



The Sight-Loss Support Group of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.

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The OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 2013/JANUARY 2014

**Official Newsletter of the Sight-Loss
Support Group of Central PA, Inc.**

YULETIDE: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

In ancient times the Winter Solstice was a time of celebration. Winter was a difficult time, especially in the northern latitudes; the growing season had ended and the tribes survived on stored food and whatever animals they could catch. The life-giving sun sank lower in the sky; darkness and cold prevailed. The Winter Solstice marked the darkest of nights just before the sun reverses its downward path and begins to shine longer each day. On the eve of the solstice, the Yule log was brought inside and lit; songs were sung and stories were told. The fire was kept burning throughout a specified period of time and in some cultures the Yule celebration melded into the "Twelve Days of Christmas".

The flames and embers of the Yule log symbolized the return of the sun, a new spark of hope and the beginning of a new life. And so it is with sight loss when it enters your life unexpectedly. You reach the lowest, darkest time but the sun eventually returns. With courage, support and new skills, you find hope, new beginnings, the spark of possibility and a new way of seeing your world.

HOLIDAY PARTY

**Holiday Party: Thursday, December 19, 12:00 pm,
Mount Nittany Residences**

We will have our own Yuletide feast, celebrating the return of the light and a season of blessings and simple joys. The more the merrier – SLSG members (new and old), friends of Lunch Bunch, volunteers, staff, Board members, audio describers, family and friends - you're all invited!

We will have a potluck luncheon, so please bring a side dish to share. Drinks and dessert will be provided. Thus far our menu includes ham, scalloped potatoes, green bean casserole and a divine mystery dessert. Please RSVP (238-0132) and let us know what you're bringing. Mount Nittany Residences is located at 301 Rolling Ridge Drive behind Hills Plaza.

VIEW VIA HEADPHONES NEWS

A Freebie: Artistic director Richard Biever of the State Theater has offered SLSG clients another opportunity for an evening out. SLSG clients are invited to attend, free of charge, the Sunday night readings of new plays. They take place in "The Attic", the small upstairs theatre where the Contemporary Play

Reading Series is held. "Speech and Debate" will be read on January 26 at 7:30 P.M. Next is "Fat Pig" on February 16, 7:30 P.M. Because these are bare stage readings, no audio description will be provided. Contact Nanette Anslinger, coordinator of audio describers, at 946-4848 or 934-0917, by noon Wednesday, the week of the reading, to make the necessary reservations for yourself and a companion.

Save the dates: On Tuesday, February 4, 7:30 P.M. Compagnie/Kafig will be audio described at Eisenhower Auditorium. Käfig's double-bill of Correria and Agwa features 11 young male dancers from Rio de Janeiro. Their individual stories about life in the *favelas* (Brazilian shanty towns) and their determination to make something of themselves inspired choreographer Mourad to create two heart-stopping works that showcase the young Brazilians' irresistible cocktail of athletic samba, hip-hop, and *capoeira* dance styles, highlighting astonishing acrobatic skills and dazzling virtuosity.

On Wednesday, February 5, 7:30 P.M., the State Theater will hold its final dress rehearsal of the musical ANNIE. Little Annie charms everyone's hearts. Despite a next-to-nothing start in a 1930's NYC orphanage, she's determined to find the parents who abandoned her years before on the doorstep of the orphanage run by the cruel Miss Hannigan. Leaping lizards! She smiles through all adversity! The dress rehearsal, free for SLSCG clients, will be audio-described and no reservations are necessary.

Brand New Audio Description Equipment: Thanks to a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and with matching funds contributed by the audio describers, View Via Headphones will replace its 14 year old equipment with updated technology. New

headphones, receivers, and a new transmitter will provide clearer audio description for shows at the State Theatre and at Mt. Nittany Middle School where the State College Community Theatre performs. Make it a New Year's Resolution to attend free audio description of plays and musicals at these two venues!

PAM'S CORNER

The countdown has begun, only three weeks left to shop for the holidays. Here are a couple of book suggestions for that special VIP on your list.

_____Pathway to Independence: A guide for people with vision loss by Rita Thomas Kersh. This book is a practical guide for people with varying levels of vision loss who strive to be more independent in their everyday activities. This book is especially useful for people who are currently experiencing vision loss, but several of the tips and hints may be new ideas for those who have been visually impaired for a long time. Audio CDs consist of three recorded and one MS Word disk. Order large print or audio format through the author at a reduced price of \$15. Make check payable to Rita Kersh, PO Box 2216, Bedford, IN 47421. E-mail Rita for more information at hoosierrita@gmail.com

_____Stir It Up! Recipes and Techniques for Young Blind Cooks The left side of the page includes adaptive cooking techniques, and the right side contains simple instructions for young blind cooks. The print/braille format allows everyone in the family to cook from the same book. Includes breakfast, snacks, lunch, dinner, sides, and sweets and party treat recipes. Love the Doggie Paws treat for dogs and the Meatloaf Cupcakes! Available from National Braille Press; to

**order call 1 (800) 548-7323 or online at
www.nbp.org/ic/nbp/STIRITUP.html
SHOWSHOEING ANYONE?**

Too cold to play tennis, so let's embrace winter with panache. We're going snowshoeing! Cindy Shaler and Bill Muzzy have offered the parkland that adjoins their backyard in Boalsburg - the perfect landscape for all of us novice snowshoers, sighted and non-sighted alike. When our toes are cold and our mittens have filled with snow, our hosts have invited us to sit by their wood stove and sip hot chocolate. Now this outing is weather dependent, so we can't set a date at this time. If you'd like to try your foot at snowshoeing (novices are most welcome) give the office a call and we'll add you to the call list. Stay tuned - we'll call you when the weather conditions are just right.

TIS' THE SEASON FOR CRANBERRIES

Cranberries, a traditional holiday side dish in North America, are more than just a tart and tasty meal accompaniment. A rich source of vitamin C and dietary fiber, cranberries are packed with healthy antioxidants; in fact this little red berry is the leader of the antioxidant pack. Cranberries contain the highest quantity of disease-fighting phenols, a type of antioxidant that is thought to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer, stroke and heart disease. Researchers have discovered that cranberries protect against the build-up of arterial plaque, urinary tract infections, gum disease, Alzheimer's, and possibly age-related macular degeneration. Recent studies also link the consumption of cranberries with healthy cholesterol levels, improved gastrointestinal health and the prevention of kidney stones.

With age-related macular degeneration on the rise, we should be vigilant about our antioxidant bank account. Antioxidants are molecules in our food that slow down the oxidation process that produces free radicals. These pesky free-radicals we hear so much about are the waste products of oxidation; in the form of unstable molecules they can damage normal cells and prevent them from doing their jobs. Our bodies metabolize a lot of oxygen in our maculas (the center of the retina) and a lot of free radicals are produced there. Free radicals are toxic to our eyes and to the rest of our bodies. They overwhelm our limited supply of antioxidants, especially if we aren't replenishing antioxidants by eating foods that contain them.

So get thee to the store and load up on cranberries, the powerhouse of antioxidants that can strengthen our body's resistance to degenerative disease. As we settle down to our Thanksgiving feast, let's give thanks for the humble cranberry. Remember, cranberries aren't just for Thanksgiving anymore.

MACULAR DEGENERATION AND DEPRESSION

This article comes from the AMD Alliance International website: www.amdalliance.org/living-with-AMD-depression.

It is hardly surprising that some people who experience AMD (age-related macular degeneration) also experience symptoms of depression. Besides the emotional and psychological aspects, vision loss may be accompanied by other unexpected challenges, such as relationship pressures, early retirement, loss or limitation of daily activities, and the need to think more about the aging process in general. All of these

can contribute to feelings of loss, lowered self-esteem dependence, isolation and despair.

Until recently, very little attention has been given to the relationship between depression and AMD. We now know that older adults who have been diagnosed with AMD are two to three times more likely to experience moderate to severe symptoms of depression than others in their age group.

A number of studies demonstrate that people experiencing vision loss are significantly more likely to suffer from clinical depression than the general population. For example, in a recent study of vision loss, rehabilitation and depression conducted by the Arlene R. Gordon Research Institute of Lighthouse International, one-third of visually impaired participants had clinically significant depressive symptoms. When we talk about clinical depression we do not mean occasional feelings of low mood, lack of motivation or anger. With clinical depression symptoms last for two weeks or more and are so severe that they interfere with daily living. Depression affecting people with vision loss also has a major impact on families and friends, especially the partner. They may also be less open to rehabilitation thus prolonging the adjustment time to their vision loss.

Someone given the diagnosis of AMD needs to be prepared for the impact of this condition. It is often people who experience gradual vision loss who are most at risk of depression since they live with the daily fear of waking up to a further deterioration of their sight. Most people who are grieving have feelings of unhappiness or sadness, but these feelings can lift. Some degree of depression is common in



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people who are coping with loss of sight. But when you experience long-lasting sadness or are having difficulty carrying out day to day activities you may have clinical depression.

With this type of depression a person loses interest and pleasure in activities that were once satisfying and these feelings persist for weeks. Symptoms of serious depression include: persistent sad or “empty” mood, significant weight loss or gain, fatigue, irritability, insomnia and chronic aches and pains for no apparent reason. Clinical depression is a disorder that can be treated with medication, psychotherapy or counseling, or a combination of the two. If depression is suspected it is important to be evaluated by a qualified health or mental health professional.