

# outlook

Blind Foundation Community Magazine

Autumn 2018



A Service  
Experience  
Designed by You



Beyond vision loss

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**Cover:** Cheerful volunteers at the Retina International World Congress, getting ready to welcome participants.

## Feedback on our services

The Blind Foundation is committed to providing high quality services to all its clients.

To provide feedback on our services, please contact **Denise Kitto**, National Manager, Customer Service and Advice, at [feedback@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:feedback@blindfoundation.org.nz) or C/- Private Bag 99941, Newmarket, Auckland 1149.

**Please get in touch if your vision needs change on 0800 24 33 33.**



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# Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of Outlook for 2018.

This issue is jam-packed with news and stories from our community.

Read about the latest from the Access Alliance, including a Q&A with campaigner Áine Kelly-Costello (page 10). Find out about a new solution for getting books to DAISY player users faster than before (page 8), and how public transport operators have supported guide dog training in Wellington (page 15).

The feature article (page 16) gives a window into the co-design work supporting how the Blind Foundation constructs a service experience in partnership with service users. It highlights a selection of the insights gathered by the initial co-design work, and provides information on how you can read a full summary of the related report.

In Our People section we tell Brian Grainger's story of mistaken identity and a speeding ticket (page 19), how Shannon Cleave went from 'couch potato to triathlon champion' (page 20), and Lance Girling-Butcher shares his experience with Tai Chi (page 22).

Our experts from the Blind Foundation's Adaptive Communications Adaptive Technology Service (ACATs) and Independent Living teams have contributed to the Tech Talk section, which covers the launch of smart speakers (page 27), tips for using a PenFriend audio labeller (page 28), frequently asked questions about learning braille (page 30), and more.

Finally, in the Get Involved section you can read about the latest from the Blind Foundation Library (page 32) and find out about some local events and groups happening all around the country that you're invited to come along to (page 34).

We love hearing from you. If you want to send us your thoughts, ideas, photos or stories we will share them whenever possible. Please get in touch via email at [communications@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:communications@blindfoundation.org.nz) or call us on **0800 24 33 33**.

**Ian Moody and the Marketing team.**

## Message from the Chief Executive

It has been a busy start to 2018 - a year proving to be full of opportunities for connecting and progress.

As you read this, we will be wrapping up our Red Puppy Appeal. The annual street collection helps us raise money for guide dogs, made possible by the thousands of volunteers who lend their support from local communities all over New Zealand. On behalf of

everyone at the Blind Foundation, I sincerely thank those volunteers and generous donors who have supported our guide dog services during this appeal.

Prior to that, we had the pleasure of hosting a number of international groups visiting New Zealand to attend the Retina International World Congress which was hosted this year in Auckland.

We also hosted guests from sister organisations in Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan. It is always insightful to share information and advice that help us expand our knowledge and help us with our ongoing improvements to our services.

The Retina Congress was an insightful event with experts from all over the globe presenting on current research and treatments of retinal diseases. We had 45 wonderful volunteers lend their time to support



attendees, and as a proud sponsor of the event I also had the opportunity to speak about the Blind Foundation.

Addressing an audience of eye professionals and current or potential Blind Foundation service users, I spoke about how our organisation is here to support people with vision loss at every stage of life.

I spoke of our commitment to finding ways of meeting the unmet needs of the thousands of New Zealanders with significant sight loss, who do not currently receive support from us. I also emphasised that we want to help people during the earlier stages of them losing their vision, because we can help them make the most of the vision they have left and then be there to support if things change later.

At the same time we are encouraging more people to seek support from the Blind Foundation, we are also readying our services to be best equipped for this. The co-design research we have

undertaken, which features in this issue of Outlook, is an important part in helping us to create a service experience that can meet the individual needs and goals that people have.

I am enormously appreciative of those from our community who have been involved in the co-design process to date, which is becoming a new way of working for us. Together with other methods such as our annual roadshows and evidence-based research, the level of insight we are gaining to make informed decisions for the future is exciting.

Finally, I am sure you will share my joy in the progress the Access Alliance is making as it advances its campaign for the New Zealand government to introduce accessibility legislation.

I look forward to connecting with you again as the year progresses.

Warmest regards

**Sandra Budd**  
Chief Executive

## Message from the Chair

The Board already has much to reflect on, after an eventful start to 2018.

In January we officially opened the new Blind Foundation office on the Kapiti Coast, which was a great opportunity to connect with members and celebrate this milestone.

While home visits are a flagship service of the Blind Foundation, having access to full office facilities is also important. It is great to see plans for 'pop-up' offices in the making to reach more people around the country this year.

In February, new board member Fraser Alexander played an integral role as part of the local organising committee for the Retina International World Congress. It was

fantastic to attend and hear from leading researchers and surgeons on the medical, genetic and digital developments in this space.

Back at the Blind Foundation, I am pleased to congratulate the following members on their election to the new Youth Council: Dakota Kingi; Amanda Beaver; Leah Morris; Matt Bubb; Ryan Keen; Ben Lewis; and Taylor Heads. The Council will help guide the Board by providing a younger perspective, and I look forward to hearing their thoughts.

Finally I would like to congratulate two people recognised in the 2018 New Years Honours list:

Naida Glavish, who has supported the Board as our Tikanga advisor over recent years, was appointed to the New Zealand Order of Merit and awarded as a Dame Companion.

Jim Nicholas, who has volunteered for many years in Marlborough, received the Queen's Service Medal for sport and the community.

I look forward to hearing from you at the 2018 engagement roadshows.

**Rick Hoskin**  
Board Chair



## Smiles and fun at the 2018 Summer Kids camp

“You would want to come to camp because it is the funnest camp in the world!” – Summer Kids camp 2018 participant.

In January the Blind Foundation hosted 20 children, aged 8-14 years, at a five-day camp at Mi Camp, Turangi.

Supported by 12 Blind Foundation staff, two volunteers and nine young leaders aged 17-23 – also Blind Foundation members – the camp was jam-packed with fun activities. Kayaking, challenge ropes, swimming and a disco and talent show night were just some of the things on the agenda, which gave the kids an opportunity to make friends with their peers.

To foster self-reflection and self-assessment of their week at camp,

the children were asked to keep a journal. The kids each set three goals for the week and reflected on their progress at the end of every day.

Jo Hagele, Blind Foundation Recreation and Community Advisor and Camp Co-ordinator, said the camp was geared entirely towards increasing self-confidence, self-awareness and resilience in all the children.

“We do this by providing the opportunities for peer-to-peer support and mentoring, activities that support independent living skills and enable confidence to be active – all wrapped in a healthy dose of fun.”



Camp attendees on the lawn with banners created by each of the camp's four groups in the background.

## Innovation supports enhanced DAISY player service for library members

The Blind Foundation has come up with a new way for library members to access library content on their DAISY players, without the need for physical CDs and postage. Called Daisy Direct, the new service has been carefully designed to ensure it is a quick and easy experience for library members.

The development of Daisy Direct has been driven by the continued popularity of DAISY players, rising CD production costs, and a significant interruption to postal delivery times with the end of NZ Post's Fastpost service. With careful consideration, Daisy Direct solves these problems by providing mobile access to the same digital audio content - without the wait.

Geraldine Lewis, Blind Foundation Library Manager, says: "The feedback we have from members is that they love their DAISY players. It provides a really tactile reading experience, and the players themselves are quite portable. We want to help them continue to enjoy this experience at no cost, and we've had to think creatively to come up with a solution quickly."

She explains that the new system has been developed in a matter of months, and that there may be interest from other organisations around the world looking for similar solutions.

Thanks to ongoing fundraising efforts, the Daisy Direct service has been developed and is provided at no cost to members. Mobile data for book downloads is supplied in partnership with the 2degrees network.

With testing of Daisy Direct complete, requesting and subscription services are now available for delivering books and audio magazines.

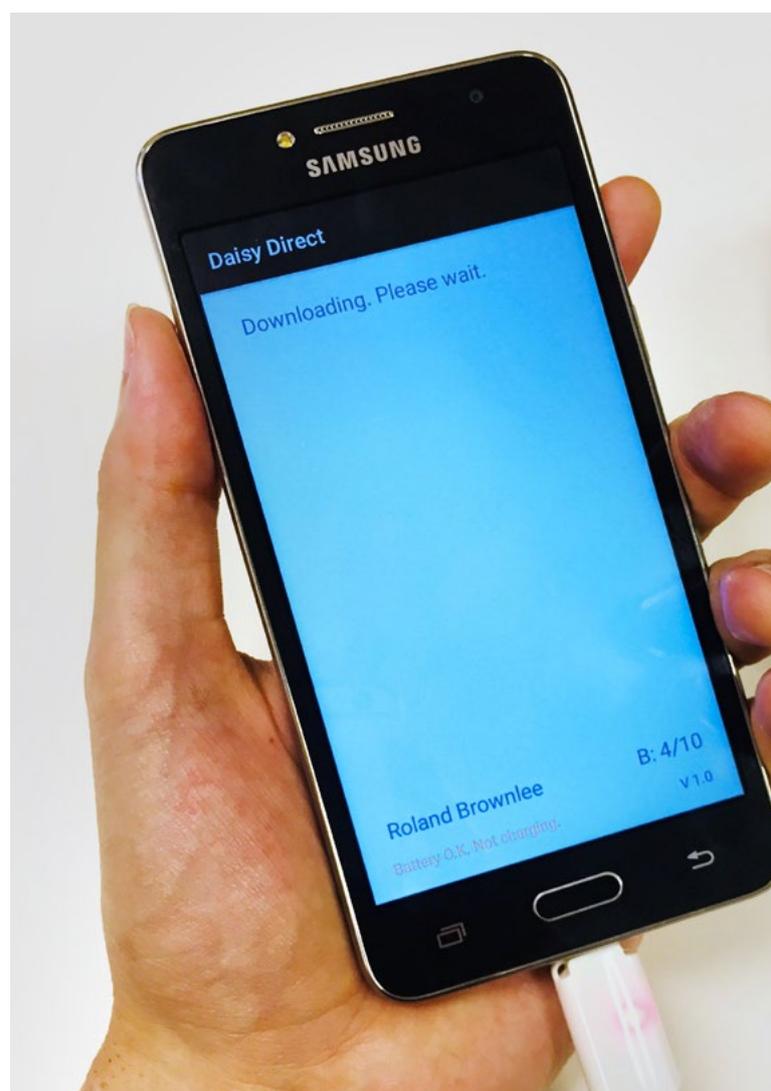
### **What is a DAISY player?**

A DAISY player is a talking book player named after the interactive digital audio format it supports, which gives

blind and low vision readers many advantages over a regular audio player. DAISY structured books let a reader navigate through a book at different levels, and save bookmarks for future reference, as well as simply playing through from beginning to end.

### **How does DAISY Direct work?**

The new Daisy Direct service runs on a dedicated mobile phone supplied by the Blind Foundation, which has a special app to connect directly to the Foundation digital library. With no need to push any buttons or navigate a screen, the app automatically downloads audio books according to individual preferences, similar to the audio book titles allocated and delivered on CD. The app then copies audio books to a removable USB drive, which can be connected to a DAISY player for reading.



Daisy Direct in action: A special USB is downloading books from the phone, to then be plugged into the DAISY Player.

**For more information about Daisy Direct, or BookLink products and services, please contact the Blind Foundation Library on 0800 24 33 33, or [library@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:library@blindfoundation.org.nz)**

## What's next for trailblazing Access Alliance

It was a blustery morning in Wellington on 1 February 2018. Representatives of the Access Alliance remember it clearly.

That day, a delegation of the Access Alliance led by chair Chrissie Cowan – who is CEO of Kāpō Māori Aotearoa New Zealand Inc. – met with the Minister for Disability Issues Hon. Carmel Sepuloni.

Warmly welcomed by the Minister, Chrissie said the delegation members were humbled by the honest discussion they had about the current lack of consideration given to accessibility needs.

In full support of making New Zealand

more accessible, Minister Sepuloni and the Access Alliance agreed on the next steps to take together to better understand the impact legislation could have on creating a more accessible Aotearoa.

Dianne Rogers, Blind Foundation's General Manager Policy and Advocacy, says: "Looking forward, we have now been granted opportunities to talk with the ministers who will be instrumental in helping us to collaborate and achieve a shared goal of removing barriers and inequity for tāngata whaikaha (people with disabilities) and their Whānau.

"We are delighted to have the support of Assistant Speaker Poto Williams MP to build cross-party support for passing an accessibility law.

"This accessibility law is the foundation for an accessible Aotearoa."

The access barriers in question are likely to be familiar to many reading this. For the blindness community they include obstacles in the built environment such as public buildings, spaces and transport; barriers to



Dianne Rogers, Pati Umaga, Minister Sepuloni and Áine Kelly-Costello.

information and communication such as inaccessible technologies and a limited range of accessible published material; and attitudes that underestimate the potential and abilities of people who are blind or have low vision.

Dianne explains: “These barriers are systemic. The changes required are substantial, but they are achievable. Now, together through the Access Alliance and its supporters, we can help write a new chapter in New Zealand's history.”

At the meeting, the Access Alliance also presented an open letter asking politicians to commit to Accessibility Legislation. The letter had been signed by thousands of supporters from all over New Zealand and the world.

“On behalf of the Access Alliance, we would like to thank everyone who has given us their support so far.

By adding your signature to the letter or simply by helping us spread the word through the people you know – it all helps to build strength and momentum that can make purpose-built accessibility legislation in New Zealand a very real possibility,” says Dianne.

### **How can you support or stay up to date with the Access Matters campaign?**

- Sign up for email updates and check for news at [accessalliance.org.nz](https://accessalliance.org.nz)
- Like and share content from the Access Alliance on Facebook at [face-book.com/AccessForAllNZ](https://face-book.com/AccessForAllNZ)
- Share your story about why access matters at [accessalliance.org.nz/share\\_a\\_story](https://accessalliance.org.nz/share_a_story)
- Look out for information on the Telephone Information Service (TIS).

**For more information about the Access Alliance, visit [accessalliance.org.nz](https://accessalliance.org.nz) or get in touch with the team at the Blind Foundation on 09 355 6922.**

## Q&A with Áine Kelly-Costello, Access Matters campaigner & community organiser

Áine is a key member of the Access Alliance and works at the Blind Foundation as the Policy and Advocacy Advisor. On 1 February, she personally delivered the Open Letter from the Access Alliance to the Minister for Disability Issues Hon. Carmel Sepuloni.

### **Q. Tell us about your role.**

A. I coordinate the grassroots campaigning side of the Access Matters campaign by working with individuals to empower them to take action. For example, our campaigners have visited their MPs, shared their stories, helped produce video content and helped us connect with their networks.

### **Q. What was the moment like when you presented the Open Letter and signatures?**

A. It was poignant. Minister Sepuloni and her officials showed the delegation much respect by listening attentively. I told her that accessibility for me was about mana and dignity. I explained that as I passed her the beautiful box full of signatures, we placed responsibility into her hands, but that we were also here to support her in introducing legislation.

### **Q. What does the prospect of accessibility legislation mean to you personally?**

A. It means being proud that our country values accessibility enough to make it enforceable and a priority. It means creating systems that are proactive about ensuring accessibility is a reality, rather than relying on individuals to remove access barriers one by one. It means that soon I would be able to spend less time fighting to take the stress out of bus journeys or to get textbooks transcribed on time, and more time living the life I choose.

### **Q. What is your focus now?**

A. We will continue to work alongside government and that won't always be public, out of respect to Government. Meanwhile, I'll be working with our grassroots campaigners to help them share their stories about why access matters, and to grow our community.

## Engagement Roadshows returning this year

Now in their seventh year, the Engagement Roadshows have become an integral part of the Blind Foundation's annual calendar. Held in a number of locations around the country, the meetings provide an opportunity for the wider blindness community to connect with the Blind Foundation's Board, Chief Executive, Leadership Team and other staff.

It gives the Blind Foundation's service users, family members and volunteers a chance to sit down and talk with the Board and leadership about what is important to them about the organisation's work, what works well and what can be done differently in the future. This feedback from the Blind Foundation's community helps to form the organisation's plans and activities.

Planning has now started on this year's meetings. Wherever possible these will be held in conjunction with other Blind Foundation events in the area such as equipment display days and local social activities.

We want to talk with you more about the organisation's achievements and to provide more opportunities to respond to your questions. You are encouraged to start thinking of things that you would like to talk about with the Board members and senior staff.

As plans come together, we will get information out to let you know where and when this year's roadshows are happening. The Blind Foundation Board and leadership are keen to meet and talk with as many people as possible, and they look forward to catching up with you in your area.

In 2017, we held 12 sessions across the country meeting with over 240 people. The report from all of the feedback provided is available on request from Noreen Parker – **[nparker@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:nparker@blindfoundation.org.nz)** or phone her via **0800 24 33 33**.

## Pearson Memorial Fund provides financial help for Blind Foundation community

Did you know the Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Fund can provide financial assistance for people who are blind or have low vision? This could include support towards the cost of items including equipment for daily living, glasses, hearing aids, and items of adaptive technology such as computers or smart devices.

The Pearson Fund also provides a desktop video magnifier rental programme and subsidises the cost of most equipment items sold through the Blind Foundation's Equipment Solutions Department.

### **When can you apply for support from the Pearson Fund?**

Applications can be made at any time for assistance under hardship circumstances to:

- meet additional financial costs of blindness.

- enhance members' rehabilitation, habilitation and personal development needs.

The Fund does not provide assistance to meet the ordinary costs of daily living or welfare.

The Sir Arthur Pearson Memorial Fund is a trust fund operated under the umbrella of the Blind Foundation. It was established in 1923 from the proceeds of a public appeal for funds to aid both civilian and war blinded persons.

For more information you can contact the Pearson Fund Administrator on 0800 24 33 33 or by email to [pf@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:pf@blindfoundation.org.nz). You can read the Pearson Fund Guide on the Blind Foundation's Telephone Information Service at option 3 3 or check out our financial assistance page online at: [blindfoundation.org.nz/how-we-can-help/daily-life/financial-assistance](http://blindfoundation.org.nz/how-we-can-help/daily-life/financial-assistance)

# Public transport operators open doors for Guide Dog team training

By Kim Norton, Guide Dog Mobility Instructor.

In September 2017 I ran a class in Wellington for three people to train with their new guide dogs.

We received amazing assistance from all supporting operators for the public transport component, who were extremely welcoming and helpful:

- NZ Bus provided buses for the teams to explore the layouts and practise getting on and off, without the pressure of other people and bus schedules.
- Transdev staff assisted our teams at Wellington train station and provided a train for us to practice on and explore at our leisure.

- The team at Air New Zealand were also very helpful, walking teams through the security screening process and making aircraft available for us to practise getting on and off as well as settling the dogs.

Public transport is often an area of anxiety for Blind Foundation members. Being able to train in a relaxed, low stress setting, and have the opportunity to talk with staff, helped make our teams more confident and relaxed about future travel.

On behalf of myself, supporting guide dog staff and our guide dog teams, I would like to thank all the people and organisations involved. Congratulations to our Guide Dog team graduates!



## Under construction: Service experience designed by people like you

As a member-led organisation, the Blind Foundation's role is to meet the individual needs of its members and service users – our community. Its purpose is to enable people who are blind or have low vision to be self-reliant and live the life they choose.

Sandra Budd, Blind Foundation Chief Executive, said: "It's really important to us that when people engage with the Blind Foundation, they are getting the best experience for their particular needs."

a group of community members (clients) and staff came together to form a co-design facilitation team.

The co-design facilitation team was set up to support the Blind Foundation in modernising the way it works with the focus on improving how people experience the services provided. The team's purpose was to gather insights and facilitate the viewpoints of clients and staff.

### What is co-design?

Co-design is a methodology for design and change that encourages the blurring of roles between the people using a service and the people developing the service. It focuses on the users of a product or service sharing what their needs are, and then being part of imagining what an ideal solution might look like.

Over recent years, the Blind Foundation has sought feedback from the community in a number of ways including the annual engagement roadshows and regular client surveys. The Foundation has also been building its capability in co-design and in September last year

This early work was focused on the general experiences of newer service users. To gather insights the team had many informal conversations with their peers, undertook interviews via phone and face-to-face, and completed workshops and interviews.



## The co-design facilitation team members

Formed with a 50:50 balance between clients and staff, the members of the team brought diversity in skills, background, expertise, and lived experience: Thomas Bryan (Staff), Heather Davis (Client), Steve Delaney (Client), Benny Foar (Client), Mark Gear (Staff), Dena Harnett (Client), Deborah Nash (Staff), Kaye Kay-Smith (Client), Kate Kerr (Staff), and Louise von Sierakowski (staff) supported by Miriam Walker as co-design facilitator and coach.

Benny Foar, co-design facilitator shared: “Co-design is rooted in compassion, empowerment and the guiding values our team built into the work we did. Our participating clients understood this. They also knew that they were in a safe place with us and that we wanted to hear their stories. They spoke from the heart.”

### A selection of insights gathered

The co-design facilitation team authored a report with their findings. The report is informative about some of the challenges of joining the Blind Foundation, understanding what services are offered, and knowing how to access these services. Here are some of the standout insights:

- We have heard that we could make many processes more user-friendly, and that there is also room to improve the ways the Blind Foundation communicates with our community.
- We have also understood more about the potential of peer-to-peer and volunteer support, and how important people feel it is that the Blind Foundation is there to provide information and advice to whānau and supporters of service users.
- We have heard about the importance of technology and employment for our community, and the need for the Blind Foundation to find ways to enable more people to access support with their technology and employment needs.

- We have appreciated the importance of understanding the whole person, and how other things going on in the lives of services users can be exacerbated by vision loss.

These are a small taste of the insights received and many of these reinforce, complement or add a new depth of understanding to existing knowledge used to form the Blind Foundation's work plans supporting an improved service experience.

The Blind Foundation is beginning to make improvements based on learnings from the co-design work so far. Attention is on the experience

of joining the Foundation, with a view to saying farewell to the long paper-based forms and ensuring the organisation provides information in easily digestible amounts.

Sandra said: "There are, of course, so many more aspects of the service experience we offer that we would like to work on using co-design in the future.

"I would like to extend my appreciation to those involved in the process to date for their openness and passion for making the Blind Foundation the best it can be. Thank you."



## A Life Without Speed Limits

As achievements go, being issued with a speeding ticket in a vehicle you don't own from a place where you haven't visited for 15 years - in addition to being visually impaired and not driving for 17 years - must surely rank highly.

Yet it was precisely this dubious accolade that Brian Grainger was credited with.

Last October Brian was surprised to receive a letter from the Ministry of Justice informing him he had not paid an existing speeding fine. To make the matter even more confusing, the letter was written in small font which Brian had trouble reading.

So Brian headed down to the court where they informed him that he had been caught speeding recently in Auckland. Although Brian explained why that was impossible on several grounds, they still required proof.

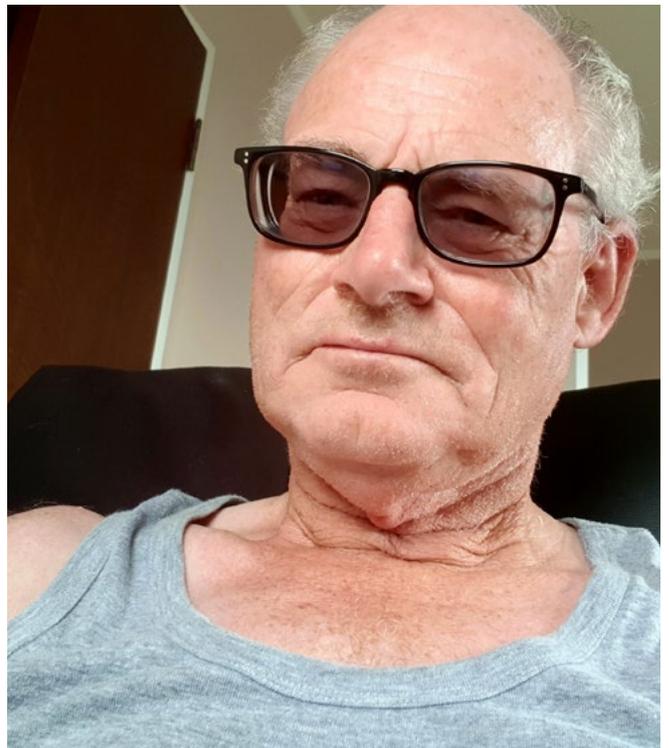
Brian told this tale at a monthly Blind Foundation lunch group, where another member used to work for the local newspaper. This member put Brian in touch with a reporter currently working

at the Taranaki Daily News, who agreed to run his story.

Fortunately, the mistake became clear and the ticket was waived.

Brian has a message for anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation: "Talk to someone, and don't let it upset you too much. Reach out for help."

It was by reaching out to peers that Brian was able to fight his corner and ensure he did not have to pay a fine that wasn't his.



Brian Grainger.

# Shannon Cleave: Couch Potato to Triathlon Champion

Born with albinism, Shannon has been a member of the Blind Foundation her whole life. Two years ago, she found herself unfit and weighing 148kg.

Since then, she has successfully completed an array of impressive physical challenges. But Shannon's story is not about weight loss (60kg), fitness (competing in para-triathlons), or even fortitude in the face of adversity. It is about a fundamental shift in her personal ethos.

Several years ago, Shannon accepted redundancy from her job and by her own admission turned inwards. Then she began working at the Blind Foundation in 2015 and has since reached the realisation that: "Life is a series of choices. If you make the best choice you can at each point, you will have your best life.

"When you realise that your situation is the outcome of your choices; you have to accept that you have the ability, responsibility and power to control your world."

So how do you use that power?

"It's more than positive thinking. You have to act on it. You can't just

sit in a dark room and imagine light, you have to go and find the switch!"

Shannon recalls discussing the idea with a Blind Foundation client. He was unhappy and had been using his partner's health and inactivity as a justification for his own. The client realised that by making good choices to help himself, he could help them both. Since taking Shannon's message to heart, he has lost weight and regularly takes part in running events.

Shannon's message for others is: "Every choice you make has an impact on your life. Choose wisely."



Shannon Cleave (left) and guide Deb Nash with medals after a race.



# Hans Peet shines light through the mist in his debut book

Originally from the Netherlands but a Kiwi for thirty years, Johannes Peet was born with Stargardt disease, a hereditary condition that causes macular degeneration to onset at an unpredictable point during life.

Having previously worked as a wine-maker, ultimately Peet was unable to continue in that vocation as the disease gradually took hold. But the wine-making industry's loss was the publishing industry's gain, as Peet instead turned his talents to writing.

Understandably, Peet was profoundly affected by the loss of his vision: it took a heavy psychological toll and brought on depression. In *Adrift in the Fog: A Journey of Rediscovery*, Peet reflects on his loss of independence after sight loss, and the feelings of helplessness he had to confront.

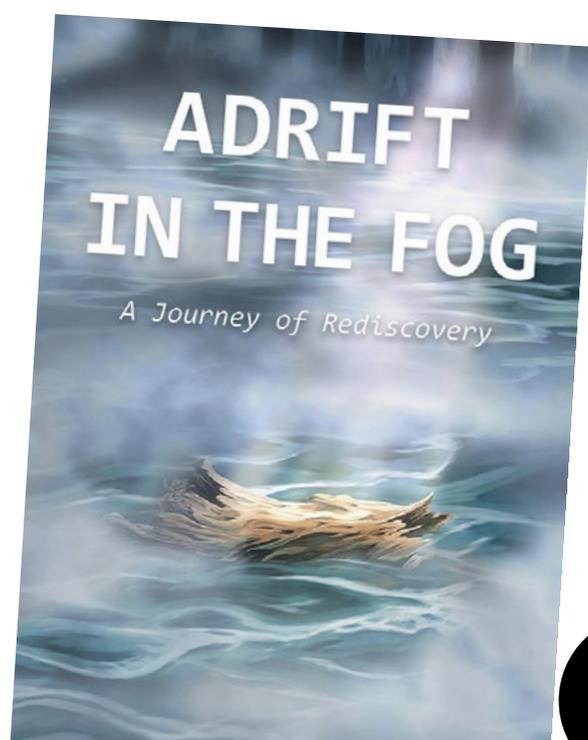
Peet says he was inspired to write the book when he asked himself the question: "What do you do when something happens to you, over which you have no control, plunging you into a fog of depression?"

He answered: "You go under. You drift." But his work is not a lament,

rather it is a story of hope and redemption.

As its title suggests, for Peet vision loss forced him to embark on a journey of self-rediscovery. But it was a chance encounter with Mona Lisa, a woman living in Russia, that gave him the strength to forge his route. Peet tells of his travels and adventures and how, with his new-found companion, he finds fresh meaning in his life and creates a new future from the ashes of the old one.

This moving and uplifting book is available on Amazon, or directly from the publisher, **Red Hen Books** phone: **07 777 0212** or email: **info.redhenbooks@gmail.com**



# Try Tai Chi to improve your balance

By Lance Girling-Butcher.

This is a message from a frequent faller: Try Tai Chi if you want to break that bond with gravity.



Tai Chi instructor Margaret Underwood gives blind student, Lance Girling-Butcher, a physical demonstration of a balance improving technique.

I have just joined a new and inventive class in New Plymouth and the benefits are obvious already. The class is run by experienced, long serving instructor Margaret Underwood who is adapting her advanced skills to work with the blind.

And boy do I need help.

Some 30 years ago I had a tumour removed from my audio nerve inside my skull. They drilled in through the inner ear to gain access, destroying my hearing and balance on the left side of my head.



Keeping upright without that ear was bad enough, then I lost my sight and the view of the stabilising horizon. Since then I have had enough falls to get a job as a ten-pin skittle.

Yogi, my wonderful guide dog, has helped to keep me vertical but there are times when even he is unable to assist with the battle with gravity. Discovering Tai Chi and Margaret is a new lease on safe mobility and pedestrian confidence.

Tai Chi is a gentle Chinese martial art that can be used to improve blood flow and help people to achieve a better balance and greater flexibility. It is a great aid in helping people to prevent falls.

After teaching Tai Chi for more than 35 years, Margaret says teaching people who cannot see is a new and daunting task for her.

“Normally when I work with sighted people they are able to watch what I do and replicate it. With the blind I have to find a way of letting them feel what I am doing.”

Because of her travel bug and interests in America, she has a class of people aged 70 to 90 years in California: “The people in the United States came to me because they had had falls. None of them has had a fall since and they say that their balance has improved markedly”, she says.

Margaret says many people are unaware of the importance of stimulating the bone structures in the middle ear. These generate brain activity but require movement to do this.

She says that is why so many hyperactive students are treated the wrong way when made to sit down and be calm.

“They would be better running around the paddock than sitting in the chair. The reverse problem applies to people in retirement homes. Too many are left sitting in chairs watching television hardly moving their heads when they would be better even sitting in a rocking chair and rocking rather than sitting still,” she says.

**If you are interested in attending the Tai Chi classes held at the Blind Foundation in New Plymouth please phone 06 759 1169 or 0800 24 33 33.**



# The power of evidence for planning and advocacy

By Keith Gordon Ph.D. Director of Research, Blind Foundation.

Imagine that you're planning to go on a trip. What is the first thing you need to know?

Clearly, how long the trip will be. In other words, without basic knowledge it is impossible to do proper planning.

This is a simple example of why data is essential and why we have put such an emphasis on evidence-based research at the Blind Foundation.

My association with the Blind Foundation began four years ago, when I was asked to advise on the development of a research strategy.

Like the person planning a trip who needs to know how long the trip will be, my first question was: "How many people are there in New Zealand with significant visual impairment?"

I'm afraid that the answer to this question was not very convincing. The data we had at that time was based on projections from Australian data.

So we decided to undertake a study on the prevalence of visual impairment in New Zealand. This study revealed that there were about 30,000 people

in New Zealand eligible to be Blind Foundation members. This in turn told us that there was a significant number of people that weren't coming to the Foundation for services, and supported the development of the Blind Foundation's strategic focus on reaching more people.

Like the person going on a trip, we needed to know what the needs and desires of our fellow travellers were. We conducted a survey of over 900 Foundation members asking them 180 questions related to their needs. The results are being used to help plan the delivery of services, alongside other research like the Blind Foundation's annual roadshows and co-design work.

We have also conducted research on how many of our members experience a condition called Charles Bonnet Syndrome, whereby people who previously had vision might experience visual hallucinations following vision loss.

Studies conducted in other countries indicated that about one in five, to one in three people who have lost vision, experience some form of



visual hallucination. Some experience patterns, while others may see more complete objects such as people or animals. Some of these hallucinations may be quite exotic, such as little men with umbrellas sitting on the end of one's bed.

Many people experiencing these hallucinations are concerned about their mental health and as a result may be reluctant to tell anyone about their experience. They are looking for reassurance from professionals that they are not losing their minds. Our study showed that experience of this condition was quite widespread among our members with 30% of new members coming to the Foundation having experienced some type of hallucination.

The power of research is that it provides an understanding of the magnitude and nature of an issue, and can be used for planning and funding of services. It can also form the basis for advocacy. We have estimated the economic costs of vision loss in New Zealand, so that governments and other stakeholders have an understanding of the financial impact of vision loss to the country.

Research commissioned by the Foundation was used as the basis for the "Access Matters" campaign for accessibility legislation in New Zealand, with the aim of improving access for all. It gave us a knowledge of the size of the disability community in New Zealand and the financial benefits that accessibility legislation could bring to the country.

We continue to conduct studies that utilise the power of evidence to improve the lives of people who are blind or have low vision in New Zealand.



Keith Gordon, Ph.D. Director of Research, Blind Foundation.

# Making accessible games cool

Sonnar Interactive produces games out of the Blind Foundation's Awhina House studios in Auckland.

Already in possession of multiple awards, Sonnar Interactive began in 2016 as a research project. It continues to add new games and capability to its suite at speed.

Jarek Beksa, CEO, says: "There are more than 75,000 video games available worldwide, yet only around 100 audio games accessible to people who are blind. In our view the accessible games haven't been all that fun, so we are trying to change that."

One of their most recent games is called Twisted Tales and is available to play as an app on Apple and Android smartphones. It is also compatible with voice-controlled device Amazon Echo.

Twisted Tales takes a familiar fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood, and makes it into a pick-a-path adventure that comes to life through rich audio and beautiful graphics.

Inclusivity is a notable point of difference to their games. Jarek says: "We have created the first set of games in the world that allow blind

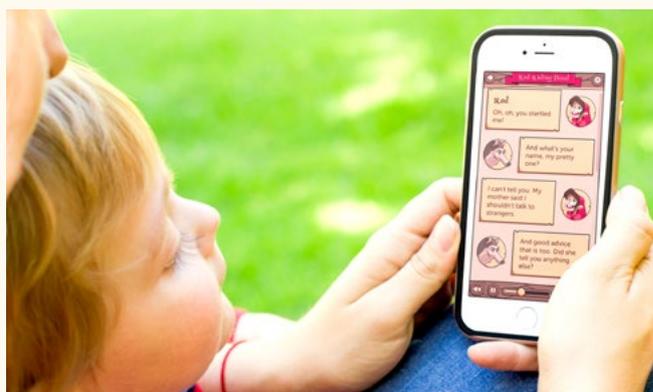
and sighted users to play together on the same device, on the same terms, with the same high quality of experience."

Player feedback reflects their success, with a reviewer of their Audio Game Hub posting: "I am partially sighted and my wife is fully sighted, and to be able to play games with her is just fantastic. You made possible something I thought I wouldn't ever see."

The Audio Game Hub hosts multiple games and has been downloaded over 125,000 times by people all over the world.

All games are available via Apple and Google Play stores.

*The Blind Foundation is a proud partner of Sonnar Interactive.*



Twisted Tales on a phone.



*With thanks to the Blind Foundation's Adaptive Communications Adaptive Technology Service (ACATS) and Independent Living teams for supplying the information in this section.*

## Smart Speakers launch in New Zealand

By Thomas Bryan.

Many of you may have heard via the media or a blindness email list about the launch of the first smart speaker in New Zealand, the Amazon Echo. It is soon to be followed by Google Home and Apple HomePod. These speakers bring access to a range of information by simply verbally asking a question. No computer needed.

The Echo is a low cost internet speaker that responds to your voice by using a special wake word followed by a question. For example: "Alexa, what is the time?" Or "Alexa, what is the temperature today?" You could also ask to hear the latest news, listen to your favourite music or check on flight times.

The Echo has the potential to be so much more. Many New Zealand companies are making their information available so that eventually we might be able to use the Echo to book a cab, order a pizza or even shop.



It is available in a number of sizes, starting with the Dot. All the Echo products can carry out the same tasks, but some include a screen for video calls, and others link in to home audio systems. They all have the ability to control some smart home appliances. This means it can action commands like "Alexa turn on the living room lights" or "Alexa turn the heat pump down to 18c."

If you would like to know more about the Echo please contact either JB Hi-Fi or Noel Leeming, who are the authorised sellers.

# Using a PenFriend to label household items

By Elaine Kelleher, Rehabilitation Instructor.

The PenFriend is a voice labelling system that works by adding voice recordings onto self-adhesive labels through a pen-shaped device. Once a recording has been stored onto a label, you can then play this back.

Easy to use with only four buttons, the PenFriend is great for labelling medicines, cans of food, expiry dates, CDs and other household items. It can record up to one hour of audio on a label, making it great for recalling instructions, ingredients, lists and appointments.

To listen to a label that already has a voice recording, you just need to turn on the pen and touch the label with the tip of the pen and it will play back the recording.

I have supported many people living on their own to use the PenFriend. Here are a few labelling tricks I recommend:

- Instead of putting a label directly onto a ready meal, put the meal in a freezer bag and put the PenFriend label as well as a handwritten label on the bag. This way

the bag with the label can be reused.

- Stick a label onto a magnetic strip to put on top of cans of food.
- Stick a label to a hard plastic label with an elastic band attached, and use it to identify bottles like bleach.
- Add labels to a wall calendar to record appointment details.

People use the battery-operated PenFriend for all sorts of reasons and its great advantage is how easy it is to use. It is worth noting though that individuals may need sighted assistance to provide the information to be recorded, for example to tell you the expiry date or cooking instructions on a packet.

The PenFriend is available to purchase in the Blind Foundation shop and comes with 127 recordable labels (sticky dots) including three larger magnet badges. Additional labels can be purchased separately.





## Low cost electronic braille reader now available

The Orbit Reader, the low-cost electronic braille reader that the Blind Foundation has collaboratively developed with other blindness organisations, has become available in the Blind Foundation store.

Neil Jarvis, Blind Foundation GM Strategic Relations, has been a driving force behind its development and says: "One of the biggest barriers to the take-up of braille in recent years has been the high cost of electronic braille reading devices." He explains it is a collaborative objective of the international Transforming Braille Group to bring the cost down, and The Orbit Reader is the first outcome of this effort.

## Getting help with Microsoft products

If you need help with Microsoft Windows or Office you can contact the Microsoft Disability Answer Desk. This Help Desk is staffed by Microsoft experts who know how to assist people using adaptive technology, and they are of course extremely skilled at supporting Microsoft's many accessibility features. While the service is based in the US, anybody can use it.

To access from New Zealand call **0800 20 6300**. The service is completely free to use and is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 9pm and Saturday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm.

## Join the conversation about adaptive technology

### **Assistive Technology Interest Group (ATIG NZ)**

For Blind Foundation clients to provide peer support and discuss matters relating to assistive technology. To subscribe send a blank email to: [atig-nz-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:atig-nz-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

### **Vision Impaired iPhone list (VI-iPhone)**

For people with vision impairments who have questions about using an iPhone, or can offer advice to other iPhone users. To subscribe send a blank email to: [nz\\_vi\\_iphone\\_users-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:nz_vi_iphone_users-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)



# Learning Braille: Some Frequently Asked Questions

By Chantelle Griffiths, Braille Awareness Coordinator, Blind Foundation.

For someone who is blind or has low or deteriorating vision, accessing written information can sometimes feel daunting.

There are many different ways to read, such as talking books and using magnifying aids. But when people think of using their hands to read braille, it can make the task seem harder than ever. Yet, learning braille can be very empowering. Here, we answer some of your most frequently asked questions about learning braille.

## **What is braille?**

Braille is a tactile system that you read with your fingers, consisting of six small dots, three down and two across.

## **How hard is it to learn braille?**

Like any new skill, braille takes time, perseverance and motivation to learn. But even a basic understanding of braille letters, numbers and punctuation can help you accomplish many simple reading

and writing tasks while at home, work, study or in the community.

## **If I learn braille, do I have to stop reading the way I do now?**

No, you don't have to use braille all the time. Many people use it to enhance the way they already read and write. Some people with low vision find that braille helps them to be more productive when their eyes are tired or in poor lighting conditions. Others use braille for study and audio books for leisure reading. It's up to you when and how you use braille.

## **Am I too old or young to learn braille?**

It's never too late to learn braille. Anyone can learn regardless of age, location or background. At first, it may be hard to think of reading with your fingers. But with practice, motivation, a positive attitude and the right support, braille may be a good fit for you.



## Reading a braille book.

### **What can I use braille for in my everyday life?**

Some people use braille to write important names and phone numbers to keep by the phone or on the fridge. Others label containers in their kitchen. You can identify medication, write a shopping list or read a recipe. When you're out, you can read tactile signs on doors and elevator buttons. There are also many fun activities and games available in braille, such as playing cards, Scrabble and Monopoly.

### **Are you curious about learning braille? Ask yourself these questions:**

- Can I read and write comfortably most of the time the way I do things now?
- What reading or writing tasks can I no longer do, and how does that make me feel?

- What would I like to read or write that I currently cannot?
- What difference would it make if I could do some or all of these tasks in a way that feels easier and more comfortable for me?
- Am I willing to put time and effort into learning a new skill if it could help me improve how I read and write?

Braille may not be right for everyone, and there may be some things you can do another way, such as reading the newspaper or your mail. Even though it may not always be possible to get all the information you want in braille, there are still many benefits from learning.

Call our National Contact Centre on **0800 24 33 33** to talk with us about braille, how you can learn, and how it might fit in with your everyday life.



# What's new in the Blind Foundation Library

By Geraldine Lewis, Library Manager.

We are always adding to our library collection, and I'm pleased to share with you some of the highlights from recent months.

Last year the library reached an agreement with CNIB for an exchange of library content. We have now received a hard drive from them, with several thousand electronic braille and DAISY books. It is an involved but exciting process entering this into our collection, which will start to be available to library users in the coming months.

In February we also received a hard drive from Vision Australia with over two thousand titles of their Christian Blind Mission material on it, which is being entered into our collection.

NZ House and Garden is the latest magazine on board and we have also recently added M2Women and M2Magazine, as well as the Blind Foundation podcast Perspectives.

A number of Dutch and French titles are now available in our collection too. Some of the Dutch material has been selected on the recommendations of a client, while the French material has been sourced from CNIB.

We are pleased to share that we now have access to material in a variety of languages for our collection, including titles in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Polish, German and Portuguese. To help us order the material you want to read, we invite you to contact us to let us know what interests you.

To talk to us about this new material and to update your preferences, or to talk to us about anything regarding our library service including joining our library, please contact us on **0800 24 33 33**, or email us at **[library@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:library@blindfoundation.org.nz)**



# Calling women who are blind or have low vision to join New Zealand VIEW

New Zealand VIEW, which stands for Vision Impaired Empowering Women, is a support group for women who are blind or have low vision.

You are invited to join and become part of a diverse group of independent and motivated women with an aspiration for a fully accessible society that inspires and motivates women.

NZ VIEW provides peer support and advocates for women of all ages,

enabling them to reach their full potential through networking and the sharing of ideas that are unique to women with vision loss.

Each area group provides activities tailored to the needs and aspirations of their local members. These may include: guest speakers, social outings, family events and information sharing that focuses on subjects and events relevant to the needs of women.

If you are a woman over the age of 16 and a client of the Blind Foundation, you are invited to join NZ VIEW.

For more information about your local area group or if you would like to start your own area group, contact Ailsa Morgan, the National Secretary at NZ VIEW on phone: **07 3482 765** or email: **[nzviewinc@gmail.com](mailto:nzviewinc@gmail.com)**



If you would like to support NZ View, they have created timeless birthday calendars available for purchase at \$25 each plus postage.

# Featured activities and groups: Come and join us

Members of the Blind Foundation in your local community are getting together for all sorts of reasons. Here is a snapshot of some things that may be of interest.

To learn more and find out what's happening in your area, get in touch with your local Community Life Enrichment team member or the Contact Centre on **0800 24 33 33**.

## **Auckland**

*The Tuesday Group*

*Alternate Tuesdays, 10am-1pm.*

The group meets every first and third Tuesday of the month in the cafeteria at the Blind Foundation's Awhina house, between 10am and 1pm. The group is focused on exchanging hints on coping with sight problems, technology and anything else.

Together with ACATS they are arranging adaptive technology group training sessions for iPads and smartphones, to be held on alternate Tuesdays following their meeting. The independent group welcomes newcomers. Please contact Trevor: [tplumbly@trevorplumbly.co.nz](mailto:tplumbly@trevorplumbly.co.nz)

## **Napier**

*Lower North Tandem Ride*

*26 - 28 April 2018.*

An opportunity for members in the lower North Island who would like to build their tandem bike experience. Enjoy three days of cycling around the Napier area, then relax and enjoy the company of other members, volunteers and support staff each evening. For more information contact Recreation and





Community Advisor, Jo Hagele:  
**04 380 2144** or email  
[jhagele@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:jhagele@blindfoundation.org.nz)

### **Wellington**

*Wellington Walking Group*  
*First Tuesday of each month.*

*Kapiti Walking Group*  
*Third Friday of each month.*

Join either of these groups for an hour walk around Wellington and Kapiti. A great way to meet new people and increase your fitness at the same time. Both groups are supported by staff and volunteers for guiding or other assistance required. To sign up please contact Recreation and Community Advisor, Jo Hagele: **04 380 2144** or [jhagele@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:jhagele@blindfoundation.org.nz)

### **Nelson**

*Nelson Fringe Festival*  
*27 April - 6 May 2018*

The Blind Foundation is teaming up with the Nelson Arts Council to provide an audio described performance as part of its programme. If you would like to explore this opportunity contact Erin Eyles, Recreation and Community Advisor: **03 375 4318** or email [eeyles@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:eeyles@blindfoundation.org.nz)

### **Canterbury**

*Art and Dance Workshops.*

Throughout the year members in the Christchurch area come together to experience and explore a variety of art and culture. Workshops range from audio described art gallery tours, hands on creative arts sessions, audio described theatre and participation in theatre or dance workshops. To find out more contact Erin Eyles, Recreation and Community Advisor: **03 375 4318** or [eeyles@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:eeyles@blindfoundation.org.nz)

### **Otago**

*Dunedin Blinkies Walking group*  
*Alternate Wednesdays, from 10.30am.*

The group walks for 2 - 4 hours and stops for a packed lunch along the way. A great way to exercise, experience the beauty of the Otago region and connect with like-minded people. If you have a good level of fitness and think this activity sounds like you, we would love to have you come along with us.

Contact Chris Moffitt on **03 466 4245** or [cmoffitt@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:cmoffitt@blindfoundation.org.nz) for more details.



## Related organisations

There are a number of national organisations that work with the Blind Foundation to support the blind and low vision community.

These organisations are available to Blind Foundation clients and whānau; some groups also cater to blind or low vision people who are not clients.

To find out more, please contact the groups using the details below.

### **Albinism Trust**

(06) 367 5900  
albinism@inspire.net.nz  
albinism.nz

### **Blind Citizens New Zealand**

0800 ABC NZ INC (0800 222 694) or  
(04) 389 0033  
enquiries@abcnz.org.nz  
blindcitizens.org.nz

### **Blind Sport New Zealand**

(09) 979 1579  
dan@blindsport.kiwi  
blindsport.kiwi

### **Deafblind Association of NZ Charitable Trust**

0800 450 650  
info@deafblindassociation.nz

### **Kāpo Māori Aotearoa**

0800 770 990  
info@kapomaori.co.nz  
kapomaori.com

### **New Zealand Vision Impaired Empowering Women (NZ VIEW)**

(07) 348 2765  
ailsamorgan@outlook.com and  
nzviewinc@gmail.com

### **Parents of Vision Impaired New Zealand (PVINZ) Inc.**

(04) 293 8236 or 0274 402 073  
david@pvi.org.nz

### **Retina New Zealand**

0800 569 849  
admin@retina.org.nz  
retina.org.nz

### **Retina Youth**

0800 569 849  
youth@retina.org.nz  
retinayouth.org.nz and Facebook group

### **Support and Education for our Youth, their Families and their Friends Inc.**

021 0235 4395  
seyffnz@gmail.com

These details are correct at the time of printing. Please check the Blind Foundation website for updated details and more information at [blindfoundation.org.nz](http://blindfoundation.org.nz)

## Ex-demo sale

We have a small selection of ex-demo stock on sale for up to **50% off** the original price, available only online or by calling the Contact Centre on **0800 24 33 33**.

Please note ex-demo products have been in a display unit for demonstration purposes and their packaging may have been opened during that time. All ex-demo products have been assessed to ensure they are in good or excellent condition, and come with a standard 14 day right of return and 6 month warranty - excluding the address book.



### The Giant Print Address Book

Sale price: \$13.50

### Aftershokz SPORTS M3 Wired Bone Conduction Headphones

Sale price: \$37.50



### Large Chrome Tactile watch with leather strap

Sale price: \$22



### Small Chrome Tactile Watch with bracelet strap

Sale price: \$27.50

### Pillow Speaker

Sale price: \$28



For updates on equipment, including new items and sales, subscribe to our Product Watch email. Send us an email to register your interest at [productwatch@blindfoundation.org.nz](mailto:productwatch@blindfoundation.org.nz) or call 0800 24 33 33.

# Blind Foundation equipment display days

The Blind Foundation holds regular equipment display days across the country to introduce clients and the community to specialist equipment and services for people who are blind or have low vision.

As the dates below might be subject to change, please contact your local office or our friendly Contact Centre staff on 0800 24 33 33 to confirm. To view the latest equipment display days visit [blindfoundation.org.nz/events/](http://blindfoundation.org.nz/events/) or users of TIS can listen using the TIS menu 3 7 8. Please note that magnifying and lighting assessments are not available at equipment display days listed below. Please contact your local office to organise any assessments you might require.

Area	Venue	Date and Time
Matamata	Union Parish Church, Peria Street, Matamata	2 May 2018 10am - 12pm
Dunedin	Blind Foundation, Corner of Hillside and Law Streets, Dunedin	8 May 2018 1pm - 3pm
New Plymouth	New Plymouth BF Office Hall, 129 - 131 Vivian Street, New Plymouth	17 May 2018 1.30pm - 3.30pm
Palmerston North	Palmerston North BF Office, 49 Walding Street Palmerston North	30 May 2018 10 - 12pm
Oamaru	Blind Foundation Hall, Stewart Street, Oamaru	11 June 2018 TBC
Balclutha	St Marks Anglican Church, 19 - 21 Renfrew Street, Balclutha	12 June 2018 1pm - 3pm
Ashburton	Vintage Railway and Historical Museum, 19 Maronan Road, Tinwald, Ashburton (TBC)	26 July 2018 11am - 12.30pm
Timaru	Blind Foundation Hall, 63 Grey Road, Timaru	24 July 2018 11.30am - 1.30pm



Area	Venue	Date and Time
Dunedin	Blind Foundation, Corner of Hillside and Law Streets, Dunedin	14 August 2018 1pm - 3pm
Rangiora	Knox Presbyterian Church, Corner of High and King Street, Rangiora (TBC)	16 August 2018 TBC
Hamilton	Hamilton Social Centre, 15 Liverpool Street, Hamilton	TBC
Levin	Levin Senior Citizens Rooms, Cambridge Street, Levin	5 September 2018 TBC
South Auckland	Blind Foundation Guide Dog Auditorium, 30 McVilly Road, Manurewa	TBC
Wanganui	Wanganui Blind Foundation Office, 102 Peat Street, Wanganui	6 September 2018 1pm - 3pm
Waipukurau	30 Jellicoe Street, Waipukurau	16 September 2018 10:30am - 12pm
Invercargill	Invercargill Craft Room, Invercargill Blind Foundation Office	25 September 2018 1pm - 3pm
Tauranga	Tauranga BF Office, 160 Seventeenth Avenue, Tauranga South	TBC
Whakatane	Conference Room, DRC Whakatane, 141-143 King Street, Whakatane	6 November 2018 11am - 1pm
Mosgiel	Mosgiel RSA, 6 Church Street, Mosgiel (TBC)	11 October 2018 TBC
Morrinsville	TBC	23 October 2018 TBC
Wanaka	St Johns Rooms, 4 Link Way, Wanaka (TBC)	20 November 2018, TBC

# EPIC YOUTH



## Your EPIC Youth adventure awaits

**28 June - 1 July 2018**

Are you a member of the Blind Foundation aged 17 - 30?

Save the date for our inspiring EPIC event including camp activities, workshops and leadership development.

Keep an eye out on [blindfoundation.org.nz](http://blindfoundation.org.nz) or phone  
0800 24 33 33 for more details to come soon.