



A night of glamour and fun at the RVIB Gold Ball

RVIB's dinner and dancing fundraiser, the Gold Ball, was held on Saturday, 10 May at the Melbourne Town Hall Grand Ballroom and was a roaring success.

This year, RVIB Gold Ball organisers recreated the glitz and glamour of stage and screen for a glamorous night consisting of a four-course meal, lively atmosphere and big band entertainment.

Special Projects and Events Manager, Jeff Johnson, says that the Gold Ball is an important event on the RVIB calendar not only due to its grand scale, but also because of the relationship it helps to foster between RVIB and corporate Victoria.

"We planned the evening as a glamorous night out for those who attend but, ultimately, we all know why we do this - to raise funds," Jeff said.

"Special entertainment was provided by two golden legend impersonators; Elvis and Frank Sinatra. It was in keeping with our theme, differentiated our event from others and certainly helped create some added appeal."

A live and silent auction was also held on the night and proceeds will assist the purchase of new computer equipment for children at the RVIB School.

RVIB thanks the many sponsors and supporters who not only helped make the night such a success, but who also generated much needed funds for people who are blind or vision impaired.

(More photos overleaf)



▲ The Melbourne Town Hall was the perfect setting for this black tie event



▲ Elvis staged a spectacular show

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RVIB

> Vision: To be the leading provider of services, resources and information which enable people who are blind or vision impaired to maximise their independence and quality of life.

For people who are blind or vision impaired, the road to independence is a challenge.



There are many aspects of lifestyle that must be adapted and different ways of doing things learned, but everyday in Victoria thousands of legally blind citizens are doing just that.

One of RVIB's major roles as a leading blindness agency is to offer our clients the training, education and support needed for them to be able to build and maintain independent lives.

This issue of RVIB News contains a few stories that highlight the independence and achievements of people who are legally blind.

Our feature story profiles RVIB Board Member Don Draffin who, despite losing his eyesight 20 years ago, has built a successful and competitive business with his two brothers.

Don, like so many RVIB clients, has embraced life and in doing so continues to achieve and inspire others to do the same.

RVIB is also fortunate to be associated with well-known Latin musician, Jose Feliciano, for his Melbourne concert to be held at the end of May. Jose, who was born blind, has been entertaining music-lovers all over the world for decades and continues to do so.

Each of these stories forms a preview to our annual awareness week, For Sight Week, which will be held again in September. The theme will be, "independence" and more details will be revealed next issue.

Thank you also to our supporters who attended the RVIB Gold Ball dinner-dance. It was a wonderful evening and the live and silent auction was successful in raising money to assist the purchase of specialised computer equipment for our students at the RVIB School.

Yours sincerely,

Doug Kent
Chief Executive Officer, RVIB

RVIB Gold Ball ...



▲ *Guests danced the night away*



▲ *Celebrity MC, Jo Pearson*



▲ *Some of the auction items*



▲ *Marilyn Monroe made a special guest appearance*

RVIB kids win on the track



Twelve RVIB clients, and their carers, were given the opportunity to attend the Children's Australian Formula One Grand Prix Party courtesy of Qantas. Rachel Laverick, from RVIB Corporate Development and Sponsorship was there and shares her impressions of the event.

At 9am on Thursday, 6 March there were seven little engines sitting at the Burwood School all raring to go!

Upon arrival we joined in the hurly burly of the crowd around the circuit, but the first pit stop was morning tea in the Qantas Corporate Box.

Afterwards the children spent the day running around and having fun.

As the cars screamed past, the children squealed with delight. Sitting trackside we saw, heard and smelt the V8 SuperCars and Formula One cars. The Tattersall's Historic Car Demonstration and Mini Celebrity Challenge were also part of the fun.

Like all good things the day had to come to an end, but with ice-creams and presents in hand who could complain? Qantas provided a fantastic experience and nothing was too much trouble. We really were made to feel welcome.

We extend our thanks and appreciation to Qantas for involving RVIB in this event, and in showing continued support to people who are blind or vision impaired in Victoria.

Zest for life the key to success

The head of street furniture manufacturer Draffin-Inwel admits that being blind can be a set back at times but has had little impact on his vision for life or big business. Corey Nassau reports.

Living with a disability is all about putting alternative things in place so that you can continue to enjoy the pleasantries in life according to the Managing Director of Draffin-Inwel, Don Draffin.

Don, who is also an RVIB Board Member, lost his eyesight 20 years ago and whilst he sometimes finds it testing, his attitude toward life is more positive now than when he had his sight.

“I think I've become more positive since losing my eyesight and I, just like others who are blind or vision impaired, have to be that way because the challenges are great and the hurdles high,” he said.

“Becoming blind meant that I had to change the way in which I approached a lot of things, not only in my vocation, but also in the common tasks I was used to doing every day.”

Don acknowledges that there are things that he used to do in comfort that he no longer can, but says that his new life is about finding other things that give him equal pleasure and satisfaction.

Draffin-Inwel, a Bayswater-based company with an annual turnover of more than \$4 million, is one of those pleasures and he runs it alongside his two brothers; John, who is vision impaired also, and Brian. Don and John are both RVIB clients and Brian is a regular volunteer.

“We specialise in the manufacture of street furniture and many Australians would, perhaps unknowingly, already be familiar with our park benches and rubbish bins because they're everywhere,” Don said.

RVIB College offers a broad curriculum of accredited adaptive technology training for people who are blind or



▲ RVIB client and Managing Director of Draffin-Inwel, Don Draffin

vision impaired and Don agrees that the training he has received from RVIB over the past seven years has been crucial to his business performance.

Using voice-synthesised computers he has mastered many of the products common to office use, such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel and is now tackling a complex database program.

“Ironically when I was sighted I had a secretary type my letters. Now I'm blind and I type my own,” he said.

Recently in Sydney on a sales exercise with the NSW Government, Don took some time out for an interview with RVIB's weekly radio program on 3RPH, *Around the Institute*.

Competing with the background noise of moving forklifts, he explained that he was about 20 minutes out of the city and he and his team were in the process of dismantling a furniture display so they could make their flight home that evening.

“I love doing this and I do it because I can. Sometimes you have to rely on others and it provides a challenging workplace, but it also means that our team skills with our staff have to be that much better and we take pride in that,” Don said.

“We have 35 people working for us and we have a tremendous team spirit with all of them. You just do the things that you can do.”

Away from the office Don pursues his love of trains by delving into railway history, hobby trains and railway tours. He reads a few talking books each week and also spends time at his beach house when he can find the time.

“We're always very busy and I like it that way. It's so important to create situations in life that keep you challenged,” he said.

“There are always things you can put in place to help you reach your goals, whether you have lost your sight, hearing, smell or touch, and I look up to many of the people I meet at RVIB who cope with these issues day by day.”

Paul Newman funds new resource for RVIB



Children, aged 0 to 3 years who are blind or vision impaired, will soon be able to benefit from a new RVIB textbook, "Little Steps", thanks to a generous grant received from the Paul Newman Foundation to help develop this resource.

The textbook, written by RVIB Early Childhood Educators Liz Houghton and Sandie Mackevicius, will address the special needs of children during these critical early years and will be an invaluable resource for teachers and the children's families.

Ron Dann, Manager of Trusts and Foundations at RVIB, was delighted that the Paul Newman Foundation agreed to lend their support to the project, providing much needed funding to cover the book's printing and photography costs.

Mr Newman, best known for his skills as an actor, has developed a foundation to support charities worldwide by giving away all profits, after taxes, from the sale of his salad dressings and pasta sauces to charities in countries where his products are sold. Since his business started over 20 years ago, the Newman Foundation has donated over \$200 million, including \$8 million to Australian based organisations.

RVIB relies on the support of sponsors such as the Paul Newman Foundation to continue developing new projects and resources for people who are blind or vision impaired throughout Victoria.

RVIB thanks lifetime achievers



▲ RVIB recognised the outstanding achievements of Auxiliaries, volunteers, individuals and corporate supporters at a ceremony held on the grounds of Government House.

The Governor of Victoria, Mr John Landy, was given the honour of presenting lifetime achievement awards to some of RVIB's most dedicated supporters during a presentation lunch held at Government House in March.

Organised by RVIB, as an official gesture to recognise the outstanding contributions made by our auxiliary members, long time volunteers and sponsors, the impressive garden location provided a perfect backdrop for the occasion.

President of the RVIB Board of Directors, Dr Trevor Anderson, and RVIB's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Doug Kent, both addressed the attendees and thanked them for their commitment and generosity of spirit.

"You can all be proud, for you are part of the team that ensures RVIB's services are accessible to those who need them," Mr Kent said.

"Today, we celebrate our relationship with you. We recognise and honour your past efforts and hope we will continue to work together to meet the challenges of the future."

Receiving lifetime achievement awards were each of the 22 auxiliaries, individual volunteers who have offered years of commitment to the organisation and, of course, representatives from our major corporate sponsors and partners: Qantas, Channel Nine and Southern Cross Broadcasting (3AW and Magic693).

The proceedings concluded with the drawing of a raffle, in which the Donald Auxiliary took home two out of the three prizes.

RVIB thanks the sponsors and supporters whose generosity helped make this event possible.



Jose Feliciano - a legend in concert supports RVIB

Lennard Promotions, in association with RVIB, is proud to present six time Grammy Award winner Jose Feliciano live in concert.

Performing in Melbourne for one night only, Jose Feliciano will return to Crown Casino with his salsa dancers and some of New York's finest Latin musicians.

RVIB Community Relationship Manager, Kerri Guyett, says that the association that has been formed with the legally blind musician will provide positive exposure for RVIB.

"It's wonderful to be affiliated with this concert, not only because of Jose's international stature, but also because he is a wonderful example of achievement and independence to those who are blind and vision impaired," Kerri said.

Jose Feliciano, who is one of Latin music's best-known figures, has recorded more than 60 albums and is

considered as one of the first Latin artists to cross over into the English music market.

Jose will perform classic hits including, Light My Fire, California Dreamin', Rain, Feliz Navidad, Hi Heel Sneakers... and many more.

RVIB has secured 100 premium seats to the concert and are available at the same price as regular tickets (\$65). Two lucky ticket holders from this allocation will win a meet and greet with the star.

Premium seats can be purchased by contacting Kerri Guyett, RVIB Community Relations, on (03) 9522 5232. Tickets also available through Ticketek.

Jose Feliciano will perform in *An Evening of Latin Passion* on Saturday, 31 May 2003 at 8pm.

For more information contact **Kerri Guyett**, RVIB, on **(03) 9522 5232**.

Feelix Project Looking for sponsors



The Braille Book Project, known as Feelix, is a borrowing library of picture

books that have been made accessible for the first time to children with a vision impairment. Feelix's Project Manager, Louise Curtin, says that since the launch in February there have been many requests from families that have a child or children in their early years of school. Previously, they have been unable to access picture storybooks with Braille in them and Feelix fills this gap. **Sponsors are urgently needed to help fund this project.** For further information please call Louise Curtin at RVIB on 9522 5216.

Congratulations



Congratulations to Mr Krzysztof Dusik on winning a new Toyota Rav4 valued at over \$35,000 in RVIB's car raffle drawn on 4 April. Michael Lane of Lane Toyota in Glen Waverley presented Mr Dusik with the car (pictured).

NEW RAFFLE - 3 SEPT. 2003

To be part of RVIB's new raffle for a 2003 Toyota Camry Sportivo sedan valued at \$34,974, please call **Jenny Hannan** at RVIB on **9522 5298**.

RVIB Events

RVIB For Sight Week 8 - 12 September, 2003

▶ RVIB will be celebrating its annual state-wide awareness campaign, 'For Sight Week', from 8 to 12 September, 2003. A number of fun events and educational activities are planned to increase community awareness about what it means to live with blindness or a vision impairment and to highlight the achievements of a number of RVIB clients. If you would like to become a corporate sponsor for For Sight Week, please call RVIB Corporate Development / Sponsorship on 9522 5205.

Christmas in July Luncheon 30 July, 2003, Tatra Restaurant

▶ Celebrate Christmas in July with RVIB at Tatra Restaurant in the beautiful and tranquil Dandenong Ranges. Enjoy a sumptuous two course meal of traditional Christmas fare followed by entertainment from a talented singer who will lead the singing of best loved Christmas carols. Tickets are \$30 (or \$40 if transportation is required). For bookings and enquiries please call Ian McDonald or Kerri Guyett at RVIB on 9522 5218 or 9522 5232.

High Tea at The Windsor 11 September, 2003

▶ To celebrate RVIB and its work over the past 139 years, you are invited to attend the Windsor Hotel for high tea in the Grand Ballroom. A traditional high tea will be served and a guest speaker and entertainment will add further highlights to the day. For bookings please call Ian McDonald on 9522 5218.

RVIB partner introduces new eye treatment in Australia



RVIB corporate partner Medownick Laser Clinic at Epworth Medical Centre in Melbourne, is pleased to announce that treatment is now available in Victoria for patients with very high refractive errors who are unsuitable for laser vision correction.

Dr Allan Sebban, at Medownick Laser Clinic, has recently performed the first Artisan implant operation to give high quality vision and a greatly enhanced lifestyle. The Artisan implant gives stable predictable vision for a broad range of high myopia (short-sightedness) and high hypermetropia (long-sightedness). It is also partially reversible, and maintains the integrity of the central cornea.

The initial design was first released in 1986 and since this time thousands of artisan implants have been successfully implanted in Europe. Unlike some other types of implants, the Artisan lens is especially suitable for young patients (18 and over) since implantation does not affect near focussing and patients can enjoy clear distance and near vision without requiring reading glasses.

This exciting surgery is now available in Australia. Like a contact lens, the power of the Artisan lens is customized for each patient's eye.

For further information please call Meadownick Project Manager George Kazanis on 0407 305 540 or Managing director Dr Alla Geiro on 0414 661 952.

RVIB History Project - Update



▲ An early photograph (circa 1890 - 1910) taken on the grounds of RVIB's St. Kilda Road headquarters depicting staff and students.

Earlier this year RVIB initiated a history project to consolidate information about RVIB's past. History Project Coordinator Patsy Vizents provides an update on her fascinating journey through RVIB's 137 year history.

I have been working on the History Project for three months now and have managed to get a great deal done in that time.

As more people find out about the project, donations of items are forthcoming. For instance, a gentleman contacted me with a donation of the 1952 RVIB Christmas Appeal Cup presented to the hotel where his late uncle resided. The hotel had raised the most money during this appeal. Uncle Jack had kept this cup and other memorabilia from the past, and it is now time for it to be returned.

Through the process of sorting stored records, many items of interest have been found. A report was written by an unknown author, who was possibly the instigator of a model railway club that began soon after the Burwood School was opened in the 1960. The report details how the club was organised and how locomotives and rolling stock worked together to form the

stations and tracks that the boys of the club could use. Newspaper articles from June 1962 have been found that detail some of the club's activities.

Another piece of information from newspaper clippings details the way that RVIB raised money. The hotels, as mentioned above, had donation tins or ran special events to raise money for the Institute and in 1962 a particularly novel appeal called "Operation Neighbour" was held. About 33,000 tins were distributed throughout Victoria. Voluntary helpers gave these to the first house in each street within the collection area, with instructions to pass the tin to the next-door neighbour. The Appeal aimed to raise \$500,000 (250,000 pounds) and after 1/3 of the tins were returned, \$194,000 (97,000 pounds) had been raised. Doesn't that say a lot about trust in the community when money can be collected by passing the tin from neighbour to neighbour?

Being able to dip back into the past through the newspaper articles and the photographs, some taken for RVIB promotional purposes, is a wonderful way to weave together the individual strands of this organisation.



RVIB

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