

**Volunteer Newsletter Update from Adele Francis (Senior Regional Manager South Wales) and Marian Williams (Regional Manager North Wales) February 2023.**

**Happy Valentine’s Day, our poem to you.**

Valentine greetings you lovely lot, Keep on reading not to miss the plot,

Roses are red, violets are blue, you have no idea how much we appreciate what you do. Thank you.

**Hobby Update**

**Sailing**

Visually Impaired Sailing Association (Visa-gb) aim through the freedom of sailing to empower, motivate, and encourage visually impaired people and help to build lasting friendships.

Visa-gb provides sailing experiences around the UK for the over 18s on yachts of 36 to 44 feet with trips of up to 7 days and work with the local communities to establish a permanent legacy for the visually impaired.

All boats have the support of three experienced sighted sailing volunteers including a Yachtmaster qualified instructor; the other three crew are all visually impaired and will have the chance to experience every duty on the boat from raising the sails, to helming and berthing the yacht.

Visa-gb are running a three yacht, seven-day trip from 9th to 16th June 2023 starting and finishing at Milford Haven at a subsidised cost of £375 this includes all food onboard. Shorter sails may be available. For more information, see the website: www.visa-gb.org.uk, E-mail: info@visa-gb.org.uk or call Dee 07920 144614

**Golf**

The Runcie family at Abergele Golf Club are holding a free "Have a Go" taster session for the blind and visually impaired community in North Wales on Saturday 11 March at 1.30pm 2023. Visually impaired people of all ages are welcome; a parent or guardian must accompany under 16’s.

We welcome everyone including people new to golf and those who have played golf prior to losing their sight and wish to return to the game. There are instructors supporting and advising on the day. For more information and to book call 07507 641 325 or 07542 828312. Geoff Morris - Trustee for England and Wales Blind Golf

**Research**

How could your data play a part in the future of eye care?

Dr Wen Hwa Lee, chief executive officer and chief scientist of charity Action Against AMD (AAAMD), has shared more about how your data could play a part in the future of eye care.

Joining our monthly My Macular and Me webinar in January Lee revealed more detail about a new project, which will see AAAMD working alongside optometrists and ophthalmologists to ensure more retinal photos and scans are made available to researchers.

The project, which will be launching later this year, will be encouraging the public to donate data safely and securely for research. Lee said this aims to create the world’s largest database of retinal images from the public, which is a critical piece to be analysed using artificial intelligence (AI) to develop new insights in detection of macular disease, earlier diagnosis and new treatments.

Lee said: “With this effort and us taking this special interest in eye health, we are one of the first countries to move the entire firefighting mode to understanding how the disease occurs to try and stop it early on.”

Lee also highlighted how the project could help reduce pressure on NHS services. He said: “With so much pressure on the NHS especially in secondary care where ophthalmology has been the busiest outpatient specialty for several consecutive years, it is now not only logical but necessary to better call upon primary care.”

He added: “If optometrists can be equipped with tools to help them send only the people who absolutely need to go to hospital we already increase the productivity of the NHS without a single pound being injected into the system.”

The project will see researchers use the data to train AI tools to augment the optometrists to further increase their ability to discern disease from people who have not yet been diagnosed, to detect multiple conditions earlier or even before they may cause any harm. By collecting data from ‘healthy’ participants (or ‘pre-patients’), this will ensure that the AI algorithms are representative of the population and can have a longer-term impact on our future health.

Keep an eye out over the next few months as we’ll be revealing more about this project and how you, and your family, can get involved.

**Events**

**Low Vision Open Day** supporting all areas of Sight loss Wednesday 29th March 2023 open from 10am to 2pm Neath Community Centre, 10-12 Orchard Street, **Neath**, SA11 1DU.

Monday 20 March 2023, open from 10am to 3pm, The ASK Centre, 9 Water Street, **Rhyl**, LL18 1SP.

Would you like to learn more about support, services, and groups? Meet your local charities and societies; ask any questions you might have. Gain hands on experience with products and technology to aid you in your daily activities. Magnifiers, Electronics, reading machines, desktops and much more. Entry is free and no appointment needed. We look forward to meeting you there!

**Sight Village (fantastic opportunity for a group trip)**

QAC's Sight Village, the exhibition for people with sight loss, their families and professionals working with them, is to return to Wales. The one-day event will take place at All Nations Centre, Cardiff, CF14 3NY on the 18th April. Doors will open at 10am until 3.30pm and as always, Sight Village is FREE to attend.

It is an opportunity to find out about the latest technology, products and support services for people with sight loss from exhibitors including charities, commercial companies and voluntary organisations. You can pre-register for the event by calling one of the team on 0121 803 5484.

If you would like further information about any of the topics raised in the newsletter, please contact Adele on **07494468007** or Marian on **07495 054 053** or you can ring the Advice and Information number on **0300 3030 111**.

Kind regards,

Adele and Marian