June 2015

Some Thoughts from Bill

Wow! It has been a busy spring. We have accomplished so much it’s hard to put it into a few words.

We have closed our “bricks and mortar” office and started our virtual office—not an easy task after 32 years of record keeping. Thanks to all who helped in the move.

I want to especially thank Roger Gaumond, who has gone above and beyond in: managing the move of our inventory to a storage area, researching and obtaining a mobile "hot spot" telephone system, obtaining Go-To-Meeting software so we can communicate with remote individuals and organizations, setting up our first Community Information Presentations, and generally keeping us all going.

We started a new Outreach program to present who we are, what we do, and how we do it. This has been met with a lot of enthusiasm both internally and externally. So far, we have gone to several area retirement homes to give this talk and to present
guest speakers on subjects like the Audio-Description program, the Puppy Raiser program, and North Central Sight Services. Thank you to Roger (again), Eileen Rivoir, Nanette Anslinger, Rana Arnold, Susan Kennedy, and Heather Engel.

Susan developed a brief survey and a method of capturing data from those surveys taken after presentations, to monitor and measure how we are doing. This is vital, for if we do not measure we cannot report the results to United Way. Thank you, Susan.

We presented the new “virtual” SLSG to the United Way Committee. Thanks to all.

We have a fantastic, brand-spanking new, fully accessible website, www.slsg.org. Creating it was no small feat; we have Eileen and Bob Rivoir to thank for that.

The remainder of the summer and the fall will be very active, with audio-described performances and arts festivals, additional Outreach presentations, and new events being added all the time. Keep an eye on the calendar on our webpage for all the latest events.

Have a great summer!

Bill Muzzy
President, Board of Directors
Watch Our Community Info Presentations on Your Computer

By Roger Gaumond

The Sight-Loss-Support Group is planning to provide community information presentations at locations throughout Central PA, including retirement homes, senior centers, libraries, churches and wherever clients with sight-loss issues can be found. If you can’t get to the talk in person, then you may be able to view the talk on your computer. We are making these presentations available via the Internet to anyone who has a computer with Internet connection. All you have to do is email us at office@slsg.org a few days before the presentation you want to see, and we will send you a return email containing a “link” to the meeting. Just click on the link, add your name to the sign-in block. You can type in any question you have for the speaker, and view both the talk and any items the speaker is talking about on your screen. You can also ask the speaker questions by typing your question into the “chat box”. If you want, we would be glad to run through the procedure with you before the first talk. Just let us know in your email message that you want to try it out first.

We have been holding these meetings monthly this spring, and will resume them in the fall with presentations at the Village Heights community in September, and then we’ll broadcast the fun and music from a general membership/fundraising meeting in October at the Friends’ Meeting House in State College. For information, dates and times of these and other events, please
Summer Theatre and Arts Audio Described
By Nanette Anslinger

SLSG clients are invited to hear, audio described, several theatre productions and one art exhibit this summer! All shows, except one, are admission-free dress rehearsals, while tickets need to be purchased for LES MIS at Eisenhower Auditorium. Please arrive half an hour before curtain times to check out the audio description equipment, and listen to the in-depth, pre-show notes which are transmitted 15 minutes before each show begins.

FUSE Productions presents

LES MISERABLES (musical)
Eisenhower Auditorium, Saturday, June 27 2 P.M.

(Tickets can be purchased by calling 1-800-ARTS-TIX or in person at Eisenhower, Bryce Jordan Center or the Downtown Theatre.)

Based Victor Hugo’s novel, LES MIS tells of Jean Valjean, 19th C. French prisoner who breaks parole, and Javert, the police inspector who fervently hunts him down. A good man, unjustly jailed in the first place, Valjean tries to help Fantine, a poor factory worker, by saving her child Cosette from the money-grubbing innkeepers who hold her captive. Marius, a participant in the Revolution, falls in love with Cosette, but everyone’s lives change forever when war intercedes.
Nittany Theatre presents

1776 (musical)
Boal Barn, Wednesday, July 1 7:30 P.M.

The Declaration of Independence is a seminal event in American history and 1776 blazes this story to vivid life, putting a human face on the pages of history as we see the founders behind the national icons: proud, frightened, uncertain, irritable, charming, often petty, sometimes funny, and ultimately noble figures determined to do the right thing for a fledgling nation. It’s the summer of 1776, and the nation is ready to declare independence . . . if agreement can be reached. See the first-ever, all-female cast of this classic!

State College Community Theatre presents

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF (drama)
Downtown Theatre, Wednesday, July 22 8 P.M.

In Tennessee Williams’ Pulitzer Prize-winning play, the wealthy Pollitt family gathers to celebrate Big Daddy’s birthday. Dying of cancer, he can’t decide which son will inherit the estate: his favorite, Brick, an alcoholic, or his less-favored son Gooper, his fertile wife Mae, and their five “no-neck monster” children. While sensuous Maggie “the cat” works her wiles to secure a future for them, Brick spirals deeper into despair, crippled by emotional loss and physical pain. The truth in this family is as hazy as the summer sun, and sometimes the way to find it is a hard journey.
Nittany Theatre presents

BETTY CROCKER, KINSEY, AND ROCK & ROLL
(a new 1950’s comedy)
Boal Barn, Wednesday, July 29 7:30 P.M.

This world premier production centers on Donna Jean’s sweet-sixteen party in which audiences are treated to a mixture of madcap fun featuring a stodgy father, the consummate housewife of Betty Crocker fame, some frisky friends that spout Alfred Kinsey’s sexual revolution release, and some crazed teenagers with their rock and roll!

State College Community Theatre presents

GYPSY (musical)
State Theatre, Wednesday, August 19 8 P.M.

Mama Rose is a wildly determined stage mother trying to make her two young daughters into famous vaudeville performers. At first, she focuses on the younger, cuter June. But when June runs off to marry her beau, Tulsa, Rose concentrates on her other daughter, Louise. Louise, filled with hidden talent, becomes a star.

Nittany Theatre presents

THE ADDAMS FAMILY (musical)
Boal Barn, Wednesday, August 26 7:30 P.M.

“Da-Da-Da-Dum, Snap, Snap ...” The Addams family, that lovable family of creepy kooks is alive and living in their spooky mansion
in Central Park. Fans of Charles Addams’ popular TV show and films will be delighted by this fast-moving musical that includes all our favorites from America’s most “ooky” family — Morticia, Gomez, Wednesday, Lurch, Grandmama, Pugsley, Uncle Fester, and several “undead ancestors . . .!”

Finally, the IMAGES Art Exhibit at which Pennsylvania artists exhibit their work in a juried show, will be mounted simultaneously at Schlow Library’s Community Room and Penn State’s Downtown Theatre gallery space. IMAGES will be audio described for SLSG clients and friends, on Wednesday, July 15, and include “touch” where permitted. The audio described tour will begin at Schlow Library at 1:00 p.m. and then move across the street to the Downtown Theatre.

Also . . . FESTIVAL EYES GUIDES are available for guided touch tours at the CENTRAL PA ARTS FEST and THE PEOPLE’S CHOICE FESTIVAL. Call 238-0132 to schedule the services of a guide.

A NEW LOOK FOR SLSG.ORG
by Eileen Rivoir

Have you checked out http://slsg.org lately? While our group has had a web presence for years (215 “hits” in March of 2015 alone!) moving on from a “brick and mortar” organization necessitated updating that site to one that was more appealing, more informational and, most importantly, more accessible. My husband Bob (retired PSU ARL software engineer) and I (a heavy
social media “user” and 28-credit PSU Management Information Science certificate holder) volunteered to redevelop it this winter.

Our biggest challenge was the accessibility, as our current website builder did not easily support the code needed for screen readers, and we learned very quickly that accessibility included much more than sight limitations. In the intro to *Web Accessibility, Web Standards and Regulatory Compliance*, Bruce Lawson writes:

“It's easy for a non-disabled person to browse the Web. Point your mouse, see the screen, ignore (or read) the ads and the navigation on a page, and concentrate on the central area of a web page that contains the content. Skim through the headings, search for an interesting picture, and then settle your eye down to read the actual information.

“Fine and dandy, if you aren't old and don't have arthritis, Parkinson' disease, or multiple sclerosis, and therefore have the motor control necessary to point your mouse. It's a piece of cake to listen to that news report if you aren't deaf, and easy as pie to find the main content if your vision is good enough to read – or if you are sighted at all. No problem ignoring all those flashing ads, if you don't have an attention deficit disorder, and no danger of a seizure, if you don't have photosensitive epilepsy.

“Even amongst our clients, the needs can be conflicting. Those with declining vision would love huge text, those with tunnel vision may work better with small, and the widgets to change the
size of the font can totally throw an audio screen reader. Add to this the differences between the browsers being used (many of us older folks tend to stick with older versions) and the hardware it will be viewed on (cell phone, tablets, pc's with mega monitors.... and again, many of us old folks like to stick with what we know) and Bob and I were often left scratching our heads. ”

After investigating several website builders, we switched from WebStarts.com to SquareSpace.com. We read a lot of text books and tried to keep both the appearance and coding neat and clean while following the accessibility guidelines as closely as possible. We dug out lots of old photographs and our composition skills, talked to a lot of users, and have been very happy with the outcome. Some compromises needed to be made, and we are still working on improvements and additions. Soon, a page of links to other organizations and information will be added. Videos of our GoToMeetings may be posted. An easy mechanism for donations and membership payments will be added. Please feel free to email me (ehr110@comcast.net) with any suggestions or feedback, or if you are interested in being a test user, I can work one-on-one with you this summer.

DID YOU KNOW:

ZOOMING IN:

Did you know that on most websites, you can increase/decrease the size of the text and images by simply clicking two keys at the same time http://learnhowtozoom.com/? They are:
Ctrl + (on Windows) or
Command + (on Mac)

ZOOM or “- 100% +”:

Also, most Web browsers (IE, Chrome, Netscape, etc) have improved dramatically over the last few years, so it is very easy for the user (you!) to adjust your settings to the way you want to view things. Your browser will have a “ZOOM” or “- 100 % +” option that you can adjust so that all the sites you view (well, all the sites that are properly coded) will be adjusted.

JUMP TO CONTENT:

The “Jump To Content” link in the top menu of http://slsg.org enables screen readers to jump ahead to the main body of work without the tedium of reading through all the banner info over and over. All good websites include a way to accomplish this; the actual link text is often invisible to a visual reader (a screen reader reads the code, not the image on the screen). I decided to leave it visual at this stage for educational purposes.

News You Can Use

Resource of the Week…VisionAware

VisionAware is a free easy-to-use website where you can find answers to your questions about eye conditions and living with vision loss. It is sponsored by a joint effort of the American Foundation for the Blind and Reader’s Digest Partners for Sight Foundation. Great Information! www.VisionAware.org.
To get their “Getting Started” Kit which connects folks with tips and resources for safety, organizing, technology, fitness and fun, visit [www.VisionAware.org/getting started/](http://www.VisionAware.org/getting started/).

**Innovation of the Week…a Smart Cane**

*From: The Week, June 12, 2015*

According to an article in *The Week*, originally published in *Wired* by Liz Stinson, students at Birmingham City University have developed a camera-equipped “smart cane”, dubbed the XploR, that includes GPS and facial recognition software to help the blind recognize people as they approach. The cane’s software pulls in photos from Gmail and other sites to identify people “from up to 32 feet away”; the person’s name and location are then fed to the user’s Bluetooth-enabled earpiece. The cane’s camera “scans” as much of the user’s environment as possible” with its 270 degree lens, and helps the user avoid obstacles and navigate busy streets. The XploR is currently in the prototype phase, but the researchers are looking for investors with the aim of marketing it commercially.

**Activity of the Week**

*Yoga for the Visually Impaired*

“Blind people carry a lot of tension in their bodies,” says Gretchen Hein of Namaste Yoga. “They never know when they might get hit or fall off a sidewalk. Yoga is very beneficial for them, but blind and visually impaired people don’t often come to
yoga classes, which can be intimidating, and most of the CDs I’ve listened to don’t break the poses down properly.”

Hein and Marty Klein, have recorded a set of five CDs entitled Beginning Yoga for the Blind and Visually Impaired, designed for use at home and as an introduction for those wishing to join classes. Sighted people wishing to practice at home will also find the directions explicit and easy to follow, while yoga teachers can learn from the instructional detail.

Three of the disks feature Hein’s sweetly clear, steady voice guiding the practitioner through a series of yoga postures, each with its own track, plus a one-hour class. Additional insights from the blind perspective are provided by Klein, a massage therapist, counselor, writer, and musician who lost his vision completely in 1974. The other two CDs include general information about yoga, provide warm-up and alignment exercises, and offer advice for yoga teachers. “You can give the CD to a yoga teacher to listen to,” says Hein. “It explains, for example, that a teacher shouldn’t rush in to take care of you every time something goes wrong, or flip out if you get frustrated.”

For more information, go to www.BlindYoga.net.

Safety Tip of the Week
Audio Emergency Alerts
By Nick McCann

WASHINGTON - The Federal Communications Commission Thursday announced it had adopted a rule that would allow
people with visual impairments to access emergency messages through a second audio stream on tablets, laptops, and smartphones. Three beeps will precede emergency messages shown on TV screens and the like, alerting those who cannot see it to switch to an audio channel and listen, the FCC announced.

Fun of the Week

Audio Description on Netflix

Netflix is beginning to deliver on its audio description promise quicker than many had expected. Of note, this includes a variety of shows that are described by third parties. A new Audio Description link is available from the Netflix home page which shows the current list. Note: Some TV shows only include descriptive tracks for selected seasons or episodes.

And don’t forget

Mark your Calendars: Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts

July 8-12. 2015

If you are in downtown State College on July 8, check out the puppies and puppy raisers at Children’s Day.