



Generous spirit shines at the Gala Ball

RVIB's second annual Gala Ball lived up to its billing as a night of glamour and fun, as close to 300 guests danced and dined the night away at the fundraiser held on Saturday, 26 June.

Channel Nine celebrities, Jacinta Stapleton (*Stingers*) and Steven Jacobs (*Postcards*) hosted the black-tie event held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel's Savoy Ballroom, which raised crucial funds for the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) and Vision Australia Foundation (VAF).

Five-star entertainment was provided by some of Melbourne's most talented musical acts. These included jazz sensation Nina Ferro, the talented Bob Valentine, comedian Marty Fields, musician Peter Cupples and the lively Peter Sullivan Big Band.

Live and silent auctions held on the evening were a tremendous success, and further boosted the fundraising efforts. Some of the fantastic items auctioned included a \$10,000 advertising package from Channel Nine; a Toyota RAV4; and the naming rights to a guide dog puppy, courtesy of Guide Dogs Victoria.

The guide dogs were a big hit with guests, although the pups were



▲ RVIB board member Mrs Margaret Peril and her husband Jacques kicked up their heels at the Gala Ball. See page three for more photographs.

oblivious to the attention, sleeping throughout the bidding process.

The night raised over \$60,000 which will help RVIB and VAF to continue providing essential services to the growing number of Victorians who are blind or vision impaired. Latest figures show that close to 138,000 Victorians live with blindness or a vision impairment.

Special thanks to all our donors, supporters and sponsors without whom this event could not have been possible.

contents

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| CEO's MESSAGE | 2 |
| GALA BALL PHOTOS | 3 |
| VISION FOR THE WORK | 4 |
| 4SIGHT WEEK | 5 |
| RVIB OPEN DAY | 6 |



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.*

CEO's message



I am pleased to announce that members of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, Vision Australia

Foundation and

Royal Blind Society of New South Wales voted in favour of a proposed amalgamation. This opens the door for the newly combined agency to provide improved services for people who are blind or vision impaired in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT.

This is a wonderful result for all three agencies and allows us to build on our collective experience and to move forward as a much stronger entity. By merging, we can also save significant costs by reducing the duplicated effort associated with running three agencies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters who have helped RVIB not only in recent times, but over the many years that the organisation has been a leader in the provision of quality services for people who are blind or vision impaired. I hope you will continue to show your support as we move ahead with our united front.

I would also like to thank all those who attended the Gala Ball held in June. It is wonderful that so much philanthropy still exists in the community and I am grateful to everyone who helped contribute to the night's success. I would also like

to extend my gratitude to the many sponsors who donated items towards the auction, which achieved an excellent result.

Future events on this year's calendar include our annual awareness campaign, 4sight Week, which will run from 6 to 10 September. The countdown to RVIB Carols by Candlelight has also begun, and we hope you will join us in this spectacular Christmas eve tradition.

An organisation such as RVIB could not have survived for over 138 years without the generosity of sponsors, donors and supporters like you. As we enter a new and exciting era we need your help now more than ever. Each and every donation is important. Through your continued support at this crucial time, you can be part of the generation who helps build our future. The time to make a real difference to the lives of people who are blind or vision impaired is now.

Yours sincerely

Dr Douglas M Kent
Chief Executive Officer, RVIB

RVIB course helps build confidence

Improving the safety of people who are blind or vision impaired when using public transport was the focus of a unique course run by RVIB in July.

The two-day educational program gave 24 clients the opportunity to learn more about how to stay safe on public transport as well as discover self-defence strategies to improve confidence when out and about.

RVIB orientation and mobility specialist, Malcolm Fraser says that the program was designed to encourage safe travel and included input from a number of transport industry professionals.

"A number of professionals, including representatives from Connex Trains, Yarra Trams, BusVic and Victoria Police, offered their time to address the participants and we appreciated their support and enthusiasm," Malcolm says.

A half-day session on self-defence strategies was also held in a professional training studio to round out the practical aspects of the workshop.

"The perception that people who are legally blind are more of a target than sighted individuals is not statistically supported and we're keen to get that message across to course attendees."

"RVIB's mission is to enable clients to be independent and mobile. Whether a person is walking to a destination or using public transport, this course makes a direct contribution to encouraging independence and we're delighted to have offered it."

Thank you to all our sponsors for helping make the 2004 Gala Ball such a success



▲ Guest Ramona Mandy was thrilled to have been the highest bidder for naming rights to this guide dog puppy.



▲ Jacinta Stapleton and Steven Jacobs from Channel 9 were fantastic hosts.



▲ Jazz sensation Nina Ferro and her band had the crowd dancing.

PREMIER SPONSORS:

Channel 9
Toyota
Flower Flower
Lobster Cave Restaurant
Comelinside Quality Homewares
Bristow Prentice Lambaard Budd
Mystique Print
3AW

MAJOR SPONSORS:

Enough Rope, Roving Enterprises,
Melbourne Racing Club, Sport 927,
Moonee Valley Racing Club, Australian
Jet Adventures, Leader Community
Newspapers, Hidden Valley Golf &
Country Club, Fedele Jewelworks,
Preschool Equipment, McCormicks,
Moss Garden Products, Toorak Manor,
Flag Choice Hotels, Corporate
Traveller, Robert Piccoli Photography,
Mt Hotham Ski Resort Management,
CUB, Cumberland Lorne Resort,

Grand Hyatt Hotel, Australasian
Sporting Photos, Jurlique Skincare
Products, Brown Brothers Wines,
Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Pleasure
Boat Cruises, Dubbo Open Range
Zoo, Sydney Aquarium, Melbourne
Aquarium, Werribee Zoo, Melbourne
Zoo, Pollywoodside Maritime Museum,
Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre,
ADO Boutique, Sheraton on the Park
– Sydney and BridgeClimb.

CORPORATE SPONSORS:

Pelaco International, Belgian Beer
Bluestone Café, Channel 9, Bristow
Prentice Lambaard Budd, Comelinside
Quality Homewares, Systems Union,
Hershell Asset Management, Ripponlea
Mitsubishi, Hall Chadwick, Horwath
Partners, City of Melbourne,
PulseData Australia, ANZ Trustees,
Butler & Co Real Estate and
Morpheum Pty Ltd.

RVIB Events

RVIB CAROLS BY
CANDLELIGHT

– 24 DECEMBER 2004



► RVIB Carols by Candlelight holds a special place in the hearts of many Australians as this unique event brings families together to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

The event, now in its 67th year, is RVIB's biggest annual fundraiser, with all proceeds going towards helping provide services to thousands of Australians who are blind or vision impaired.

Each year RVIB Carols by Candlelight attracts a crowd of over 30,000 people who gather to watch Australia's finest musicians and artists perform Christmas carols on stage. Our media partners, Channel 9 and 3AW also bring RVIB Carols by Candlelight to the homes of over 2,000,000 Australians through the live national telecast, and simulcast the event across the Southern Cross radio network Australia wide.

Carols is held under the stars at the magnificent Arts Centre, Sidney Myer Music Bowl. A pre-show especially for children will be held from 8.00pm, and the live Carols telecast begins at 9:00pm.

Tickets to this year's event go on sale on 13 November 2004 and can be purchased by calling Ticketmaster7 on 1300 136 166. For full event details please visit www.rvibcarolsbycandlelight.com.au.

Vision for the work

Luigi Todino has been vision impaired for more than 35 years and the road to employment has been a challenge. Now, thanks to the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and the City of Melbourne he's back on track.

For any person who is vision impaired finding work can be a major hurdle, but with support from RVIB Employment Services and the right employer the search and determination can pay off.

In February 2004, Luigi commenced an 18-month traineeship with the City of Melbourne's arts and culture department and he says he couldn't be happier with the position he's now in.

Finding this role has been a long-time coming says the 35-year-old who has qualifications in disability work and community education and now provides administrative support to a team of six.

"I was born with degenerative myopia, which left me with no vision in my left eye and only five per cent peripheral vision remaining in my right," Luigi says.

"I have always been keen to make a full-time contribution to the workforce and when this opportunity came up I was determined to make it happen."



▲ Luigi Todino's work placement has helped turn his life around.

Luigi is proud that he discovered the traineeship program, set his sights on achieving it and then worked together with RVIB Employment Services to give himself the best chance at selection.

"When I saw the program advertised I knew this was a chance I couldn't let pass by and that I was going to put all my resources into helping me get there," he says.

"I worked with RVIB to develop my interview skills and to prepare my application and it paid off. I'm now working full-time and feeling great about where I'm at."

City of Melbourne's Cultural Development Team Leader, Jane Crawley, says that Luigi is fantastic to work with and that both he and guide dog, Zarek have fitted into the team well.

"Working in the arts and culture branch can be quite demanding but Luigi has taken it in his stride and has been wonderful to work with," Jane says.

"He is very generous in spirit, is collaborative, passionate, clever and hard working, operates well in a team context and has a terrific dry sense of humour."

Upon commencing employment with the City of Melbourne, RVIB conducted a work site assessment to determine if Luigi would require any adaptive equipment or workplace modifications to fulfill his duties. Luigi says that both RVIB and his new employer have been extremely supportive.

"RVIB produced a report for the City of Melbourne that contained clear recommendations on how the workplace and my workstation could be improved to maximise accessibility and clear unnecessary obstructions," Luigi says.

"My computer required some extra software, including the screen reading package called JAWS, and most other changes were extremely simple."

Jane says that prior to Luigi's commencement, an RVIB employment consultant conducted training for the entire team to assist them in developing a better understanding of blindness.

"The co-worker training certainly helped everyone in the arts and culture branch develop a better understanding of what it means to be blind and vision impaired," Jane says.

Luigi has only been in the traineeship for a few months but is already glowing as a result of this change to his day-to-day life.

"The traineeship will run for 18-months and I'm thankful for this opportunity every day," he says. "Many employers don't realise how easy it is to employ a person who is blind or vision impaired, but once in a while you will get a chance to prove yourself."

For more information about the work of RVIB Employment Services, or to learn more about employing a person who is blind or vision impaired, phone RVIB Employment Services on (03) 9520 5555.



▲ Robyn McKenzie

Past Achievement Award winner reports

By Robyn McKenzie

Last year, I was awarded the outstanding personal achievement award as part of the For Sight Week campaign. I won a return trip for two to Tasmania flying with Qantas.

In March, I flew to Hobart with my friend Russell. Having only been to Tassie once as a child, I felt obliged to do all the normal touristy things you do in Tassie.

But, as often happens for me when I travel, the most significant memory from the trip has become evident all these months later. And, in a way which I would never have imagined, the memory has enabled me to reflect on my purpose for working at RVIB.

While walking along the beach at Snug Bay, I met a man who was circumnavigating Tasmania on his push bike. His backpack was adorned with pots and pans and various other cooking utensils. It turned out he was recovering from a broken leg and a psychiatric illness. The next day, Russell received an SMS message from his niece who was slowly sailing her way around Australia with her boyfriend. As luck would have it, they were moored at Katering, the next bay along from us only nine kilometres away.

We visited Sarah and Jason and had drinks on their boat in the late afternoon sun. They'd left Melbourne five months ago to start their great Aussie tour and had become side tracked by Tasmania's beauty.

They were now "potholing" their way around Tassie. Apparently a lot of sailors pothole their way around bays along the coastline. I hadn't heard the term potholing before.

That night, in my "Harry Potter cupboard under the stairs bedroom" in our onsite caravan at the Snug Bay caravan park, I contemplated potholing. It occurred to me that life is like potholing. You take the time to explore your goals by investigating certain pathways. Some pathways lead you to exactly where you want to go. Other pathways take you somewhere you never expected to go and others help you to find out what you really want to do.

Clients visit various aspects of our services as they pothole their way through adjustment to vision impairment and I'm very pleased to be a part of that process. I would like to thank Terri Cameron for nominating me for the achievement award and I'd like to thank Qantas for the opportunity to visit Tasmania. The experience has enriched me.

“Some pathways lead you to exactly where you want to go. Other pathways take you somewhere you never expected to go and others help you to find out what you really want to do.”

4sight week

6 - 10 SEPTEMBER 2004



▲ 4sight Week ambassador Adam Elliot with his Oscar and Harvie Krumpet.

4sight Week will be launched at the Melbourne Observation Deck, Rialto Towers this September.

The annual campaign (6 to 10 September) will build on activities run in 2003 and continues educating Victorians and increasing community awareness about the abilities and achievements of people who are blind or vision impaired.

Among the activities planned for 4sight Week 2004, are a **launch** (6 September) with ambassador and Oscar winner Adam Elliot, an **educational display** at Scienceworks (6 to 10 September), **vision screening** in the Bourke Street mall (8 to 9 September), **High Tea at The Windsor Hotel** (9 September), and **book launch** of a new RVIB publication – *Thanks mate I'll try that* (10 September).

Also forming part of 4sight Week will be a brand new 4sight photography exhibition, which will be displayed in the Rialto Towers foyer all week. The exhibition will feature photographs taken by people who are blind or vision impaired.

RVIB will again be presenting Achievement Awards for excellence in fields such as business and enterprise; sport and recreation; and community service.

For full details about 4sight Week visit www.forsightweek.com.au.

“Open your eyes” – RVIB Open Day



▲ CJP participant Scott Nixon helped host the successful open day.

More than 200 people attended an open day held at RVIB's Prahran site on 3 July.

The open day, which was planned and coordinated by participants of the Community Jobs Program (CJP), was an opportunity for friends, family and members of the wider community to go behind the scenes and discover the services and support offered at the Prahran site.

"Open your eyes" was the event slogan and the day was both educational and experiential. Attendees were able to learn more about adaptive technology and Braille, observe sighted guide demonstrations and see the latest projects in the industrial skills area.

In addition, a number of free seminars were also held to offer open day goers the opportunity to hear and learn more about career planning, obtain professional advice on employment opportunities and services and to discover the array of courses and specialised training available from RVIB College.

The Member for Prahran, Mr Tony Lupton, attended to show his support.

Neighbours star reads for children who are blind



▲ Blair McDonough was a recent celebrity guest reader for Feelix.

Neighbours star, Blair McDonough, is the latest in a string of Melbourne-based celebrities who have donated their time to read for the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind's (RVIB) Early Childhood Braille Book Project, known as Feelix.

Blair, who stepped into the public eye in the first season of Big Brother, recently read the popular children's book *The Cat in the Hat*, written by Dr Seuss, at the Feelix recording studio in Kooyong.

Feelix is a borrowing library of picture books with Braille that have been made accessible for the first time to children with a vision impairment so that they can read and have fun with the same stories as their sighted friends.

Each storybook kit contains the original picture storybook annotated with Braille, a CD or tape of the story, some tactile aids to help the child enter the world of the story and a little tactile book so that children can tell the story to themselves or others.

Coordinator of Feelix, Louise Curtin, said that this unique project fills the gap in the availability of literature for young children who are blind or vision impaired.

"The reading of storybooks to young children who are blind or vision impaired is one of the earliest steps in the child understanding that print or Braille tell a story," Ms Curtin said.

Other celebrities who have read for the project include Felix Patron Sigrd Thornton, Jon Faine (ABC 774), Dennis Walter (3AW), Kerry Cue (author and columnist), David Treddineck (*The Secret Life of Us*), Kick Gurry (*Looking for Alibrandi*) and Michael Fitzpatrick (1981 and 1982 Carlton premiership captain).

The Feelix library currently holds more than 200 titles and kits are posted free of charge, by request, to Victorian families with children who are blind or vision impaired, under six years of age. Interested families can learn more about Feelix by phoning (03) 9522 5216.



RVIB

Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind 557 St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 3004

Telephone (03) 9522 5222 Facsimile (03) 9510 4735 Website www.rvib.org.au Email rvib@rvib.org.au