



Helping Blind and Disabled People

MK Reader Service Newsletter Winter 2015

Welcome to our Service Users, Volunteers & Friends.

This is our winter update with what has been happening since the last newsletter, issued back in the Spring. You will find all our contact details in the very last section.

A message from our Chairperson – Paula Suchy

How wonderful to meet so many of you at our various events this year. I would particularly like to thank Karen and her unsung band of heroes who man the front door, make and serve the refreshments and clean up afterwards. I really appreciate the valuable contribution you all make towards the smooth running of each occasion.

We have also been working closely with Bucks Vision to ensure that our services are of a good standard and complement each other. We recently let you all know about a fundraising quiz which Bucks Vision held. Two of our Reader Service teams went along and had a successful evening coming 1st and 2nd!

Meetings, Get Togethers & Celebrations

Support Meetings

Volunteers at our support meeting in May appreciated hearing a talk from Debbie Malone, a rehabilitation officer from SARC.

Our October support meeting gathered together 120 volunteers and users. They were able to meet with representatives from SARC, BucksVision, the Macular group, Eye for Art, MK Moles, as well as get information from the Rifle Club, Sound News and the local RNIB group.

In November some of our volunteers attended an introduction to First aid course. You will be pleased to know that they are now familiar with how to use a defibrillator, should the need ever arise.



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM in June was also well attended. Paula Suchy MBE was re-elected as chairperson for 2015-2016. The following were elected as the new committee, with their committee responsibilities given in brackets:

- Service User Representatives: Jeff Bashton (Vice Chair), Paula Varey (Fundraising), Caroline Pearson (Talks Project), Michael Baldry (Bucks Vision Liaison)
- Volunteer Representatives: Stephen Harrison (Treasurer), Lynn Bovis (minutes Secretary), Philip Ward (Development Committee), Rose Haigh (Special projects)

Volunteer, James Clifton was co-opted onto the committee at their first meeting after the AGM.

Quiz Night

Over 80 people enjoyed a quiz night and auction of promises in June. Stephan Suchy again excelled himself in preparing the questions and leading the proceedings. Martyn Lycett proved to be an entertaining and persuasive auctioneer. Many thanks to all who helped with this event and those who donated things for the auction and raffle. We raised over £600 for our funds. Due to popular demand, there are plans to hold another one next year. Hope Stephan can keep the questions coming!

People

We continue to have a steady stream of new volunteers and service users, with two training days undertaken to get the volunteers ready for action. If you are a newcomer to MKRS – Welcome!

We were sad to hear of the passing of three of our Service Users, Helen Lever, Merlyn Bay and Christina (Stella) Phillips and would like to thank their volunteers for the support they gave them.

Money Matters

Funding, Donations & Subscriptions

The wonderful campaign organized by Karen and the committee, aided by your letters to local councillors and MPs, helped retain

our funding for the current year. However, it is not certain whether we will continue to receive funding in future years.

The annual donation/subscription request went out to service users in October. So far we have received over £1000 from this initiative, which helps towards the costs of providing our readers and shoppers. It is never too late to make your contribution, so if you have not yet responded and feel able to help support us, please go ahead. The Local Giving match funding initiative has also been used to good effect, where we have received over £900 in matched donations. We have also been given a £3000 grant to cover training (we are not allowed to publicise the donor). Several service users and volunteers have also given generously to help support the Reader Service.

Fundraising

Paula Varey reported that Asda sent us a cheque for £50 from their “Chosen by you, given by us” scheme.

We also raised over £270 from our flag day at Asda in July. We are again taking part in the Christmas CMK Car Raffle with three slots to sell tickets in Middleton Hall. Our next newsletter will report the outcome. We are so grateful for those of you who valiantly stand holding collecting buckets or selling tickets to help with our fundraising. We are also grateful to the Walnut Tree Community shop for their valuable support and were pleased to receive a cheque for £5000. Please keep taking in your unwanted things for them to sell, it is all appreciated.

Volunteer Travel Expenses

Please send mileage claim forms into the office by the end of the month. Documents are generally sent to the treasurer during the first week of the following month. This means if you miss the end of month deadline it may take up to six weeks for your expenses to come through. Stephen, our treasurer, can now pay expenses directly into your bank account, so please include this information with your claim if you have not previously made these arrangements with him.

Accessible Arts!

We can provide volunteers to accompany Service Users to theatres and other events within Milton Keynes. However, it is essential that Karen has plenty of notice in order to make arrangements.

A Night at the Theatre?

If a person is unable to attend Milton Keynes Theatre unaccompanied, then they and their escort/carer are entitled to half price tickets. Make the staff aware of your needs when booking. You should show proof of disability in order to qualify for your discounted access-rate tickets.

The following audio-described shows are coming up:

- Aladdin - 19 Dec 2015 2.30pm (Touch Tour 1pm)
- Sleeping Beauty - 30th Jan 2016 2.30pm (Touch Tour 1pm)
- Chicago - 17 mar 2016 7.30pm (Touch Tour 6pm)
- The Bodyguard - 16 Apr 2016 7.30pm (Touch Tour 6.45pm)
- Swan Lake - 30 Apr 2016 2.30pm (Touch Tour 1pm)
- Annie - 3 Jun 2016 7.30pm (Touch Tour 6pm)
- Guys & Dolls - 16 Jun 2016 7.30pm (Touch Tour 6pm)

For more information call their Access Line: 0844 871 7677.

Phone the Theatre on MK 547500 if you want brochures in large print or on CD. Aylesbury Waterside Theatre also offers audio brochures. (Contact 01296 745100).

Service Users, if you are interested in what other cultural events are going on in MK, remember you could ask your Reader to check through a brochure for you!

Cineworld Access

Various facilities are available at our local Cineworld, including audio described performances. Anyone with a CEA card can also get a free ticket for someone who helps take you to a performance. To find out more, contact their disabled access helpline 0800188 4044 Monday to Sunday 10.00-22.00.

Get to grips with Art

Milton Keynes Gallery is now closed for two years. We will let you know if there are plans for any art related guided tours while the main galleries are out of commission.

Festive Information

The CentreMK decided it is not necessary to have a recorded description of the display in Middleton Hall as it is mainly given over to a Christmas Market. If you disagree and would have liked to have had information about what is there, then please call them on 01908 678641 or email enquiry@thecentremk.com. You can also write to the management offices, 2nd. Floor, CentreMK.

Music

The treasurer for Sound News, Tim O'Brien, together with a friend has recorded a CD of instrumental versions of famous Christmas carols and songs. This is a professionally produced CD, designed as nice gentle background music. Tim and Andy are donating all profits from the sale of the CDs to various charities and they have offered us a share of the profit from any sales made through Sound News or the Milton Keynes Reader Service This means that £2.65 will be donated to MKRS for all individual cd's sold through Sound News or MKRS. The cost is £12 per CD (or 3 for £30) To take advantage of this offer please either contact Tim direct on 01908 662677 or send a cheque, payable to T.E. O'Brien, to him at 61 Tower Drive, Neath Hill, Milton Keynes, MK14 6JX together with a note giving your name and address. Remember to print MKRS on the note somewhere, so Tim knows where to pay our share of the profits"

Feedback from people who have already bought a copy of this CD has been very positive and Tim and Andy will be playing live in the shopping centre on 23rd December at 6pm. If you have access to a computer, you can hear samples of the CD on their website www.fadin-shoes.com.

Make a Note

Dates for your Diary

A summary of the forthcoming dates for your diary:

- Saturday 23rd January: New Year coffee morning. This will include a very brief EGM regarding the constitution - only a few minutes!
- 7 June - Support Meeting for volunteers 7.00 - 9.00
- 2 July - AGM 10.00 - 12.00
- 27 October - Coffee afternoon 2.30 - 4.30

Service Information

MK Reader Service is a Registered Charity Number 1013965.

Service Co-ordinator: Karen Preece

Postal address: Small Meeting Place, 43 Marshworth,
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Telephone: 01908 231123 **e-mail:** mkreader@tiscali.co.uk

Website: www.miltonkeynesreaderservice.org.uk The website is continually updated with news and photos. Contact Karen if there is anything you would like to see added.

The Last Word

Finally, we would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful and happy New Year.

If you would like to receive this newsletter in an alternative format please contact Karen at the office.

End of MK Reader Service Newsletter for Winter 2015