2ND THURSDAYS MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Our 2nd Thursdays lunch group is a good place to be if you are new to vision loss or an old hand. On the 2nd Thursday of each month we have a simple lunch and share our stories and experiences with one another. After lunch, we frequently have a short presentation on a topic of interest to individuals with sight loss. Here’s what’s going on this fall:

- September 12: 2nd Thursday members share their experiences with vision loss
- October 10: Cindy Stahlman, Director of the Centre Region Active Adult Center, will talk about the activities at our local senior citizen center.
- November 14: TBA
- December 12: 3rd Annual Christmas Party

We meet each month at Mt. Nittany Residences (301 Rolling Ridge Drive) in the community room from 11:30 am to 1:00/1:15 pm. Lunch is provided - yes, there is free lunch in this world. We hope you’ll join us soon. For more information call the Sight-Loss Support Group office, 814-238-0132.
FALL 2019, VIEW VIA VOICE
SCHEDULE OF AUDIO-DESCRIBED EVENTS

Our audio describers are preparing for an autumn bounty of events! All of us are excited about the local performances at the Boal Barn playhouse, the block-buster hits at the Center for the Performing Arts, and the always loved P.S.U. Arboretum tour. Please join us!

Dial M For Murder: State College Community Theatre, September 3, 2019, 7:00 PM, BOAL BARN IN BOALSBURG

When American writer Mark Halliday visits the very-married Margot Wendice in London, he unknowingly sets off a chain of blackmail and murder. This thriller was also a feature film by famous director Alfred Hitchcock. This is a special preview for SLSG; NO TICKETS ARE REQUIRED, BUT PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE ASAP.

Matilda –The Musical: FUSE Productions, September 5, 2019, 7:30 PM, SCHWAB AUDITORIUM, PSU

Based on Roald Dahl’s classic children’s book of the same name, Matilda follows a bright little girl who immerses herself in books. Matilda is discarded and belittled by her dimwitted parents. But with an ever-growing imagination and sharp mind, Matilda dreams of a better life, daring to take a stand against unjust forces and to grasp her destiny in her own, tiny hands. TICKETS ARE REQUIRED (www.fuseproductions.org or phone (814)-380-8672; ask for reduced "student" price). PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE ASAP.

Glorious!: The True Story of Florence Foster Jenkins, the Worst Singer in the World: Iron Bridge Theatre, September 17, 2019, 7:00 PM, BOAL BARN IN BOALSBURG
“Glorious!” is a hilarious comedy about the worst singer in the world! In 1940's New York, the performer who everyone wanted to see live was Florence Foster Jenkins, an enthusiastic soprano whose pitch was far from perfect. Known as 'the first lady of the sliding scale', she warbled and screeched her way through the evening to an audience who mostly fell about with laughter. Based upon a true story, the play spins from Florence's charity recitals and extravagant balls, through to her bizarre recording sessions and an ultimate triumph at Carnegie Hall in this hilarious and heart-warming comedy. This is a special preview for SLSG; NO TICKETS ARE REQUIRED, BUT PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE BY SEPTEMBER 3.

Fall Tour of the Penn State Arboretum:
September 24, 2019, 10:00 AM, H.O. SMITH BOTANIC GARDENS

Join us at 10:00 AM for a leisurely walk through the beautiful gardens at the Penn State Arboretum. Tour the gardens with Master Gardeners and Audio Describers. PLEASE RESERVE YOUR SPACE BY CALLING THE SLSG AT 814-238-0132. NO TICKETS ARE REQUIRED, BUT YOU MUST RESERVE A SPOT BY SEPTEMBER 10.

The Book of Mormon: Center for the Performing Arts (CPA),
October 10, 2019, 7:30PM, AND October 13, 2019, 2:00 PM,
EISENHOWER AUDITORIUM, PSU

The Book of Mormon follows two young missionaries who are sent to Uganda to try to convert citizens to the Mormon religion. One missionary, Elder Price, is an enthusiastic go-getter with a strong dedication to his faith, while his partner, Elder Cunningham, is a socially awkward but well-meaning nerd whose tendency to embroider the truth soon lands him in trouble. Note: The Book of Mormon contains many religious themes, most notably those of faith and doubt. ADULT THEMES AND LANGUAGE.
TICKETS ARE REQUIRED; PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE BY SEPTEMBER 26TH.

**A Bronx Tale**: Center for the Performing Arts (CPA),
October 30, 2019, 7:30 PM, EISENHOWER AUDITORIUM, PSU

*A Bronx Tale*, Broadway’s hit crowd-pleaser, takes you to the stoops of the Bronx in the 1960s, where a young man is caught between the father he loves and the mob boss he’d love to be. Bursting with high-energy dance numbers and original doo-wop tunes from Academy and Tony winner Alan Menken (*Beauty and the Beast*) and Tony nominee Glenn Slater (*Love Never Dies*), *A Bronx Tale* is an unforgettable story of loyalty and family. TICKETS ARE REQUIRED; PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE BY OCTOBER 16.

**RENT!**: Center for the Performing Arts (CPA),
November 19, 2019, 7:30 PM, EISENHOWER AUDITORIUM, PSU

This Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning masterpiece returns to the stage in a vibrant twentieth-anniversary touring production. A re-imagining of Puccini’s “La Bohème”, *RENT* follows an unforgettable year in the lives of seven artists struggling to follow their dreams without selling out. With its inspiring message of joy and hope in the face of fear, this timeless celebration of friendship and creativity reminds us to measure our lives with the only thing that truly matters—love. TICKETS ARE REQUIRED; PLEASE RESERVE THE AD SERVICE BY NOVEMBER 5.

**REMEMBER**: The audio-description service is free, but reservations through the SLSG are required AT LEAST TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE. On the night of the performance, please arrive in plenty of time to acquire your headset and go to your seat before the 15-minute pre-show description begins. Those with full-vision may also find the introduction and description helpful and interesting. Note that assistance with ticket costs is available for many performances.
Please call the Sight-Loss Support Group of Central PA at (814) 238-0132 or email at office@slsg.org for reservations or for further information.

Ticket Information for the PSU Center for the Performing Arts (CPA) at Eisenhower Auditorium: Tickets are necessary and may be purchased by calling the CPA at (814)-863-0255 or (800)-ARTS-TIX. A limited number of complimentary tickets are available at the Eisenhower Auditorium for patrons with sight-loss and a guest through their Accessibility Program; phone Joi Loree McKenzie directly at the CPA at 814-865-5011 for SLSG client reduced tickets. The CPA's audio-described schedule can be easily viewed at https://cpa.psu.edu/eventswithad

Tip: View the calendar page of the Sight-Loss Support Group's website (www.slsg.org/calendar) for more information on past and future events.

TRAINING RETREAT FOR OUR SLSG AUDIO DESCRIBERS

Note: Our SLSG audio describers are a dedicated lot, volunteering their time to make live theater, the visual arts, and community events accessible to visually impaired individuals. There’s a lot that goes on “behind the scenes” before the audio-described event itself. Audio describers research shows and exhibits, write up detailed notes, and preview the performance they will be describing (if possible).

Sometimes audio describers seek out training opportunities to enhance and refresh their skills. It takes a gift for language, an appreciation of the theater and the arts, and practice, practice, practice to be an effective audio describer. Audio description is indeed a skill.

Below, Louise Victor, the Coordinator of View Via Voice, describes an audio-description retreat that she and Cindy Shaler attended in
March 2019. We are indeed fortunate to have such a thriving audio description program, now in its 20th year. And it all starts with our audio describers who are devoted to painting a verbal image for those of us who see just a bit or not at all. Thank you for making the cultural and artistic world accessible to us; our lives are the richer for it. Enjoy Louise’s article.

Audio-Description Refresher
By Louise Victor, View Via Voice/Audio Describer Coordinator

On March 14th, 2018, View Via Voice Audio Describers Cindy Shaler and Louise Victor boarded a plane bound for a four-day Audio Description training retreat near Charlotte, North Carolina. Although Cindy has been an Audio Describer since 2004 and Louise since 2017, we were ready for a refresher course. Three levels of training are offered at the retreat at different times of the year. Although we’ve been audio describing for years we were required to start at the beginning – Level 1.

Our instructors were Jan Vulgaropulos, an Audio Describer for 13 years who serves the Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina area, and Colleen Connor, an accessibility consultant, and her seeing eye dog, Joplin. Colleen provides the “voice of the consumer” and critiques the descriptions. Having a VIP (visually impaired person) added a unique perspective to the training of the Audio Describers.

According to the retreat website, “Our Audio Description trainings are held in a retreat setting where students and teachers share meals and living space. Each retreat includes 20 hours of formal classes with training relevant to Audio Description of live theatre, TV, film, and more. We limit our student group to no more than 8 participants to insure individual attention and generous practice time.” www.adtrainingretreats.com
We learned a lot from our fellow retreat colleagues, sharing ideas and experiences at meals and after training hours. Some of the students had experience in describing, while others were just learning.

The main activity consisted of viewing the movie “Roman Holiday” starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck. Each of the students had two, eight-minute segments that we had to describe to the group. The process involved viewing the scene and taking notes, then describing the scene to the entire group. The instructors and students gave feedback about each description. We were then required to describe the scene again, utilizing the constructive criticism we received. This process was repeated with each participant, allowing us to observe others describing and to give them feedback. On the final day of training the group described the entire movie, seamlessly, going from one person to the next as if we were jointly describing the movie. This session was recorded at the same time and we each received a copy of the audio description.

Other subjects covered in the training included: the history of audio description and future trends; disability awareness and understanding our audience; and a thorough review of the complex rules of Audio Description, among other topics.

The instructors and students were amazed to hear that the View Via Voice Audio Describers of the Sight-Loss Support Group often do not have a chance to preview the performances that they describe. Most shows at Penn State’s Center for the Performing Arts are only in town for one night, so the describers must describe the action “cold” as the show progresses. The instructors advise Audio Describers to preview a show at least two times before describing it. This ensures that the describer talks about important foreshadowing events, does not cover joke punch lines or music, and talks between action, scene changes or musical interludes.
The retreat was not all work and no play! We spent our time at a lakefront house on Lake James, nestled in the mountains of western North Carolina. We had two hours a day to hike, kayak or canoe, and enjoy the fire pit and sandy beach. Cindy and I enjoyed a boat ride around the lake and sometimes just used the time to clear our heads of all the information we received. In the evenings we enjoyed lively discussions and fun games of “Trivial Pursuit”.

When we returned home to State College, Cindy and I passed on what we had learned in our own abbreviated training session for our current Audio Describers. We had so much information to share from the retreat.

Cindy and I are ready to go back for Level 2 training in October!

THE PA OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FACES A FINANCIAL SHORTFALL

Due to a reduction in federal funding at the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), the state no longer has funds to cover all eligible Pennsylvanians with disabilities who want help entering the workforce. In response to this shortfall, OVR implemented a waiting list for all new clients in June 2019. Each month, some 1,200 Pennsylvanians with disabilities will not receive immediate services to help them prepare for and obtain employment and live independently. Rather, they will be placed in limbo with their names placed on a waiting list for an indefinite time period.

The Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) within OVR will be impacted by the funding shortfall, and visually impaired individuals seeking services will be placed on a waiting list. The mission of BBVS is to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired gain the skills necessary to live and work independently in their communities or to succeed in school.
More than 50,000 Pennsylvanians receive an array of OVR help, from vision rehabilitation services, job training, and job placement to physical therapy and assistive technology and adaptive equipment. OVR is a division within the Department of Labor and Industry. OVR’s mandate is to serve people with physical or mental impairments that pose a significant barrier to employment. Individuals currently being served by OVR through Individual Employment Plans and transition services for students with disabilities will continue getting assistance.

The squeeze now facing OVR is due in large part to an expected decline in federal money referred to as “reallocation funds.” These funds, allocated through the U.S Department of Education, typically were unused by other state OVRs and enabled Pennsylvania for years to augment its available federal funding. The federal government contributes up to 80 percent of OVR’s budget with the balance – approximately $49 million – provided by the state.

OVR has not specified how much less federal money they expect to receive. Next year’s federal reallocation funding, if any, won’t be known until September or October. OVR received $18.9 million, $6.7 million, and $15.8 million each of the last three years in federal reallocation money, which constitutes a portion of OVR’s total aid from Washington. The situation presents the Wolf administration with difficult choices: institute a waiting list, save money in its existing operations, or ask the state legislature to allocate an additional $20 million. Stay tuned – we’ll keep you updated on this important situation as it unfolds.

The article above is based on information in PA Department of Labor and Industry bulletins and a May “Pittsburgh Post-Gazette” article by Bill Schackner.
SECOND THURSDAYS SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS
Sept 12  2nd Thursday Members Share Experiences
Oct 10  Director of the Centre Region Active Adult Center
Nov 14  TBA
Dec 12  3rd Annual Christmas Party

AUDIO-DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES
Sept 3  Dial M for Murder
Sept 5  Matilda – The Musical
Sept 17  Glorious!
Sept 24  Fall Arboretum Garden Tour
Oct 10/13  The Book of Mormon
Oct 30  A Bronx Tale
Nov 19  Rent!

Remember to check our website (www.slsg.org) for announcements, updates, and further information, and to follow “Sight-Loss Support Group of Central PA Inc” on Facebook.

THE OUTLOOK
Autumn 2019