



BLIND SPORTS & RECREATION VICTORIA NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2018

If a day is a long time in politics, then ten years lobbying for positive change in disability sports can feel like a life time ... in a good way. Every day there is something new popping up in my inbox and some of our own ideas going out to the wider world.

But it wasn't always like that – not at the beginning when I first joined what was then called Blind Sports Victoria, first as a volunteer using my journalism skills to write grant applications. We did things a little differently, hard copy applications in the mail and patiently awaiting the outcomes. We were a smaller team supporting a handful of sporting opportunities around cricket, lawn bowls, golf and athletics.

Soon after joining I became an honorary executive board member responsible for development and promotion and very soon after that I was nominated as Vice President supporting our president, Maurice Gleeson. Over the past ten years as our numbers grew in all areas – participants, volunteers, staff, sponsors and board members, we continued to search for innovative ways to open up opportunities for the blind and vision impaired men, women, teenagers and children who had been denied access to sport. Often it was simply because few people understood the significance and value of matching individual needs with available opportunities.

During this exciting time of expansion, we included recreational pursuits and changed our name to Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria. Our searching and unique approach saw us grow from the early offerings to an impressive list of programs and activities adding up to around 36 sporting and recreational programs available today, including junior groups for tennis, soccer, swimming and more.

We are proud to say our eldest participant in Walking with Willpower (our buddy matching walking program) **is 86 and our youngest in the swimming program is 4 years old.** At the same time, we have had many committed athletes represent us nationally and internationally in their chosen sports, including a number of successful Paralympians.

At this stage of my ten-year reflection it's important to note that our rapid growth due to increasing needs has not been possible without the generosity of individuals, supporting sporting organisations and partners, corporate donations and government grants, in particular the contribution of our major funding partners VicHealth and the Department of Sport & Recreation. The challenge is to continue to be innovative and respond to demands while juggling a limited budget. For example, we are currently seeking funding to ensure we can continue to deliver our junior swimming program, now in its **ninth** year and at risk of folding if we cannot find the \$15,000 required to run the program, a highly individualised swimming program that requires qualified instructors.

Despite the challenges, the rewards for me over the past ten years have been numerous. I've had so much fun being part of the training programs, the fundraising barbecues and the 'come n try' days where I get to meet so many wonderful people taking up a new challenge like spin class, tennis, yoga or an overnight camp in the bush – as well as those volunteers making sure it can all happen.

Now, looking forward to the next ten years there's no telling what we can achieve into the future with the right people and adequate funding supporting us.

Dr Caroline van de Pol
Vice President
Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria

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Come & Try Day – Blind Tennis



Photo below: Adult & junior players on court

Adults and children of all abilities are welcome to come and try out Blind and Vision Impaired Tennis! The program uses modified equipment in a fun and supportive environment. If you are a potential player or volunteer, we encourage you to come along!

Free BBQ and giveaways available throughout the day.

When: Sunday 16 September
Where: National Tennis Centre
Melbourne Park
Time: 11am – 2pm

To register your interest in attending email info@blindsports.org.au

Royal Melbourne Show

- Volunteers Needed



We are seeking volunteers to assist us with our pavilion at the Royal Melbourne Show.

Your role will involve talking to the public about blind sports and assisting people to take part in some golf putting while wearing

eye shades. You will then have free time before or after your shift to enjoy all the thrills and excitement of the Royal Melbourne Show.

This is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness about the many types of blind sports available, meet new people and enjoy a great day out!

With 2 shifts available from 10am – 3pm and 3pm – 7.30pm, if you would to volunteer to assist us, please email info@blindsports.org.au. Training will be provided prior to the event

Rock Climbing – Fun for Kids!



Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria invite children of all ages who are blind or vision impaired to participate in an indoor rock climbing session.

Besides being a whole lot of fun, rock climbing has many physical, mental and social benefits for kids. Siblings and friends are also welcome to attend.

Date: Saturday 6 October
Where: Gravity Worx
182-184 Sussex Street
Pascoe Vale
Time: 11:00am - 1:00pm
Cost: Free

Places are limited so contact Miriam Bilander at miriam@blindsports.org.au or telephone (03) 9822 8876.

Road Safety Education Session



BSRV held a Road Safety Education Session for children on 13 July at Kew Traffic School.

The feedback was wonderful from both parents and children. David, who is 9 years of age said "On the school holidays I went to the Kew Traffic School with Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria. I went to help with learning to be safe around traffic. We had some lessons about being safe on the road and in cars. I know now that the buttons on traffic lights have an arrow you can touch and you can feel the vibrations to tell you that it is safe to cross the road. Then we

had a ride on our scooters and bikes on the traffic school road. We were having fun and I made a new friend. There were traffic lights and people were being lollipop people with Stop signs to help us learn about safe riding. I had a terrific day at Kew Traffic School and didn't want to go home at the end. Thanks for the great time at Kew Traffic School".

BSRV would like to thank David for his terrific report on this event.

Awards

Sir John Monash Award

Photo below: Kaye with her award



Photo courtesy of Artificial Studios

Kaye Speed has been an outstanding volunteer with BSRV for over 17 years. Her list of achievements and advocacy is remarkable and testimony to her determination to provide sporting and recreational opportunities for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Throughout her time with BSRV, Kaye has contributed more than 8,000 hours of volunteer time to BSRV both as former

treasurer, secretary and assisting with many programs.

BSRV were thrilled when her commitment and passion were recognised at the Sir John Monash award ceremony by *winning the 'Outstanding Advocate of People with Disabilities' category*.

Well done Kaye on a well-deserved award!

Higgins Community Awards

Photo below: Alison Gras receiving her award



Congratulation to BSRV's volunteer Alison on being nominated for the 2018 Higgins Community Awards. The Awards were held on Thursday 2 August at the Malvern Town Hall.

Alison has been a committed, loyal and diligent long-term volunteer for Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria (BSRV) over a period of 15 years.

During this time, Alison has worked very closely with BSRV's Executive Committee member, Kaye Speed, during her tenure as Treasurer and more recently Secretary of the organisation.

Alison has been an invaluable asset to BSRV, assisting in the smooth financial

running of our organisation over a significant period of time.

Thank you Alison for your dedicated and continued support of BSRV.

2018 Victorian Disability Awards

Photo below: M.Gleeson, A.Webb, K.Speed



BSRV were thrilled to be a finalist in the 2018 Victorian Disability Awards in the category of 'Excellence in promoting health, housing and well-being'.

Congratulations to all 2018 winners -

- Minister's Award for outstanding Leadership: Emelia Young, Yooralla
- Emerging leader award: Nazim Erdem OAM, AQA Victoria
- Excellence in creating inclusive communities: Great Ocean Stays
- Excellence in employment outcomes: Accessible Information Service, Scope Australia
- Excellence in employment outcomes: Arts Project Australia
- Excellence in promoting health, housing and wellbeing: Residential Independence Pty Ltd – Supporting seriously injured Victorians to live independently, Transport Accident Commission

- Excellence in promoting rights, fairness and safety: Dorothy Armstrong, RMIT University
- Volunteer award: Woody Marriott, Eastern Disability Action Group

Spring Outings in the West

Thanks to funding from the City of Hobsons Bay, we have three fabulous outings taking place this Spring:

Pumping Station & Spotswood Industrial Tour and Groovy Cafe Lunch



When: Thursday 20th of September
 Where: Scienceworks - 2 Booker Street, Spotswood
 Time: 10:30am - 1:30pm
 Cost: Tour Free. Pay your own lunch at the 'Duchess of Spotswood' cafe

Williamstown Botanical Gardens Tour & Lunch by the Bay



When: Thursday 11th of October
 Where: 97-99 Osborne Street, Williamstown
 Time: 10:30am - 1:00pm
 Cost: Tour Free. Pay your own lunch at 'The Kiosk Williamstown' café

100 Steps of Federation to Altona Beach Tour, Swimming & Picnic



When: Wednesday 14th of November
 Where: Cheetham Wetlands, Andrew Park Drive, Altona Meadows
 Time: 10:30am - 2:00pm
 Cost: Tour Free. BYO Picnic lunch, drink bottle, bathers & towel

Please note places are limited for each outing so register your interest to miriam@blindsports.org.au ASAP.

Come along and enjoy Walking Out West!

The VIBE Ski Club: for alpine recreation all year round

VIBE Ski Club saw its origins when the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) opened its lodge at Mt Baw Baw. The recreational staffers welcomed the blind and vision impaired to experience skiing with the aid of volunteer guides. It marked the beginning of a ski club complete with support services that facilitated the blind and vision impaired to enjoy the sport. In the recent past however, the club has evolved following the amalgamation of RVIB to Vision Australia in 2004.

The present ski club continues to function at Mt Baw Baw jointly with Rob Gray Ski Club where it is now accommodated under the name Vision Impaired Blind and Everyone (VIBE) Ski Club. It is so named as the club has drawn many sighted members as well. "One of the original members, Alan Bates has been involved with the club for many years through his vision impairment. His family, which includes sighted adults have grown up with the club and their children and friends have also become involved," explains Samantha Marsh, who is a former President of the committee. While there may be many sighted members, the Club hopes to encourage more blind and vision impaired to join in future.

Though the Club at present relies on members arriving with their own support

such as a family member or a friend, it's also looking to build a network of volunteers to offer better support. To this end, the club is looking to develop a register of members who are willing to volunteer as guides, starting with the Club's own lodge and then branching out to other ski lodges. In the meantime, the sighted members themselves are volunteers at the lodge, some with experience in general guiding through their association with vision impaired or blind family members. The method of guiding for skiing involves the sighted individual taking the lead, closely followed by a vision impaired member. To enable the vision impaired member to see the guide clearly the Club provides high visibility vests. For those with no vision, guides can remain at their side and offer verbal cues.

While skiing and tobogganing may be some of the activities on offer during the winter months, there's much to do all year round. "Even though we are called the VIBE Ski Club, we actually like to refer to ourselves as an alpine club. It's a lovely getaway environment with many walks to enjoy," says Samantha adding that "like the BSRV walking group that stayed at the lodge, we'd like to see more people enjoying the other activities up there." For those without transport the lodge may not be the easiest to access, however during a club weekend, members are willing to offer transport to those who are unable to arrange their own.

Gaining membership to the Club involves a simple enquiry via email and a nominal fee

of \$25 per year for a family or couple. The Club encourages prospective members to first partake in an activity or a club-hosted weekend as members must be approved by the committee to maintain a family friendly environment. Those interested may get in touch via info@vibeskiclub.org.au.

Vision Impaired Dance

Improving your balance through core stability training

Pictured below: Genamarie performs a bridge using the fitball.



It is well known that core stability exercises improve your balance and stability, which is important for fall and injury prevention during daily activities - as well as for sport and recreation.

Core exercises are those that train the muscles in your lower back, pelvis, hips and abdomen to work in harmony.

Rosemary Robenn, who teaches our Vision Impaired Dance class, says that pilates style exercises using a fitball (large rubber ball)

help with muscle control and flexibility, not just in the ballet studio, but in everyday life. "For anyone, dance is not just about learning steps," Rosemary said. "It is about building a strong foundation first and foremost upon which these steps can later be built. To be able to move well, you must first be able to stand still well. Gaining core strength will improve your balance and fitness overall and this will permeate into all aspects of your life. You will stand taller and straighter, have much more control over your body and generally look and feel much more confident, simply because in your dance class this is what you are training your body to do."

BSRV's vision impaired dance class trains you in pilates style exercises at the barre and on the floor; and also combines simple ballet moves to music. It is a fun way to strengthen and tone, while enjoying the sounds of beautiful ballet music. No experience is required.

Participants meet at Flinders Street station and proceed to the ballet studio in Flinders Lane, guided by Rosemary Robenn.

To register your interest or find out more, please call Amanda Webb on 0410 069 140 or email: amanda@blindsports.org.au.

Vision impaired Dance is held on Fridays from 12.30 - 2.00pm at
Centre for Adult Education
[253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne](#)
Next class: Friday 12 October

AFL Blind: The new adaption of football with bright lights, coloured jumper trims and balls with buzzers

ABC Central Victoria

(<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-14/blind-football-is-set-to-become-an-afl-first/10113978>)

By Larissa Romensky

VIDEO: AFL Blind gives blind and vision-impaired players a chance (ABC News)

For the past 14 months, AFL Victoria has been testing different equipment and rules to create a Victorian blind football league.

The third and final testing day took place at a purpose-built venue at Tullamarine with the field surrounded by netting and the ceiling covered with bright lights.

The adapted version of Australian Rules Football, known as AFL Blind, has been created for the blind and vision-impaired community.

Having previously been unable to play football, centre half-back Michael Todorovic was thrilled at the opportunity.

"It's really hard for us to play footy out at school or even like at a normal footy club at the weekends because it's so quick and we can't see the ball," he said.

While the game is similar to AFL football, there is a different scoring system for levels of impairment, shorter quarters, and no tackling.

"It's touch footy and we don't have to physically mark the ball for it to be counted as a mark, the ball can just hit our body, if someone kicks it and it actually touches our body it is classified as a mark," Mr Todorovic said.



PHOTO: Michael 'Mikey' Todorovic was born with Stargardt's Disease and is classified as a B3 player as he has limited vision. (Supplied: AFL Victoria, Nerissa Turner)

Mr Todorovic has limited vision so is classified as a B3 player.

Other players who use hearing as their main source of direction are classified as B2 players and fully blind players are classified as B1. So that the umpires can differentiate between the levels of impairment, the players wear different coloured trims on their uniforms: blue for B3, pink for B2 and a yellow trim for a B1, fully blind player.

Designing with sound

Aside from the different coloured trims and tactile uniforms to help players navigate, sound is an important design feature of the game.

Bluetooth speakers were placed behind the goal posts and the current prototype ball has an inbuilt buzzer and USB charging port.

While many blind ball sports use a bell in their ball, AFL Victoria worked with Sherrin on a suitable design.

"Think about a drop punt and when a drop punt goes in the air the bell gets stuck in the pointy end of the ball so we can't use bells, so we've put beeping devices inside the footy," AFL All Abilities inclusion manager Tim Nield said.

While AFL Victoria has settled on a colour and material of the ball, there is still some work to do.

"We just need to work on the loudness of the football. We haven't got the decibels at the level we need to allow the players to track the football and that's the final piece of the jigsaw," Mr Nield said.

Confidence and friendship



PHOTO: It is not all about the game, the social aspect is also important. (Supplied: AFL Victoria, Nerissa Turner)

The game is not just about sport — blind football has contributed to a sense of inclusion and friendship.

"It does a lot for your self-confidence as you don't feel like you have a vision problem when you're playing blind footy,

you just feel like the average person on the street," Mr Todorovic said.

Born with Stargardt's disease, which affects Mr Todorovic's central vision, it renders him unable to drive as he is classified as legally blind.

The inherited juvenile macular degenerative disease means he experiences progressive vision loss caused by the death of photoreceptor cells in the central portion of the retina.

"My vision starts to get out of focus probably after a metre or two," Mr Todorovic said.

While Mr Todorovic struggles with his vision, fellow player 16-year-old forward Caleb Neyenhuis is fully blind, having lost both eyes to retinoblastoma, cancer in the eyes.

"I had one eye removed and it got to my other eye so that had to be removed as well, so I'm fully blind now," he said.

While the young player also loved playing the game he said the best part of it was meeting new people.

"You get to feel part of a team — it's good to make new friends now and then," Mr Neyenhuis said.



PHOTO: AFL Blind will be launched in October with the hope that clubs take it on. (Supplied: AFL Victoria, Nerissa Turner)

It feels like you're 'a proper footy player'

While the first testing game took place on a futsal court, the third instalment of the testing has seen many improvements.

"Everyone's getting a touch of the ball, we've got a lot more room, we're playing on a proper footy field, we've got so many great rules and it's turned into a professional game," Mr Todorovic said.

Mr Neyenhuis agreed. As a fully blind player, it was initially difficult to get hold of the ball, but changed rules including how marks are taken by B1 players have allowed more involvement.

"It feels pretty good. When you kick a goal, it's cool," he said.

"It feels like you're a proper footy player — like it's unreal, having a uniform and just playing the game, it feels like you're properly playing footy — it's an amazing feeling," Mr Todorovic said.

By October AFL Blind will be launched with a competitive six-week pilot project, with the hope clubs will jump on board next year.

Both players are hoping to play for their beloved Geelong Cats.

"I'm a mad Cats supporter so my goal would be to have a Geelong team in the league — that would be a dream come true," Mr Todorovic said.

If you would like more information on AFL Blind, contact Tim Nield at Tim.Nield@afl.com.au

Volunteer in Vogue

Find the Joy in everything you do!

By Debra Landini – BSRV Volunteer



Every second Sunday I drive out to Heather's and walk for Joy! Not Joy the person, but Joy the *thing*. I actually do walk for Heather who is vision impaired, and for Blind Sports who support those that are blind or vision impaired, and I walk for me. It's a win-win-win situation. But altogether it adds up to walking for Joy!

What could be better than walking in the sunshine, fresh air and breeze? Walking with someone else in the sunshine, fresh air and breeze.

I've lost track of the time I've been walking with Heather because it doesn't really matter. Heather and I get on really well.

Interestingly, our lives are very different and our backgrounds too, but we actually have a lot in common right now.

When we walk, we talk, and talk and talk. We exchange news of the past fortnight, and plans for the next fortnight. The walking and talking comes easy. Amazingly the weather has been on our side every time, but we figure we'll go to a shopping centre if the weather is bad. We've walked on a few cold days, and on those days I thank the person who invented heaters in cars, on my drive home.

So why did I contact Blind Sports and volunteer to walk with someone? Well, it helps another person, it's a chance to give something back to the community, it shows thankfulness (- I have my sight), it motivates me to walk (- and I really need to walk!), and it *makes Joy!!!*

Volunteering with Gerry, Anne and Max!

By Laura Foster-Rice – BSRV Volunteer



I would love to tell you all about my volunteering experience with a wonderful couple, Gerry and Anne.

Since October last year I have enjoyed

being their eyes and ears on weekend walkies, along with their lovely dog Maxine. They are lucky to have beautiful parkland on their doorstep, so each weekend we would hop in the car and take a short drive with Maxine hanging out of the window! Each Saturday Maxine eagerly awaited my arrival and would alert Gerry and Anne at the exact time I was due to arrive. She would bound towards the car and then pull us around the park! Unfortunately, she developed acute arthritis and passed away recently. We continue walking each weekend, and Gerry and Anne have started to look for another companion dog – has to be a big dog though, not a small one (Anne's wish)!

Last time I visited, Gerry remarked on the way home that he was so happy and thankful for taking them out. The park is full of happy memories for them, and funny moments like the time a huge St Bernard dog stood on Gerry's foot and he was glued to the spot for what seemed like an eternity by a giant paw.

They have a great sense of humour, and it makes me happy to think I have helped to brighten their weekend. I promised I would take them to the Macedon Ranges soon to visit family in the autumn, which they're very much looking forward to. Here's to many more walkies down the track!

BSRV thank our many volunteers for their time and commitment in assisting with our programs to ensure people who are blind and vision impaired are provided with many and varied sporting and recreational activities.

Sponsorship

Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria invites interested individuals and companies to contact us about sponsorship in this newsletter, a quarterly publication distributed widely including all three levels of government and various departments including Department of Sport

& Recreation, VicHealth and Department of Education.

The newsletter is well circulated through the Australian Sports Commission, a number of generic sporting organisations, numerous corporate partners – both small and large, and other disability sporting groups as well as the Victorian Institute of Sport and to members of the general public.

If you would like to discuss the opportunity for sponsorship, please contact Susan on 9822 8876 or email info@blindsports.org.au



www.facebook.com/blindsportsvictoria

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