

Successful Result for Tasmanian Southern Cross Games Member

Tassie Team nets 18 medals

Tasmanian Visually Impaired Children's Support Group with additional support from the Premiers Department, the Education Department and many other contributors have once again been able to assist a small group of Tasmanian blind and vision impaired children to attend the bi-annual Southern Cross Games.



Above: Tassie Team left to right, Kendal Garrett, Emma Jago, Samuel Gordon, Bernadette Gordon and Stewart Smith/ Taylor

The game held in Auckland, New Zealand for the 18th – 22nd April were once again well attended by teams from Queensland, New South Wales 'Country', Victoria, Samoa and of course our group from Tasmania plus the North and South Island of New Zealand.

This year even though the group was small in number they have done a magnificent job and done our State proud with a medal tally of six gold, seven silver and 5 bronze.

Athletics were held at the renowned Ericsson Stadium which was really a class venue for the event. Along with the athletic swimming was the other main event and though there were

some issues of access the swimming went of well.

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Above: Sights and lights from the City of Auckland with the high point the soaring Auckland Tower



Above: Emma Jago with Dad and Mum visit the Auckland Zoo for a life time experience with an elephant.

Swimming events were held at the Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa Leisure Centre and our team members did well in their chosen events.

Other additional activities during the teams stay New Zealand included Goalball, Ten Pin Bowling, and Five Aside Football 'Soccer'.

(Soccer) and Rock climbing which individual members attended on their personal performance.

One very special event occurred for Tassie team member Emma Jago was while

visiting the Auckland Zoo had the opportunity of a lifetime to be able to be able to touch an elephant. This opportunity will live with Emma for the rest of her life.

A team culture evening was also held at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, were teams took the opportunity to show the stage skills and have a fun time to boot with everyone enjoying the show.



Above: Emma Jago feels the touch of a gentle giant, a moment in time that neither will forget

Other team members also took in the sights and the lights of the city of Auckland, from the soaring Auckland Tower. The main comment was they couldn't believe how high it was as there is nothing like this in Tasmania to compare it with.

A great time was had by all competitors and some long term friendship have been made which will stay with them for many years, plus instilling a sense self worth no matter their disability seems to everyone else.

It have not yet been decided where the next Southern Cross Games will occur in 2008 as yet but we do have time to

think about the possibilities of others joining the Tasmanian Team in the future.

The accommodation for team members was at Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre and every one enjoyed their stay there and commented on the help and assistance that was given to them by the management and staff "Thank you Waipuna".

Comments from families were especially the first timers, that the opportunity of their child to attend such a special event has shown already a great shift in their child outlook and a greater hunger for social interaction for such events.

TAS VIC take this opportunity once again to thank the many business and organisation including the Premiers Department and the Education Department, that have show their support and

generosity to enabling this group the chance of a life time to compete on an even level with others that have a similar disability.

Blind youth going for gold at Southern Cross Games (18 -22 April 2006)

While New Zealand was cheering on our athletes at the Commonwealth Games, another group of athletes was preparing for Games of another sort.

From 18-22 April around 150 blind and vision-impaired students from New Zealand, Australia and Samoa will descend on Auckland competing for medals in the 2006 Southern Cross Games.

"Involvement in sports competitively or for recreation is extremely important and is closely linked to confidence and self-esteem," says Glynis Smith, Southern Cross Games organiser and Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind Recreation Advisor.

"It's not all about the winning, doing your best and giving it a go is equally important. It's about having a positive attitude to life."

Track and field, swimming and soccer are sports traditionally associated with sighted achievers, but with the right support and attitude vision-impaired students are breaking stereotypes. The Southern Cross Games are also an opportunity for youth to compete and socialise with people of similar ages with similar levels of vision.

"It can be very isolating being blind or vision-impaired. In the smaller centres, you may be the only student at your school or even in your region," says Glynis.

"Events like the Southern Cross Games help our young people establish support networks while building the confidence to go on and tackle other challenges, be it school exams, finding an after school job or choosing what subjects to take."

The Southern Cross Games is a biennial event and was last hosted by New Zealand in 1990. They are open to any blind or vision-impaired student from the Pacific aged 9-18 years old that is enrolled in full-time study.

Programme for the 2006 Games:

Tues 18 April 5pm – Powhiri and Opening Ceremony (Waipuna Conference Centre)
Wed 19 April 9am – Swimming (Mangere Moana Nui A Kiwa)
Thur 20 April 9am – Athletics (Ericsson Stadium)
Fri 21 April 9am – Goalball & Soccer (RNZFB and Auckland Domain)

A special thank you to major sponsors AXA Hearts in Action, Mt Wellington Trust, Beatrice Georgeson Trust, A&S Flavell Charitable Trust, the ASB Bank, Kindred Sharp Children's Trust and Waipuna Hotel for supporting the 2006 Southern Cross Games.

A Parents Review of the Southern Cross Games

This year at Easter in Auckland my daughter Kendal participated in her very first Southern Cross Games. I am unable to convey to other parents how valuable this experience was for her.

She met for the first time completely blind children and also severely visually impaired children like herself. As well as competing with children that have her visual problems she had lots of opportunities for social interaction with them. Participation was the only focus on each event not who came first, second or third.

The organisers made a big effort to provide the children with an opportunity to socialise informally by having trips to a bowling alley, mine golf and a disco one evening. Kendal also spoke to many other children at each day's events as well as around the pool in the evening.

As a first time parent at the Southern Cross Games I found it was very well organised and Kendal came home from New Zealand with the realisation that there are a lot more people who are visually impaired than she first thought. The social aspect of going to New Zealand alone was well worth the trip. I would urge all parents who have school age children with a vision impairment to think about attending the next Southern Cross Games

Kendal's Mum (Vicki)

Kendal's view on the 2006 Games

The trip was a bit boring but I brought a Narnia book at Melbourne Airport.

I met Emma who also was going to compete for her first time in the Games for the very first time. We played in each other hotel rooms some times, we were a bit noisy though. On Wednesday the Games started with swimming I went in two races free style and backstroke and got a gold medal for each race. After the we had a activities afternoon.

On Thursday we had heaps of different races. I went in the 75 meters and 200 meters, cane ball, quit throwing and long jump. In the afternoon we went shopping at the Victoria Street Market. I met Hannah and another girl from New Zealand team and we went swimming together at the hotel pool. I also met girls from Samoa at the disco.

On Friday we went to the Royal Institute for the Blind in Auckland for Goalball, It was just FUN.....

'Kendal'

Accessible Computer Games

Written by: Graham Pearce, Age 15

Are you blind or vision impaired? Are you searching for games to fill your endless hours of boredom? If so, Audyssey is the magazine for you. It is a quarterly magazine about games accessible to the blind, either by accident or design. Mostly computer games are discussed, but discussion about any type of game that is in some way accessible to the blind is welcome.

Audyssey can be obtained at many locations around the net, but the most up-to-date one is at:

<http://www.audysseymagazine.org>

On that page, you can get all available issues of Audyssey up to issue 31, at the time of this writing, (January 2002). On the page, there is a link there to subscribe to Audyssey so you can receive future issues by e-mail. You can also refer a friend and pass on to them both the current issue of Audyssey and an introduction e-mail explaining the magazine.

One of the best places to chat about games is the Audyssey discussion list. There, you can meet other blind gamers, and discuss your favourite game. To subscribe to the list, send a blank email message to: blindgamers-subscribe@yahogroups.com

People who subscribe to the list will also have up-coming issues mailed to them.

There are many developers of games for the blind, as you'll find while reading through Audyssey. Here, I have tried to list the sites that will get you to the bulk of what is available. Some of these games, especially those designed for the blind, are shareware, meaning either only part of the game is available, or the game only runs for a limited amount of time.

Firstly, let me mention the site that indirectly led me to discovering Audyssey. It's called the if-archive, and it is a collection of over 1600 text games, plus game hints, maps, and authoring tools. It can be found at: <ftp.ifarchive.org/if-archive/>

If you can't access this site, or find it slow, try this one: <http://www.ifarchive.org>

If you're new to these types of games, I recommend you try the Rising From Times Ashes collection. It can be found in the /starters directory of the if-archive, in a file called ashes.exe.

If you're not much of a reader, but you would still prefer free games, I recommend you have a go at some games by Jim Kitchen. His games are of exceptionally high quality, my favourite being his Windows Golf game. One of his games, the Windows Trucker game, will not work if you are using a software synthesizer with a multi-channel sound card. (A software synthesizer is one that doesn't need you to connect anything to your pc to run. It uses your sound card to produce the speech). You can determine if you have a single-channel sound card by the following simple test: open up a reasonably sized sound file, wait until it plays, then press a key that you know will produce speech. If you hear speech, you have a multi-channel sound card. If not, you have a single-channel sound card like me. All of Jim Kitchen's games can be found at: www.simcon.net/jkitchen

There are quite a few companies developing accessible games. The oldest is called PCS. They have about 20 games up for download, all of which are demos. Their official home page is at: www.pcsgames.net

Another well-known game developer is called ESP Softworks. They have 3 games up for download, a demo of pinball, an archade-type game called Monkey Business, and a free game called Shell Shock. www.espssoftworks.com

Yet another game developer is called Accessible Games. They have 9 games up for download, all of which will only run for 15 days. They also have a program called Accessible Chat, which allows you to chat with other blind people on-line. Their address is: www.gamesfortheblind.com

Another very famous game developer is called GMA Games. It has created three revolutionary games, Lone Wolf, a submarine simulation, Startrek, a startrek simulation, and Shades Of Doom, a big step forward in the blind gaming community. Their address is: www.gmagames.com

Bavisoft is yet another company producing games for the blind. Their first, and only game so far, is called Grizzly Gulch, and was a revolutionary game for it's time. Check out their web site at: www.bavisoft.com

Two other game companies that have recently appeared on the scene are Danssoft and Code Factory. Danssoft has produced two games, one for windows and one for DOS. They also have many games for the Blazie note takers available. This site has recently moved to join blindsoftware.com, a large source of freeware, shareware and demo games. Blindsoftware's address is: www.blindsoftware.com

Another new company developing games for the blind is called Code Factory. The company is based in Spain, and their games are in both Spanish and English. They have produced six educational games, a car racing game, and a christmas game. Their address is: http://www.codfact.com/en_index.html

As for new game companies, there are quite a few of them, but they only have one or two games. The most significant one is at: <http://www.inspiredcode.net> They have a game called metris, a musical tetris game, four blind mice, a mouse-driven screen reader, and say pad - a talking text editor.

Happy gaming! Graham Pearce, Age 15

Mobile Speak

Screen Reading software for your mobile phone

Mobile Speak provides unparalleled accessibility to the powerful functionality and data management features of mobile phones, heretofore inaccessible to those who are visually impaired. When Mobile Speak is installed on a compatible cell phone, it converts text into crisp, easy to understand speech

using the globally acclaimed Eloquence text to speech engine. The speech is heard through the phone's internal speaker or Bluetooth headphones. Instead of spending thousands of dollars for proprietary note takers or several mobile devices, each performing a separate task, blind people can do exactly what their sighted counterparts have been doing for some time: Buy and carry one single, sleek device to handle multiple communications and data management functions.

With Mobile Speak, Eloquence speaks aloud for you nearly every single function displayed visually on the screen.

The Nokia series of Smartphones are packed with powerful features and functionality, and virtually all of those features are easily accessed by blind or sighted users. With a five-way joystick and two control keys, you can cycle through the comprehensive menus, easily making selections with a click of a joystick.

This ultra-sleek, compact phone is more than user friendly; it defines what blind people have been waiting for in a mobile solution. Below is a sample of some of the features provided with the Nokia phones.

- Hear incoming and outgoing calls
- Check logs for missed calls, received calls, or merely review dialed numbers
- Access incoming caller ID information
- Manage contacts as well as dial numbers from its directory
- Check for appointments
- Access calendar information
- Write and read text messages
- Write, read and send emails
- Write notes and journal entries
- Create to-do lists
- Set alarms
- Hear the battery status as well as signal strength
- Produce multi-media files using a sound and video recorder
- Take, send, or store pictures using digital camera
- Synchronize all contact and calendar details between the phone and PC.

Use your phone as a wireless modem by connecting to your PC via BlueTooth, Infra-Red, or USB to manage e-mail or surf the web

- Perform day to day calculations using accessible four-function calculator
- Optional MP3 player

In addition to speaking all of the above functions, Mobile Speak allows the user to customize the speech to match personal preferences. You can:

- Adjust speed
- Adjust pitch
- Turn on or off the announcement of keys
- Customize other verbosity preferences.

Connectivity

With Mobile Speak, information can be transferred to and from your phone to your PC or laptop using infrared, bluetooth, or USB connections. You can even exchange information with other mobile devices.

Compatible Phones and Services

Mobile Speak currently works with the following, ever-growing list of mobile phones:

- Nokia 3650
- Nokia 3660
- Nokia 6260
- Nokia 6630
- Nokia 6600
- Nokia 6670
- Nokia 7610
- N Gage
- N Gage Q
- Siemens SX1

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BEYOND THE RED DOOR BY JANET SHAW - A BOOK REVIEW

By Richard Kakol from BLIND CITIZENS NEWS March 2005

Janet Shaw is a tandem cyclist who won a bronze medal at the 2004 Athens Paralympics. Her life and how she eventually became a Paralympic cyclist is a fascinating story. She took up tandem cycling in 2001 at the age of thirty-five. Beyond the Red Door is Janet Shaw's account of her journey so far, one chapter in a remarkable life. In her book she recounts the many battles she fought to retain partial sight in one eye, and how in time she had to come to terms with total blindness. As an infant she was diagnosed with retinoblastoma, a hereditary cancer of the retinas. As a result she had one eye removed, while she retained some vision in the other eye after receiving radiotherapy. The radiotherapy, however, caused her vision to gradually deteriorate, and she became totally blind in her thirties.

Janet Shaw was born in 1966, and has lived in Perth for most of her life. In addition to sight loss and the attendant problems of having a vision impairment, she has had several other issues to contend with, including being adopted, and the possibility of secondary cancers later in life. In her autobiography she catalogues the many surgical procedures she was forced to endure during her life, the countless visits to hospitals, the excruciating pain, the slow deterioration of her vision. She deals intelligently with many issues which would be familiar to people with low vision, issues such

as difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, the struggle for independence, the need to prove oneself as a valued member of society. The book's title refers to the blind school where Janet spent three years, and where she was forbidden to use her vision, an interdiction which to her seemed absurd - why not use the abilities which you possess? The blind school's red door becomes symbolic of all those things which are perceived to be impossible for a blind or vision impaired person, those things which are forbidden, and which for Janet were merely barriers to be overcome. The greatest barrier for Janet was accepting blindness, and once she was able to do this, she was liberated, she could put the pain and the struggles behind her and live an ordinary life.

Paradoxically, what Janet chose to do after losing her sight was far from ordinary. Becoming a Paralympic athlete, with the discipline and dedication which this career demands, is not something which is within the purview of most people. While she still retained some connection with the sighted world, Janet had a rather jaundiced view of those people with disabilities who evinced a need to excel in sport, or break world records. As she says: "Back then I used to see these people as being pretty desperate to be normal if they felt they had to do something crazy to be noticed." (p. 269). After losing her sight, however, her views changed, and she came to see the value in achieving something extraordinary. Though she was passionate about horse riding in her younger days, sport only figured episodically in Janet's life. It was only when she became totally blind that she decided to take up tandem cycling, and she believes that she would never have taken up cycling if she had not lost her sight.

Beyond the Red Door is a deeply moving and inspirational narrative, as it is ultimately a story of triumph, a story of courage and persistence in the face of adversity. The book is insightful and beautifully written, demonstrating the author's skill as a writer and her sensitivity to language. Janet Shaw has a remarkable capacity to evoke images and scenes, resulting in a powerful and poignant narrative. Her style is clear and direct, and she deals aptly with her emotional reactions to the various trials with which she had to contend.

I feel that not enough books have been written by blind and vision impaired people, documenting their experiences and defining what it means to be blind or vision impaired. It is essential that we have more people like Janet Shaw and more books like Beyond the Red Door to raise community awareness of blindness and vision impairment. The public needs to be informed about what people with disabilities are capable of accomplishing. As Janet Shaw says: "The public needed to know that we weren't some lower class who needed to be pitied and fussed over, or to be ignored because we had nothing to contribute. We could work just as hard as other people and achieve the same results." (p. 270). Janet Shaw demonstrates what can be achieved through courage and determination, and the contribution which a person can make despite having a disability.

Beyond the Red Door by Janet Shaw was published by Allen and Unwin in 2004.

Check out the TAS VIC Inc WEBSITE

<http://www.tasvic.org.au>

Paralympic Talent Search



The Talent Search Program is a new initiative of the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC). Its main aim is to identify people with physical disabilities, vision impairments or intellectual disability who display the athletic potential to one day, make it to Paralympic level competition.

The Talent Identification Day is open to people with cerebral palsy, limb deficiencies, people in wheelchairs, people with a vision impairment to name a few. The age group that is being targeted is 12 years and above.

A 2005/06 calendar incorporation 37 Talent Search Days across all states and territories of Australia has been developed.



Each Talent Search Day involves a series of testing including general measurements as well as sport specific tests. Head coaches from the targeted sports are involved in the testing process and are ultimately the "talent spotters".

Identified participants are grouped in two tiers – Tier 1 include those targeted for 2008, and Tier – 2 for the 2012. The program aims to identify 150 potential Paralympians by the end of 2006. This is the first step in the process of identifying people with disabilities who can display the potential to make a future Australian Paralympic team. In most cases it will take years of training and preparation to reach the standards required to compete at a Paralympic level.

People who are identified as showing potential will be encouraged to take the next step in their sporting endeavours, which will vary from sport to sport and person to person. Examples of what these next steps may be include:

- Committing to a regular training program with an identified coach
- Joining the relevant local sporting club and taking part in regular competition
- Display a high level of commitment and dedication to achieving goals

Talent Search Date for Tasmania

Date

8 July 2006

Venue

Clarence Sports Centre Montagu Bay

For further information call Tim Matthews on (03) 9614 6800

E-mail: tim.matthews@paralympic.org.au

Web: www.paralympic.org.au



DISCLAIMER

. TAS VIC NEWS does not take responsibility for the accuracy for the information contained in its Newsletter. The views and comments expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by Tasmanian Blind and Vision Impaired Children's Support Group Inc.

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2006

Notice is here by given to members of the

2006

Annual General Meeting

Of

Tasmanian Visually Impaired Children's Support Group Inc

will be held on

Saturday 5th August

starting at

2pm

at

20 Creek Road, Lenah Valley

If you would like to participate in the AGM but unable to attend the venue we will be organising a Tele-conference hook-up, but will need to hear from you well in advance to enable this to happen.

To participate via Tele-conference or to submit an apology or to find out any further information please phone the Secretary ASAP on **6273 3275** or **0419 535 105**

Signed



D Gordon

State Secretary

Tasmanian Visually Impaired Children's Support Group Inc