



# Vista celebrates 150th anniversary



**TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE:** Service user learning IT skills



**ENJOYMENT:** People are encouraged to participate

**DID YOU KNOW** there is an organisation in Leicestershire offering among the best emotional support and practical help for the blind and partially-sighted?

Imagine living alone and being told by your doctor that your deteriorating sight is such that you need to be registered blind.

Or discovering in your mid-twenties that you have macular degeneration (MD) and may eventually lose your sight altogether.

Equally, there are parents and carers who rely on this organisation to provide them with emotional back-up and advice for their blind newborn, and scores of elderly partners who turn to this charity for practical advice in helping their partially-sighted spouse.

Vista – based on Margaret Road, off Gwendolen Road, Leicester, not far from the General Hospital – celebrates its 150th anniversary this year and is

marking the occasion with a variety of fundraising activities including a heavily-scented rose named 'A Brighter Vista'.

In addition to the celebrations, Vista's specially-trained team of 500 volunteers and almost 250 staff are keen to make sure that anyone in need of their expertise and warmth gets in touch to find out more.

Vista currently supports in excess of 6,000 people and their families each year, offering an invaluable range of services to help maximise every user's level of independence, from basic home safety to making your favourite sandwich. They'll even help you to learn how to use a computer.

"We had one lady who came to us after being told by her doctor that if you had to go blind, Leicestershire was arguably the best place to be, because of the support we offer here," says Lorna Allen, Vista's marketing and fundraising manager.

"We're one of the biggest organisations for the blind and partially-sighted in the region."

And looking at the vast repertoire of facilities and services on offer, it's a reputation that's well deserved. Support starts from the very moment a person is registered blind by their doctor and lasts a lifetime. All you have to do is pick up the phone and make yourself known.

All degrees of blindness are supported at Vista, but the only means-tested service it offers is care in one of its two care homes for the elderly, Kathleen Rutland and New Wycliffe.

There is nowhere better to go for practical help with failing sight than at Vista. There's a befriending service, which either takes the form of home visits and outings, or a friendly voice at the end of the phone.

"This service also means that people don't have to travel all the way to the city to see people they've met at the centre – they can meet up somewhere

convenient to them," she adds.

Following an initial assessment, Vista's rehabilitation team carries out a home visit to ensure safety through specialist training.

The Vista shop – based in the Margaret Road headquarters – is open to anyone, including those visiting from outside Rutland and Leicestershire. The daily living aids on sale there are astonishingly simple, but doubtless practical gadgets to those who need them, from liquid level indicators that fit to the inside of your tea cup, to talking watches and cheque book signature guides.

In May, Vista is launching its Rose in addition to bookmarks, cards and pin badges to raise much needed funding in order to continue the invaluable services.

It's hoped the rose will help to increase Vista's profile, but the charity's immediate need is for more funds and volunteers.

Vista had a trained team of guide com-

municators, who visit the homes of those who are deaf and blind, take them out for a meal or offer practical help in the home such as reading and corresponding to mail.

Due to the specialist nature of what we do here, every single member of staff must undergo periodical training by paid professionals – it all adds up.

Another vital lifeline in need of a constant cash injection is Vista's talking newspaper service.

Every week, 3,000 audio tapes, CDs or MP3 files are sent to Vista users, featuring local and national news, as well as the latest from Vista itself.

"Whether it's help through volunteering or donating funds, we really need all the support we can get," says Lorna. "And with any luck, we'll be here in another 150 years!"

To find out more, call Vista on 0116 249 0909 for general enquiries, or 0116 249 8801 for fundraising or check out the website at [www.vistablind.org.uk](http://www.vistablind.org.uk)



**GROUP DYNAMIC:** (left to right) Marissa Hendry, Danielle Stain, Judith Harvey, volunteer Samira Admani, and Wendy Jones



**HANDS-ON:** (left to right) Service users Adele Fricker and June Ball practising reflexology



**HISTORICAL:** This photograph was taken outside the Town Hall, Leicester capturing the 'Blind Outing'



For further information please contact 0116 2498801 or email: [fundraising@vistablind.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@vistablind.org.uk)

## "A Brighter Vista"

Commemorative floribunda rose available to purchase from Vista Fundraising **MAY**

## Vista's Black Tie Dinner,

with host Willie Thorne and special guest stars Anton Du Beke and Erin Boag from the BBC1 show Strictly Come Dancing. Friday 6th June, Walkers Stadium, tickets £60 per person (inc three course dinner and entertainment) available from Vista Fundraising.



## Vista's annual General Meeting

Saturday October 11th at the All Nations Centre Frog Island