you have a disability

DISABLED Students' Allowances provide extra financial help if you have a disability or specific learning difficulty like dyslexia. They are available on top of the standard student finance package and don't have to be repaid. Eligible full-time, part-time and postgraduate students can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances. The amount you get doesn't depend on your household income.

Disabled Students' Allowances can help pay for:

- **specialist equipment you need for studying, for example computer software**
- **a non-medical helper, such as a note-taker**
- **extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability**
- **other costs, for example tapes or Braille paper.**

You can apply if you are doing:

- **a full-time course that lasts at least one year**
- **a part-time course that lasts at least one year and doesn't take more than twice as long to complete as an equivalent full-time course**

To apply, you will have to show evidence of your disability. If you have an impairment, medical condition, illness or mental health condition, you will need to provide medical proof, such as a letter from a doctor. If you have a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, you must provide evidence in the form of a 'diagnostic assessment' from a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher.

More information about Disabled Students' Allowances is available from www.direct.gov.uk



Local DJ is an inspiration

With the help of groundbreaking technology, a young man from Exeter is achieving his ambition to be a radio DJ...

30-YEAR-OLD Bram is only able to move his eyes after a cycling accident that left him paralysed at the age of 20. Yet despite his severe disabilities, he recently joined a team of enthusiastic local DJs at popular community radio station Phonic FM.

Bram, from Exeter, goes by the alias of DJ Eye Tech, and hosted his first two-hour show back in the summer. His rare condition, known as 'Locked-in Syndrome' means that he cannot speak or move. It has been described as the closest thing to being 'buried alive'.

As Bram explains: "It is a very lonely place stuck in your own head when your days now are so similar to each other and it just seems impossible to create new memories."

By moving his eyes Bram has developed a way of communicating using a Perspex alphabet board. With the support of his family, he learnt to communicate using the board, laboriously spelling out words, letter by letter.



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But, as Bram admits, much of what he wants to say remains unspoken: “You cannot start a conversation, or comment on something without first getting somebody’s attention to use the board with me, then I have to wait whilst they work out what I am trying to say.”

However, by mastering eye-tracking computer software, Bram has opened up new opportunities in an industry he is passionate about. Adopting the name DJ Eye Tech, he now presents his own two-hour show on Phonic FM and the internet.

Bram’s music collaborator, Philip Robinson said: “When I first met Bram, he was a young man unable to communicate with the world around him: his thoughts and feelings, questions and ideas, laughs and cries all literally locked-in; to us he was just silent.

“Through determination, patience and above all an amazing capacity for organising and remembering complex thoughts, Bram began to communicate his world to those around him. “Along the way he has produced and devised astonishing music, created and written lyrics for rappers about his experiences of his condition – all done with a very black sense of humour and an inspirational realism of what it is to be alive in a moving and talking world when you can do neither. And now he has his first radio show.”

When recording his show, Bram uses a computer with eye tracking software, to type words that the computer then reads out.

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Such a painstaking procedure means that it takes many hours to record each show. Yet this hasn't stopped Bram from recording more shows and establishing himself as a popular Phonic FM DJ. His 'Eye Life' show is now broadcast every two months and receives lots of positive feedback from listeners.

Following the success of the first show back in July, Philip and station volunteer Tony Walker are working with Bram to produce the bi-monthly Saturday shows. Each broadcast is pre-recorded, allowing the producers to edit together Bram's computer generated voiceover with the music tracks, which he has personally selected, then spice the whole show up with some lively jingles.

"I no longer think of him as that bloke that can't move," says Philip. "I'm proud to say he's my creative friend and collaborator, who's a pretty cool dude, got a wicked sense of humour and helps me put my small problems in perspective." Phonic FM Director Paul Giblin, commented: "DJ Eye Tech is amazing and has been a real inspiration to everyone involved with our community radio station. His high quality shows have had more listeners than any of our other broadcasts and have received fantastic feedback."

As Bram says: "Locked-in Syndrome has kept me silent for over 10 years, but since the development of this new technology, now the whole world can hear me!"

Turn over to find out when you can listen to Bram's show..





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Listen to Bram

To listen to the next DJ Eye Tech 'Eye Life' radio shows, tune in to Phonic FM from 8 - 10pm on 5 December 2009, 6 February and 27 March 2010.

Don't worry if you don't live within the Phonic FM range – a five-kilometre radius of Exeter – because you can tune in from anywhere in the world online at www.phonic.fm
Bram also has his own website where you can listen again to his shows and find out more about him at www.eyelife.org

Phonic FM launched in February 2008, having evolved out of a radio station set up five years ago called Vibraphonic FM, that broadcast for one month each year to support the annual Vibraphonic festival in Exeter. The output is largely music, both live and recorded, focusing on tunes and genres you won't often hear on mainstream radio. Phonic FM aims to support the arts (in the widest sense) in and around the Exeter area, encouraging innovation and participation.

It has a five-year license to broadcast on 106.8 FM within a five-kilometre radius of Exeter, from its studios at Exeter Phoenix, and is also available anywhere in the world via the internet at www.phonic.fm

**Phonic FM Exeter Phoenix Bradninch Place Gandy Street
Exeter EX4 3LS**

Tel. 01392 427416

email: info@phonic.fm

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Worth a visit this winter

If you're stuck for accessible places to visit this winter, why not try either of these local arts and crafts centres, which Devon Link correspondent Pat Mayston recently visited. You may even find inspiration for Christmas presents!

**Riverside Mill, Bovey Tracey, TQ13 9AF
Tel. 01626 832223 www.crafts.org.uk**

This beautiful old building is home to The Devon Guild of Craftsmen, and houses an exhibition space and craft shop, which displays a changing selection of members' work. When I visited the mill several years ago it was quite difficult for someone with limited mobility to explore the building, but on a recent visit I discovered that it has undergone a transformation. The new gallery is spacious and easy to negotiate, although as always in an exhibition space I am extra careful on my scooter.

Usually I find lifts much too small – making access quite difficult – however, I was pleased to find that there is a very spacious lift to the first floor and the terrace cafe. There are accessible toilets on both floors, and improvements to interpretation and information include an induction loop

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in the new gallery, events brochures available in large print, braille and audio formats, and accessible signs.

On my visit I found the staff helpful and welcoming. There is one dedicated parking space at the side of the building with easy access through a ramped entrance. If this space is occupied there is parking in the car park in Le Molay-Littry Way behind the adjacent hotel and a very short walk away.

**Duchy Square Centre for Creativity,
Princetown PL20 6QF**

Tel. 01822 890828 www.duchysquare.org

On the other side of Dartmoor in the centre of Princetown, is this purpose-built arts and crafts centre which opened it's doors earlier this year. The building is light and airy, providing a beautiful setting for the artists who are based there.

There are two exhibition galleries, a shop and workshops, where the public can meet the artists and watch them at work. On the day I visited there were several artists in residence, all very friendly and happy to talk and explain what they were doing.

There is easy access through large front doors and plenty of space to manoeuvre throughout the building. Disabled parking can be found at the back of the centre, with access to the lowest floor and a spacious lift to the ground and first floors, and an accessible toilet. Although there isn't a cafe in

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the building, there are several cafes and pubs nearby in the village.

I was very impressed with both buildings; Riverside Mill shows what can be done to improve access in an old building, and the Duchy Centre is a wonderful example of an accessible new building. With Christmas gifts in mind, both centres are well worth a visit this winter – much more relaxing than crowded town and city centres!





— Letters

Link Letters

Winning weekend at Calvert

Dear Devon Link,

I've just got back from our weekend activity to Calvert Trust Exmoor, that I won after entering a competition in the spring issue of Devon Link.

We have had a fabulous time and met many lovely people. I had entered the competition secretly, and was flabbergasted when I was told I had won, as I never usually win anything.

I went with Ann, the lady I care for, and my two children. Ann was a bit nervous about being in a wheelchair, because she didn't think that she would be able to take part in the activities. How wrong she was!

We had the most understanding and brilliant instructors you could hope to meet – Eric, Denis and Chris. They were wonderful, and encouraged Ann to participate in everything, including canoeing and abseiling! As her carer I also got to experience lots of things I never thought I would ever get to do. The children also had a great time.

We did our activities with a group from Time Out, who were a very friendly group – we had some great laughs with them. The accommodation at Calvert was very accessible and the

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staff were able to get hold of any equipment we needed. The food was also superb... fresh and perfectly cooked. Calvert Trust Exmoor has shown us that having a disability does not have to stop you doing anything, and it was great to experience this as a family.

Thank you to Devon Link and Calvert Trust for giving us the opportunity to experience this wonderful holiday.

Best wishes,
Deborah King, Newton Abbot

It is wonderful to receive such a great letter from a Devon Link competition winner. Here at Devon Link we're always pleased to hear about people experiencing new things, and we'll be sure to pass on the positive feedback to Calvert Trust Exmoor.

Thanks Torbay Steam Fair

Dear Devon Link,

I have just been to the annual steam rally at Torbay with my family. Although my husband loves going to these rallies, it was the first time we had been to the one in Torbay as it was too muddy last year.

As we arrived at the venue, and approached the gate, I heard someone say “500 exhibits in four fields” (my initial reaction was “oh no – I’ll need to sit somewhere, there’s no way I can walk around all those fields!”)

However, I was very pleased to see Brixham mobility at the entrance, offering mobility scooters to hire for a small fee. Normally I would expect to have to book in advance, so I took up the offer straight away.

Wow – what a difference it made to the day, as I was able to go around all of the show with my family. Usually when I visit events like these, I end up sat down, waiting until my family have been round all the exhibits. However, this time I saw everything too, without them having to worry if I was ok all the time. Thank you Torbay Steam Fair for a well-organised event, which took everyone’s needs into consideration and made sure we all could enjoy the old machines.

Diana, Teignbridge

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My mission to de-tangle!

Dear Devon Link,

As a holder of a Radar key, I sometimes use the accessible toilets found in supermarkets. These are on the whole very good (when not being used as a storage area!) However, one thing that bothers me, is that the red pull cord to summon emergency assistance is often wound around the grab rail, well out of reach of the floor.

I have a mission – whenever I find an emergency cord tangled up, I untangle it and tell the customer services staff what I have done and why. I may not need the alarm, but the next person who goes in there might!

Patricia, by email



Book review

by Jackie Oldham

Looking Up by Tim Rushby-Smith 'A humorous and unflinching account of learning to live again with sudden disability'

"I've fallen out of a tree, been paralysed, spent months in hospital, become a dad, moved house (twice), been given a new wheelchair, a new car (and a new set of callipers), and been overwhelmed by the support and generosity of family and friends. "I also became a paraplegic" commented Tim.

Tim Rushby-Smith, a successful garden designer with his own landscaping business, fell from a tree on 1 April, 2005. He was 36-years-old, and his wife, Penny, was five months pregnant.

While Tim was at Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel, he was assessed as having completely severed his spinal cord and was told that he wouldn't be able to walk again. He was put on a patient-controlled analgesic (PCA) machine before being moved to Stoke Mandeville Hospital, where he met Sir Jimmy Saville, along with physios, psychologists, the 'enigmatic' Dr J, and nurses.

His rehabilitation included being a competitor in Inter-Spinal Unit Games – where he excelled at wheelchair basketball, shooting, table-tennis and archery! He returned to his east London home in a wheelchair 18 months after his accident.

The book follows Tim, Penny and their daughter Rosalie travelling to Holland to visit friends, and ends when the family travel to Australia (Penny is from Sydney), to catch up with family who they last saw a week before Tim's accident.

Although I have hugely enjoyed his book – a painful 'good read' told with humour, I thought that the account of the family's trip to Australia was a little abrupt – no warning this was the end! That said, I would recommend this book to all.

'Looking Up' is published by Virgin Books and is available from all good bookshops for £7.99

Local information services

Devon's Disability Information Service

provides information and impartial advice for people with disabilities, their carers and their families. Open from 8am - 8pm Monday to Friday, 9am - 1pm Saturdays.

Tel. 0845 1551 005. Email: disabilityinfo@devon.gov.uk

Minicom: 0845 1551 020 SMS: 07773 333231

The Torbay Disability Information Service

welcomes enquiries by telephone, fax, minicom, by post or in person. Open Monday to Thursday from 9am - 4.30pm and Fridays from 9am - 1pm. Based at The Chadwell Annexe, Torquay Road, Preston, Paignton TQ3 2DW.

Tel. 01803 546474 Textphone: 01803 546497 Fax: 01803

546498 Email: dis.torbay@nhs.net

DISCplus

provides information for the parents and carers of children with special needs.

Tel. 0800 056 3666 Email: discplus@devon.gov.uk

www.devon.gov.uk/discplus

Local groups

East Devon Special Needs Action Group

is a free information service for people with physical and sensory disabilities, carers and professionals. Information

includes education, employment, support groups, charities, benefits, recreation, access, transport and mobility. Contact the group, by writing to:

**SNAG, Senphy Centre, St Michaels, Orchard Way,
Honiton EX14 8HH**

Living Options Devon

runs disability forums for people with physical or sensory disabilities, carers and Deaf people with British Sign Language. Regular meetings are held across Devon, and are a way for people to:

- Influence and comment on the services they use and become actively involved in improving those services. Representatives from the forums have access to service providers and pass on views from the forums.
- Meet with service providers who are invited to the forums on occasion to consult on services, give information, hear feedback and take questions.
- Learn about developments, initiatives and issues in the disability world and discuss them with peers.
- Meet and get to know other disabled people who live in your area.

Meetings are held across Devon in North Devon (Barnstaple), Mid Devon (Tiverton), South and West Devon (Tavistock), East Devon (Honiton), South Hams (Totnes), Teignbridge (Kingsteignton) and Exeter. Dates for future meetings can be found on the Living Options website at

www.livingoptions.org

All meetings are held in accessible venues and communication support is provided to ensure that everyone

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can participate fully. Travel costs are also paid (40p per mile for car drivers).

For more information contact Living Options Devon, Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter, EX2 8DS. Tel. 01392 459222 Fax: 01392 423427 Email: info@livingoptions.org

The Deaf Equal Action Forum (DEAF)

is a group of people who have similar experiences and understand each other. It's where Deaf people can share their experiences and support each other. It looks at the barriers that Deaf people face and thinks about how Deaf people could better access services. It's also a place to meet service providers face-to-face and improve services together. How can DEAF work for you? Can you understand your Doctor? Are you unhappy in the cinema or theatre because there are no interpreters or subtitles? Have you had problems with the police, hospital, education, transport, events or anything else because of communication or other issues? If so contact **Living Options Devon, Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS Fax: 01392 423427 SMS: 07958 517919 Email: info@livingoptions.org**

Tavistock Area Support Services

reaches out to older people living in rural isolation within Tavistock and the outlying area. The charity operate nine outreach centres (Lifton, Mary Tavy, Horrabridge, Bere Ferrers, Bere Alston, Yelverton, Princetown, Buckland Monachorum and Milton Abbot) each offering a variety of support as well as a lunch where local people can come together to share concerns, play games, have a laugh and a

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joke and support each other. The charity also has a centre in Tavistock, where a variety of in-house activities are run. To find out on how you could help or how the charity could help you, **contact Andy Lyle on 01822 616958 or visit their website www.tasstavistock.org.uk**

Devon Ileostomy Association

covers Devon and South Somerset and offers support to anyone with a stoma or about to undergo surgery for a stoma – ileostomy, colostomy or urostomy.

For more information contact Margaret Bond (Secretary) on 01392 447374 or email bomarg10@aol.com

Sound Out

– the East Devon support group for people with hearing impairment and their partners – get together on the third Wednesday of each month at Dunning Court, Dowell Street, Honiton from 10am - 12pm. Facilities include disabled access and a loop system. Tea and coffee is available. Car parking is available nearby in the municipal car park (currently 85p per hour). PLEASE NOTE that the group has now returned to its former home at the Methodist Church in Honiton and meetings take place on the third Tuesday of each month. **For more information contact Pat or Chris on 01404 54938 and leave a message, email cy.clow@virgin.net or text 07702 504701.**

Lip-reading group

There is a new lip-reading group based in Exeter for the hard

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of hearing, organised by the Workers Educational Association (WEA). Being hard of hearing can be an isolating experience. The group has given members renewed confidence to take up old and new activities. Day trips and group outings are organised. The helps you to get the most from your hearing aid, as well as where to sit, lighting, positioning yourself in a crowd and teaching your family how to deal with your impairment.

For more details contact WEA at Bradninch Hall, Castle Street, Exeter. Tel. 0845 4582758.

Employment

Disability Employment Advisers

and Incapacity Benefit Specialists offer assistance for disabled people looking for, or seeking to maintain, employment. Devon's contacts are:

Exeter 01392 473929

Honiton 01404 403200

Tiverton 01884 703000

Plymouth 01752 616154

North Devon 01271 392115

South Devon: Torquay 01803 356065

Paignton 01803 354239

Newton Abbot 01626 236327

For Access to Work assistance in your employment (equipment, help with taxi fares and other support) contact Colin Reeves on 01803 356947. For Pension enquiries contact the Pensions Service for Devon on 0845 6060265.

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Pluss

provides employment, training and equipment services for people with disabilities and long term health issues. They do this by offering disabled people a range of training and recruitment services, and through direct employment in our own manufacturing and mobility equipment businesses. Employment services include training, personal development, work experience, job-matching, job-search, in-work support and rehabilitation. Equipment services offer a one stop shop including assessment, purchase, hire, servicing and aftercare of disability equipment by fully trained staff, many of whom have a disability themselves. Pluss is the largest provider of disability service with 26 sites across South West England. They have been in business for over 35 years and are owned by Devon County, Plymouth City, Torbay and Somerset County Councils.

To find out more, please call 0800 91 777 92, email pluss@pluss.org.uk or visit www.pluss.org.uk

Transport

Go Cabs

taxi service, based in Torbay, offer taxis with disabled access and space for other passengers to travel at the same time. Drivers are CRB checked.

Tel. 01803 606060. Website: www.gocabs.net

Information

Exe Access

a specialist taxi service for people with mobility issues is now operational in Exeter. Part of Exeter Community Transport Association – supporting independent mobility.

Tel. 01392 253004

Yelverton Cars

private hire taxi service. 6 and 7 seat vehicles with wheelchair access. Available for airports, stations, weddings, local and long distance.

Tel. 01822 616695 or mobile: 07970 052668.

Email: eric.pinch@btinternet.com

Tavicab XL

Tavistock and West Devon. 6 seats plus wheelchair access. Licensed driver. Competitive tariff. Pre-bookings arranged.

Tel. 07525 730003.

Other services

Haven Advocacy

assists and empowers individuals with physical and / or sensory disabilities, or older people experiencing general frailty to express what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and to access services, in order to lead full and independent lives. The professional advocacy service provides one-to-one support to address health, social care and accommodation issues according to an individual's wishes and instructions. They can assist people with letter writing / phone calls, gathering information to enable

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informed choices, attending and supporting individuals at meetings and by signposting individuals to other services. **Contact Haven Advocacy via Living Options Devon at Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS. Tel. 01392 459222 / 456524. Fax: 01392 423427. Email: advocate@livingoptions.org**

The Devon Sensory Bus

is a free, confidential and impartial service for people with hearing and/or visual impairment. The specially converted and equipped bus visits towns and villages in West Devon and Torridge on a regular timetable. The bus has been adapted to include special listening devices, lighting and colour contrast. Families, friends and professionals are also welcome to use the unit. Trained staff who understand the effects of hearing and sight loss provide support and advice. A comprehensive range of equipment – to help with everyday difficulties such as hearing the doorbell, telephone and TV, or with reading newspapers and books – is available for demonstration, trial and loan. Advice is offered on coping with problems associated with sensory loss.

To find out more ring 01392 383730 or email sensory@devon.gov.uk Timetables are available online from www.devon.gov.uk/sensory-bus-timetables

Pharmacy to your phone

– NHS text service. Text **64746** followed by the service you require (for example, chemist or GP) and info about the nearest will be sent to your mobile with a map and telephone number.

Information

Marion Slyfield

is an independent trainer who comes from a care background. Marion was a teenage carer, has worked for social services and the NHS – and this experience has led to her writing training programmes geared towards anyone who is a carer, regardless of age. Topics include Optical Care, Audiology Awareness, Care of the Feet, Oral Health and Life Skills & Activities, Within these programmes, Marion looks at reducing the risks of falls and accidents as well as decreasing malnutrition and dehydration, social withdrawal and depression, along with keeping the mind and body active. Her 'head to toe' training is provided in a fun, yet professional way, with all delegates receiving a certificate of attendance and handouts. If you are a carer or know of anyone that would gain from these sessions please contact Marion on:

07813 358530

or email mcs.training@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.mcstraininginhealthcare.co.uk

Events

The Independent Living Centre

(ILC) in Exeter run free open mornings, covering a variety of topics, from mobility equipment to adapted vehicles. The events are open to all, free to attend and run on Thursdays from 10am - 1pm. There is level access parking and free tea, coffee and biscuits are provided!

For more information about upcoming events contact

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**the Independent Living Centre: Isca House, Haven Road,
Exeter EX2 8DS Tel. 01392 687276 Fax: 01392 423427
www.devon.gov.uk/ilc**

Parkinson's Disease Society

– Teignbridge Support Group. Meetings are held at the Langstone Cliff Hotel, Dawlish Warren on the second Tuesday of each month at 10.30am.

For more information or if you need help with transport please contact Chairman Mike Simmons or Treasurer Sheila Simmons on 01626 888791, or Secretary Jenny Breeze on 01626 200656.

Holidays and leisure

Vitalise Holidays

offers overseas adventures in far-flung places such as the Australian Outback, South Africa and Costa Rica in its new 2009-10 Brochure. Closer to home, destinations include the Lake District, Loch Lomond, Snowdonia and County Antrim. These are just a few of the huge selection of group holidays for blind and visually impaired people, devised by national charity Vitalise. The innovative holidays are made possible by the addition of sighted guides, who accompany the groups and offer practical support. The guides help visually impaired holidaymakers to get around, describe their surroundings, assist with things like money and menus, and provide companionship. Vitalise holidays cater for all tastes and are categorised into adventure, activity, interest, sightseeing and leisure. They are also graded according to the level of fitness

Information

or expertise required of the customers.

To receive a copy of the Vitalise Holidays brochure (also available in large print, Braille and CD), call Vitalise Holidays on 0845 330 0149, email viholidays@vitalise.org.uk, or visit www.vitalise.org.uk to download a copy of the brochure or access it via screen-reader.

Pamper weekends

are now available at Calvert Trust Exmoor. How would you like a weekend of rest and relaxation with the only hard bit being the decision between a swim and a massage? That's exactly what Calvert Trust Exmoor is offering guests in their pampering weekends. Ordinarily pushing our visitors through their paces on the climbing wall and reservoir, we've decided to add breaks of therapeutic relaxation. During the day guests can enjoy massage, reiki, aromatherapy, hairdressing, manicures and reflexology. Alternatively they can relax in the pool, unwind in the jacuzzi or deep cleanse in the steam room. Both the pool and jacuzzi have hoists and the steam room has an accessible doorway. On the Saturday evening, a 'Body Shop' party allows guests to try out new potions and lotions. The weekend is topped off with a celebratory party on the Sunday night to show off new hair, nails or make-up! Calvert accommodation is totally accessible and equipment such as electric beds and hoists is also available. Set on the stunning Wistlandpound Reservoir – the perfect setting for a relaxing break.

For details ring 01598 763221 or visit www.calvert-trust.org.uk

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Classifieds

Aids and equipment

Riviera Reclining bath lift

used but very good condition. Rechargeable battery.

Originally cost £385. Bargain at £150. Tel. **01395 276593**

Horizon TV Reading Aid

magnifies 26 times via 14" TV included. Ideal for viewing anything written / photos. Excellent condition. Seen working.

£80. Tel. **01392 496844**

Willowbrook electric riser / recliner chair

in mint Dralon. Little used so in excellent condition. Cost £1,200. Offers in region of £500 ono. Tel. **01392 841271**

Fully adjustable electric single bed

6'6" x 2'6" and matching single divan (bases link together to form double). Dunlop Nouvea firm mattresses. Hardly used, cost £1,400 new. £525 ono. Will consider selling separately.

Tel. **01271 863672**

Single swing frame

with adult size full support seat. Purchased from TFH catalogue. Suitable for adult or large child. Included: pull beam for independent swinging, padded seat liner and all-weather canopy. Buyer collects. £200 ovno.

Tel. **01392 427189**



Information

Vehicles

Renault Kangoo

1.2 16v October 2002. 57,000 miles. Dark blue. Good condition. Three seats plus space for wheelchair, ramp and electric reels. 6 months MOT. £3,500 ono. Sale due to bereavement. Also for sale – dual controlled electric wheelchair, price negotiable.

Tel. 01404 813019 / 07712 248086

Ford Escort Chairman wheelchair conversion.

Low miles. Hydraulic rear lowers back. Please ring for more info. £2,985. 12 months MOT. Taxed.

Tel. 01392 438505 / 07966 395724

Wheelchairs and scooters

Quantam 600 Pride wheelchair

25 mile charge. Padded seat and headrest. Balance points fitted for hoisting into car or load by ramps. Excellent condition. £1000. Tel. **01392 496844**

Pashley Adult Tricycle for disabled person.

Used for six months only. Sale due to bereavement. Cost over £600. Offers. Tel. **01647 281237**

Holidays

St Merryn, Padstow

7 holiday bungalows, sleep 4-6, wheelchair friendly, pets welcome. Tel. **01841 521920.**

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To put a classified advert in Devon Link, send your advert of no more than 40 words to the Devon Link address on the back page, with a cheque for £5.88, payable to Devon County Council. Please note that the cut-off date for the next issue is 10 March 2010 and the magazine will be published early April 2010.

Devon *Link* is published by Devon County Council and Torbay Council, working with Living Options Devon. The contents of the magazine are determined by the editor and an independent team of correspondents (as well as consultation with readers) to ensure the independence of the magazine.

Contact our correspondents

Our correspondents are waiting to hear from you...

– email them or phone Devon Link on **01392 382332**, or write to the address on the back page.

Diana Frost (Teignbridge and Torbay)

diana.devonlink@btinternet.com

Pat Mayston (South and West Devon)

devonlink@mayston.eclipse.co.uk

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Contact Us

Living Options Devon

Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS

Tel: 01392 459222 Fax: 01392 423427

SMS: 07958 517919

info@livingoptions.org

www.livingoptions.org

Living Options Devon exists to ensure people with physical and/or sensory disabilities, and Deaf people with sign language can make an active and equal contribution in society.

Devon *Link* – Autumn / Winter 2009

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Devon *Link* is also available in audio format. Contact us for your regular free copy.

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