



BLIND SPORTS & RECREATION VICTORIA NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2019

A Parent's Perspective – How Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria supported me

Having volunteered with Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria (BSRV) over a number of years, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible work they do to assist people who are blind and vision impaired. My son Geoffrey who was blind also had an intellectual disability. Maurice Gleeson, President of BSRV profoundly assisted and supported me by listening with unique insight, and advocated on behalf of Geoffrey whose complex needs had been inadequately responded to for much of his earlier life.

People with disabilities deserve basic rights resulting from community awareness leading to better understanding and appropriate education which can only enhance opportunities for others who may have similar needs to Geoffrey.

BSRV together with other support agencies, were able to support Geoffrey by raising awareness of his need for structured physical activities together with alternate sensory experiences and enlist the right support program wherein he enjoyed 40 minute daily walks, among other activities, resulting in the most contented last 6 years of his life.

My passionate support is the understanding and philosophy of BSRV in that they endeavour to create meaningful opportunities for people who are blind and vision impaired and those who have additional complex challenges.

Thank you Maurice Gleeson and Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria for making a positive difference in my son's life.

Beryl Power
Volunteer
Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria

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Tennis Champs bring home the trophies

On the heels of Ash Barty's breakthrough win at the French Open another Australian tennis player has won a first-place trophy at the 3rd International Blind Tennis Tournament which was held in Spain in June. Ricky Segura, who plays in the B4 category, has an Indigenous mother and Spanish father which made it all the more exciting for him to be playing in Spain the same week as the hometown hero Rafael Nadal collected another clay court trophy.

In an exciting final, Ricky fought hard against his skilful opponent from Great Britain, Neil Fradgley with the result being Ricky (Aus) v N.Fradgley (GB) 6-4 6-2.

The international championship attracted eighty four competitors from fifteen countries and was held in Benidorm, on the south east coast of Spain. Ricky's team mate, and fellow South Australian, Mark Haskett, finished third place in the B2 category. Players are classified depending on their level of vision with B1 the category for players who are totally blind.

The seven Australian team members, which included a third South Australian, Dragan Bekric and four Victorians, Chris Cypreou, Genamarie Richards, Adam Fayad and Michael Todorovic were well supported by coaches and volunteers. Throughout the week there were many highs and lows as the team adjusted to the climate, the classification system and the night time karaoke at the tournament resort. The relaxed holiday resort provided

opportunities for the players from around the world to meet up and share stories, perhaps a little like an informal Olympic village.

Victorian Blind Sports President Maurice Gleeson, who attended the tournament and is a member of the international governing body, International Blind Tennis Association said it was a wonderful week of sportsmanship from the Australian team and the camaraderie amongst the travelling group made the week memorable, as well as the goodwill from other participating countries.

Michael described the tournament and the experience as beyond his expectations. He particularly enjoyed chatting with players from around the world and learning about their eye conditions and the way they all value being active in a sport they love. Mikey plans to make a documentary of his experience.

The international tournament is held annually and last year was in Ireland. The 2020 tournament which may be held in Italy, will be an opportunity for Ricky to defend his title and for the Australian team to meet up with new and old friends.

Below: Group photo of the Australian Team



“Come On” yells Lleyton Hewitt as he takes to the courts with Carrie Bickmore and Tommy Little for Blind Tennis

An exciting day at the National Tennis Centre with Carrie Bickmore and Tommy Little having a go at blind tennis together with former world number 1 champion and winner of 2 Grand Slams, Lleyton Hewitt!

They played against 2 blind tennis players, Chris and Genamarie, who have participated in 3 International Blind Tennis Tournaments and are a force to be reckoned with! “It was such a fun event, watching Carrie, Tommy and Lleyton play whilst blindfolded and trying very hard to hit the ball – overall, I think Lleyton was the only one who managed to get it over the net” was one of the comments overheard on the day.

The interviews were broadcast on the [Carrie and Tommy](#) Radio Show on The Hit Network and [The Project](#) on Network 10.

Pictured below: Tommy Little, Genamarie Richards, Chris Cypreou, Lleyton Hewitt and Carrie Bickmore



2019 Victorian Disability Awards

The Victorian Disability Awards honour the contributions of Victorians who support, lead, educate and advocate for people with disability. The Awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of individuals, teams and organisations that increase the rights and participation of people with disability.

BSRV are thrilled that Kaye Speed was nominated as a finalist for the Volunteer Award category.

Kaye joined Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria in 2001 as Voluntary Treasurer and Executive Committee member and is now the Company Secretary. She has shown others that a disability need not be an impediment: one can still excel in one's profession, socially, on the sports field and in the community.

During the past 18 years, Kaye has been the backbone of BSRV, supporting the organisation tirelessly.

Thank you Kaye!

Pictured below: Kaye Speed



Nelson Alexander

BSRV were thrilled to be chosen by [Nelson Alexander Real Estate](#) as part of their Foundation Day. Foundation Day is a day that each of their seventeen offices donates the professional fee from one of their auctions to a chosen charity. The property allocated to BSRV was in Reservoir and what an amazing auction day it was. We were very excited when the property sold at auction and BSRV were given a donation of \$11,685. Thank you Nelson Alexander for your very generous support.

Picture below: Maurice Gleeson with staff from Nelson Alexander holding a giant novelty cheque



Gymnastics

Gymnastics offers great opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision, with adaptable programs for all ages. Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria together with Gymnastics Victoria conducted a workshop to learn more about common eye conditions which may result in vision impairment or blindness, and effective communication and guiding skills. These coaches are now equipped to best support gymnasts with low or no vision.

Please contact Gymnastics Victoria if you would like more information about Gymnastics opportunities in your area.

Photo below: Sandra Knight from BSRV conducts workshop with coaches



Cancer Council Screening Sessions

In conjunction with [BreastScreen Victoria](#) and [Cancer Council Victoria](#) BSRV held a series of workshops at Kooyong, Dandenong, Broadmeadows and Bendigo on 'Keeping an eye out for cancer prevention'.

The workshops were well attended and provided vital information to participants on information about the benefits of cancer screening and information on bowel screen tests.

BSRV work with many organisations to raise awareness and achieve shared goals.

Photo below: workshop participants at Dandenong



Reflections on the Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony

By Miriam Bilander

On Friday the 16th of August, a group of blind and low vision members of the community with their carers, volunteers and family, took part in a very special Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony at the United Church in Werribee.

The Karen are one of 135 ethnic groups recognised by the Myanmar constitution, a minority who engaged in a six-decade fight with the central government. During this conflict, hundreds of thousands of Karen people were killed, about 140,000 made it across the border to refugee camps in Thailand and just over 3,000 have been settled in Victoria.

Traditionally this colourful festival takes place in August during the full moon and remembers a time when the ancestors lived in fear of different spirits and would tie white thread on the wrists of children to bring back their spirits from a place of darkness to one where they behaved well, united with family and acted to preserve their culture.

The ceremony began with Bibi, a Karen community leader, explaining to us what the seven symbolic materials are that are used in the Wrist Tying Ceremony: A glass of cold water to illustrate cleansing the body and mind; three white threads, representing protection from misfortune and evil spirits; seven rice balls, which stand for being united and holding together; seven triangular-shaped lumps of sticky rice in packages, which again represent solidarity but also sharpness like a weapon; seven boiled bananas, symbolising good discipline

and loyalty; seven branches of Paw Woung flowers, signifying the ability to settle and grow in any place; and seven pieces of sugarcane, a sweet plant that presents the quality of good ethics, moral values and racial progress.

After this explanation, there was a sense that the formalities were over and everyone was invited to get up and dance. The first dance taught was the Latin-sounding 'Macarena', followed by an Indian Bollywood tune, and ending with a traditional Karen Stick Dance. After much laughter and exertion, everyone helped themselves to a buffet-style feast of home cooked Burmese food, including spiced chicken, coconut jelly and 'Sanwin Makin' semonlina cake!

A special thank you to Fang Ji, Advocacy Support & Capacity Building Officer, from ADEC, who invited us to attend this event. This is a partnership that we so value at Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria.

Below: Anne & Bibi



Photo below: Participants from BSRV at Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony



Wanted - Vision Impaired Bowlers



Were you a regular lawn bowler but don't play anymore due to your poor eyesight? Being vision impaired should not stop you from playing lawn bowls.

Why not contact Blind Bowls Victoria and learn more about their club and how you can be involved. Email secretary.bbv@gmail.com for further information.

Mt Evelyn Recreation Day Camp

With support from YMCA Victoria's Open Doors Fund, BSRV together with YMCA will be hosting a day camp at Mt Evelyn for children and their parents.

The day will include many activities such as Low Rope Course, Giant Swing, Nature Walk & Damper Making.

Places are limited so get in early!

Date: Tuesday 1 October
Time: 9.30am – 4.30pm
Where: 70 Tramway Rd, Mt. Evelyn
Cost: \$25 per child / \$15 Parent
RSVP: Miriam 03 9822 8876
miriam@blindsports.org.au

Pictures below: Ropes course and damper making



Meet the BSRV Team

Today's Profile – Allie Douglas, Project Coordinator – Teens Program

Picture below: Allie Douglas



I started working with BSRV in September 2018. I did not follow a straight path to get to this position, although my love of sport has certainly played a major role.

I dedicated 20 years to playing basketball, including 9 years in the Women's National Basketball League (WNBL) and 4 years on the National Squad, the Opals. I feel terribly lucky to have sport in my life as it kept me healthy, and also gave me a platform to pursue my passion for equity and inclusion in the community. I started playing basketball when I was seven. I was a very tall child and had experienced some bullying, so my parents joined me up with the Eltham Wildcats so I would be in an environment which valued my height. In my first game I grabbed the ball twice and ran with it. Then I held onto it and wouldn't let anyone have it. Then I learned to pass....and many more new skills.

By my mid-teens I was playing at the elite level and at 18 years, I was lucky enough to be signed by the Dandenong Rangers to play in the (WNBL). I never stopped learning. These lessons were not confined to physical skills. Through basketball I learned how to set and pursue goals, and how to start again when I failed to master a skill. It taught me how to find positives when we lost and to think about what I might improve when we won. It taught me to keep on working when everything seemed to go wrong – and to take stock and work on new skills when things went well. It taught me how to work with a range of people with very different values and interests to me.

Basketball was never my only focus, as I was also a (mostly) dedicated student with a passion for learning, and a commitment to social equality. I made choices about my basketball career to make sure it did not impact on my studies. Looking back, I know it was these two very different passions which allowed me to develop my career in youth work and sports development. I never would have been given my first youth work role as a Sports Role Model without my basketball career, but I never would have understood the intricacies of inclusion and equity in the community without my passion for learning.

Now I find myself enjoying a wonderful role with BSRV, supporting young people with vision loss to engage with sport and physical activity. I hope I can support them to find their own joy in sport and to develop their own range of skills for life off the court.

Boroondara 'Sounds Like' Exhibition at the Hawthorn Town Hall Galley

By Emma Wilkinson

Social Inclusion and Policy Officer, City of Boroondara

On 26 June 2019 we visited the Hawthorn Town Hall Art Gallery for a curator-led described tour of the Boroondara Sounds Like Art Exhibition.

Will from Description Victoria and Boroondara Council staff produced an interactive tour to experience art using sound from tactile bronze mobiles and sculptures, use of the spoken word, vibrations, high and low tonal sound and smells of incense. We also heard directly from one of the artists to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning in their works described from a video art installation.

The Exhibition featured works from the Artists, Roger Alsop, Vicky Browne, Megan Alice Clune, Julian Day and Camille Robinson.

Listen out for more similar described events that will be open for you to experience at the Hawthorn Arts Centre in the future.



Volunteer in Vogue *Creating positive change!*

By Samantha

Volunteering begins where my passion and values lies, my love for meeting people from all walks of life, and to hopefully create positive change by giving back to the community.

I very much have a passion for promoting one's participation and enjoyment in everyday life, and volunteering has enabled me to support people to participate in healthy and active lifestyles, promoting health, well-being and social interactions. Volunteering provides experiences for new and exciting challenges whilst also opportunities of developing new skills.

I have been able to embrace different cultural experiences during my time at Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria, allowing me to broaden my perspective on the beliefs and values of other people and its influence on their everyday life.

Jean and I have been walking together for a year now. We have shared together the benefits of walking and have strengthened our social connections with other walkers and volunteers within the organisation. Jean and I walk on a fortnightly basis around her local community; this may include walking around her local shops, the community's green spaces, and along the walking trails.

Volunteering has given me a chance to form a close and meaningful relationship with Jean that has had a lasting impact on my life. I've very much enjoyed getting to know Jean, sharing our passion and experiences

of travel, and I've also enjoyed learning about Jean's experiences of her everyday life living with a vision impairment.

I hope I've helped Jean develop skills to build her confidence around accessing her local community, whether that's going to the shops, spending time in the community gardens, or walking along the walking trails in her community. I hope Jean's participation has promoted her fitness, well-being and community involvement.

Photo below: Samantha and Jean – WWP buddies



Giving back to my Community!

By Vicky

Volunteering has been something I've always been passionate about since school. I really love listening to people's stories and meeting people from all walks of life, and have found volunteering a perfect way I can

do that, and contribute back to my community. I have been walking with Gwen since February, 2019 in St Albans, Victoria. In the warmer months, we went to the local park, but now that it is cooler, we actually just stay at Gwen's and have a cuppa. I think the benefits for Gwen are being able to form a new friendship from scratch, have some company on a day where she is home alone, and be able to go outside and enjoy the weather with a friend. The thing that I really enjoy, is our friendship.

I really appreciate Gwen because she is always checking up on me regardless how busy we may be. Knowing that we were complete strangers to where we are today is really fulfilling and rewarding. I'd like to thank you Miriam for allowing me to join Blind Sports, and meeting Gwen has been a delight!

Pictured below: Vicky & Gwen – WWP buddies



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

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[Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria](https://www.facebook.com/BlindSportsRecreationVictoria)

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