The Insight Scoop

a publication of the SOUTH EAST CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY CENTER OF THE BLIND

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." - C.S. Lewis

FYI: For Your Insight

Some tropical birds can live up to 80 years in captivity. Sadly, when their owners pass away, these birds are often abandoned or given to family members who may not know how to care for them. In Rhode Island, **Foster Parrots, Inc.,** provides sanctuary for birds that have been abandoned, neglected, or abused. At the time of writing, 400 birds call the sanctuary home.

-The Editors

***The Insight Scoop* is a Publication of the South East CT Community Center of the Blind.**

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Point Your Phone at the QR Code to Visit Our Website

The audio version of this newsletter is available after November 1 at 860-440-6597

November Dates

Wed, November 4 – Macular Degeneration Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
This group provides valuable support for individuals navigating the challenges of Macular Degeneration. Meetings are held at the Center on the first Wednesday of each month and are open to the public. RSVPs are encouraged, and Zoom is available for those who prefer to join remotely.

Fri, November 7 – CT National Federation for the Blind Conference
If you are planning to go, stop by the SE CT Community Center of the Blind table and say "hello" to Renée.

Tue, November 10 – Lunch & Learn with BlindShell, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Join us this month to learn about BlindShell, a type of cell phone designed specifically for people who are blind or have low vision. Unlike an iPhone, it has a physical, tactile keypad, spoken feedback, and a simpler menu system, so you can use it without relying on a touchscreen. Be sure to RSVP by Thursday, November 5 on the website or call the Center. Let us know if you need a ride.

Wed, November 11 – Smart Glasses User Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
This group meets the second Wednesday of each month at the Center. Open to anyone who owns or is interested in smart glasses, the group offers shared learning and hands-on help. RSVPs are encouraged; Zoom is available, but in-person attendance is necessary for device support.

Wed, November 11 – Eager Elbow Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
For sighted family, friends, caregivers, and volunteers who are supporting someone who is blind or losing vision, this group meets on the second Wednesday of each month. Share experiences, find encouragement, and connect with others who understand. RSVP is encouraged and Zoom is available. Open to all.

Fri, November 13 & 27 – Friday Night Funnies Virtual Trivia, 6:30 p.m.
Join us for a fun, engaging game filled with laughter and learning, all from the comfort of your couch. To participate, call 425-436-6398 and enter code 190742#.

Sat, November 14 – Hartford Artisans Weaving Center Annual Open House and Sale
Join us for a fun field trip to the Hartford Artisans Weaving Center for its Annual Open House and Sale. Explore the Center, learn about the art of hand weaving, and get a head start on your holiday shopping. You'll discover beautiful hand-woven creations, including pieces made by blind and low vision artisans. After learning about the Artisans Weaving Center and its inspiring work during our August Lunch & Learn, we're excited to visit in person. Please RSVP by November 6, and let us know if you are available to drive or need a ride.

Tue, November 17 – Chair Yoga, 10 to 11:15 a.m.
Discover the power of movement. Relax. Breathe. Stretch. Join our supportive and welcoming Chair Yoga class, thoughtfully designed for individuals who are blind or low vision. No experience needed. All abilities welcome. Please RSVP by November 5, either through the website or by calling the Center. Let us know if you need a ride.

Wed, November 18 – Blind & Low Vision Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Do you have concerns about living with vision loss? Are you starting to go blind? Do you want to know more about available resources for blind and low-vision individuals? This support group meets on the third Wednesday of the month. RSVPs are encouraged, and Zoom is available for those who prefer to join remotely. Open to all.

Thu, November 19 – Annual Turkey Dinner hosted by Ledyard Lions, 6 p.m.
Join us for a delicious traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings at the Gales Ferry Firehouse. For many years, the Ledyard Lions have generously prepared and served this special meal for Center of the Blind members, and we're delighted to continue this cherished tradition.

In the spirit of giving, please bring two or more non-perishable food items to support

the Ledyard Food Pantry. We'll also have a fundraising raffle featuring gift baskets and gift cards.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, **November 4**, through our website or by calling the Center. Let us know if you'll need a ride**.** Come hungry and ready for some fun.

Tue, November 24 – Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
Thu, November 26 – Center Closed for Thanksgiving Day

Sat, November TBD – Dice & Cane: Dungeons & Dragons Group, 3 p.m.
Join us one Saturday each month for Dungeons & Dragons. Led by Dungeon Master CJ, you'll join a merry band of adventurers in this tabletop role-playing game, using imagination and teamwork to overcome challenges and outwit the ne'er-do-wells of a fantasy world. **The date for this game will be determined at the October D&D meeting.**

December Dates

Wed, December 2
Macular Degeneration Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Thu, December 3
Birding By Ear Field Trip: Foster Parrots and the New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary. 12 p.m**.** RSVP by November 19**.**

Wed, December 9
Smart Glasses User Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Wed, December 9
Eager Elbow Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Thu, December 10
Holiday Dinner and Annual Meeting will be held at Holiday Inn, 35 Governor Winthrop Blvd, New London from 5 to 9 p.m. We have a full night of raffles, camaraderie, volunteer appreciation, and a Secret Gift Exchange. RSVP by December 2.

Fri, December 11 & 25
Friday Night Funnies Virtual Trivia, 6:30 p.m.

Tue, December 15
Chair Yoga, 10 to 11:15 a.m.

Wed, December 16
Blind & Low Vision Support Group, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Tue, December 22
Holiday Board Meeting, 6 p.m.

Fri, December 25 through Mon, January 4
Center Closed for Holidays

Sat, December TBD
Dice & Cane: Dungeons & Dragons, 3 p.m.

2026 Professional Members

Groton Eye Center
In Focus Eye Care
Crescent Point at Niantic
Trident Revenue Management

Visit our website to learn more about our Professional Membership Program.

Welcome New Members

Ilona Oberman
Laura Baller
Pat Cronin

Donations / Grants

Mertissa "Toby" Walton
Marni & Al Ouellette
Scott Skinner
Chris Beaulieu
Tammy Paradis
Travelers
AETNA
Webster Bank
Charter Oak CU
Grace Episcopal Church

Help support the Center's mission to make a difference in the lives of the blind and low vision community.

Executive Director's Notes

I think I can speak for all of us when I ask, "How is it November already?!" This year is moving too fast. I suppose I'm partly to blame for filling the calendar to the brim with activities, outings, speakers, and events. If that's the reason, I make no promises to slow down, we're simply having too much fun.

Speaking of fun, the holiday season is upon us, and I can't wait to share a Turkey Dinner with you all. The Ledyard Lions are planning another fabulous meal for our blind and low vision community. Each year, they gather countless volunteers to prepare an amazing spread. As the cost of everything rises, we're reminded of their generosity and dedication to our community. An act like this becomes more than a meal; it nourishes the human spirit as well as the body.

Keep an eye on December, we have a few early-month events. On December 3, we're taking a field trip to Foster Parrots and the New England Exotic Wildlife Sanctuary. We'll walk through the aviary and escape the cold for a little while in a tropical paradise. I've been told that one particularly friendly parrot likes to land on visitors' shoulders. I'm excited to see which member might become an honorary pirate. On December 10, we have our annual holiday dinner at the Holiday Inn. Be sure to RSVP by December 2.

As always, the Center is open to the public Monday through Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Stop by and visit us. The coffee is piping hot, and the conversation is waiting.

– Renée LaBonté

Center News

Lunch & Learn about Medieval History by Dale Plummer

On September 22, eleven members enjoyed a fascinating presentation by Center member and historian Dale Plummer on medieval life from approximately 1000 to 1600 CE. Dale recounted stories about chivalry and explained how today's military uniforms and traditions evolved from the days of knights in shining armor.

He also brought history to life by preparing two medieval desserts, Sambocade and Rapeye, using historic English recipes. Members learned about centuries-old cooking methods and the traditions behind the annual Twelfth Night Feast, a lively

celebration marking the end of the Christmas season. Complete with food, music, costumes, dancing, and mischief led by a playful "Lord of Misrule," this festive tradition is recreated annually in Norwich.

Thank you, Dale, for sharing your knowledge and giving our members such an enjoyable taste of medieval history.

Multi-Sensational Tour of Connecticut College Arboretum

On a picture-perfect October 3, six Center members enjoyed a multisensory nature walk at the Connecticut College Arboretum, led by Executive Director Maggie Redfern. We learned to identify trees by their leaf patterns, explored wetlands, and discovered the unique scents and textures of native plants and tree bark.

From feeling the warm sunshine and crossing a boardwalk over the pond to listening to nature's peaceful sounds, the walk offered a relaxing way to experience the outdoors through sight, sound, smell, and touch. This free tour was co-sponsored by the Center of the Blind and the Avalonia Land Conservancy, reminding us that nature can be enjoyed in many wonderful ways.

Stretch & Serenity with Chair Yoga

Nine Center members, including a newcomer, enjoyed a relaxing Chair Yoga session led by Lisa on October 6. Inspired by autumn's changing leaves, we were encouraged to let go of stress and worries while stretching, breathing, and practicing standing exercises to improve balance. Chair Yoga offers a wonderful way to support both mind and body while connecting with others and making new friends. Breathe in, let go, and enjoy the season. Namaste.

Learning Together, One App at a Time

A total of eleven participants attended the Macular Degeneration Support Group on October 7. The group included two newcomers. Members spoke about their favorite assistive apps, with *Siri* topping the list, along with *VoiceOver* and *Gemini*. The group explored *Siri*'s features in iOS 27, creating PDFs with the iPhone's Preview app, scheduling "Do Not Disturb", and reviewing *Be My Eyes* and *OOrion*. Mike reminded everyone that learning technology takes time, encouraging members to explore just one or two features at a time. Taking small steps can build confidence, make technology less overwhelming, and help everyone feel more comfortable along the way.

Making the Most of Our Smart Glasses

The Smart Glasses User Group met in October with 11 members attending in person and via Zoom. Renée and Mike talked about their recent presentation at the Waterford Veterans' breakfast. They discussed tips for reading menus, calling a *Be My Eyes* volunteer, and using the "Conversation Focus" feature. The group also explored *Meta AI* features and discussed connectivity challenges in areas with weak Wi-Fi or cellular service.

Members learned about adding markers to routes using the *Soundscape* app, although using it alongside phone audio can cause the app to close. Niki was also on hand to help

three members set up their new smart glasses.

Taking Time to Fill Your Cup with the Eager Elbow Support Group
Two members connected by phone to discuss communication, reconnecting with others, and the winding paths that brought them to the Center. The conversation turned to self-care and the importance of taking time to "fill your cup." For many, nature offers a simple way to recharge, slow down, and appreciate life's beautiful moments.

Autumn Craft Fun
Yarn, toilet paper rolls, fiber fill, and branches—what can you create? The cutest little yarn pumpkins! Six members had a blast making these adorable, inexpensive decorations for the fall and holiday season. Check them out when you visit the Center. A big thank-you to Renée for sharing such a fun and easy craft idea.

Buffet & Fortune Cookies: Monthly Dinner
Twenty-two Center members gathered at Panda Buffet in New London to enjoy good food, great company, and plenty of conversation before the chilly weekend arrived. Talk turned to the upcoming holiday season (already?!), and everyone had fun sharing the fortunes found inside their cookies.

A few folks stayed late, swapping stories, jokes, and family photos. It is always a joy to take a moment, catch up, and learn about each other's lives. With full stomachs, smiles, and great fortunes, it was another wonderful evening with our Center family.

In Pursuit of Trivia
On a lovely evening, California Dave hosted a small group of regulars for a fun round of holiday-themed trivia. The game ended in a tie, so a pick-a-number tiebreaker determined the winner. Congratulations to John from Colchester.

Trivia Question: In the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," how many gifts are given in total, counting every repeated gift? Answer: 364 gifts.

A Theatre Adventure to Remember
On October 17, eight Center members traveled to the big city for a performance of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Marilyn sweetened the trip with homemade cookies. Before the show, members enjoyed a touch tour of costumes and props. Some also received assistive devices for audio description.

The performance was a hit, with one longtime theatergoer calling it "better than Broadway"! Despite parking hassles, low cellphone batteries, and technology glitches, everyone embraced the day's motto: "It's all part of the adventure!" The group returned home with memories and laughs to share.

Want to join the next outing? Contact Tammy or Renée to join the theater adventures email list.

Pet of the Month

Meet **Leroy**, a short-haired cat with a raccoon's spirit and a flair for the dramatic. His full name is "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown," but

he also answers to "No Leroy, You've Already Been Fed" and, most frequently, "Ahhh, NO Leroy!"

Adopted by the LaBonté family in early 2025, Leroy took a little time to settle in before becoming a beloved member of the household.

When he isn't enjoying the luxurious life of lounging in his cat trees, Leroy transforms into something resembling a creature of folklore. No food scrap goes undiscovered, and no dirty dish is safe. Within 48 hours of arriving, he attempted to eat a bottle cap, prompting a panicked call from a terrified 15-year-old.

Even a simple trip to the bathroom can become a horror story. Imagine hearing an ominous rapping at the door, only to open it and find Leroy climbing shoulder-high up the doorframe. And nothing quite prepares you for encountering this otherworldly creature at 3 a.m.

Despite his spooky antics, Leroy is one of the sweetest cats around. Between the cuddle puddles and making biscuits, he almost makes you forget about the impending doom. Almost. The LaBonté household wouldn't be the same without him—and wouldn't have it any other way.

Leroy's Favorites

Food: Anything the humans are eating, the occasional dirt snack, and any unfortunate bugs that wander indoors.

Toy: His brother, Arlo, whom he only snuggles with when the humans aren't home.

Place to Hide: Leroy doesn't hide. *You* hide from Leroy.

Kevin's Corner

Ouch! What was that? Is Christmas about to be combined with Easter, with people rushing into their neighborhoods to hunt for their gifts?

Concerns about package deliveries being made by drones instead of humans may be too little, too late. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) wants to hear from residents concerned about the potential impact of drones on birds and other wildlife. But what about people? And what about people with disabilities?

The big package couriers have enough trouble getting your deliveries within a hundred feet of where they've been told to drop. What's going to happen when small aircraft, capable of carrying large boxes go flying around our neighborhoods? Will they get caught in trees or potentially damage power lines? Will companies that don't seem to know the meaning of the words, "front door", be able to prevent their drones from smacking into pedestrians, pets, and children at play? I have serious reservations about my next sofa flying through the kitchen window. If people, especially those with disabilities, don't speak up quickly, this may be another example of the cart being

put ahead of the horse. The real problem though is, in this case, the horse flies.

November Birthdays

Kirsten O – **7**, Mark S – **8**, Chris B – **11**, Dale P – **11**, Margaret P – **13**, Jim S – **15**, Toby W – **15**, Jesse M – **19**, Hap F – **23**, Bill J - **29**

Like and follow our FB page to help wish everyone a Happy Birthday! Facebook Link

Spines & Screens

Apple TV: *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*

Join Charlie Brown as he welcomes unexpected guests for Thanksgiving and, with help from Linus, Snoopy, and Woodstock, puts together an improvised holiday meal. This Emmy-winning classic reminds us that Thanksgiving is about the people around the table, not the food. With its humor, heart, and audio description, it's a holiday treat for viewers of all ages.

Books with BARD/CT–LAB

The Greatest Knight: The Memorable Life of William Marshal, the Power Behind Five English Thrones by Thomas Asbridge.

Sentenced to hang at just five years old, William Marshal went on to become one of medieval England's most remarkable figures. He served alongside powerful leaders, including Richard the Lionheart, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and King John, helped negotiate the Magna Carta, and continued fighting well into his seventies.

#DB 81152

Recipe of the Month

Apple Pie Monkey Bread

A delicious and easy fall treat made with apple pie filling, cinnamon-sugar biscuits, and brown sugar butter.

Ingredients:

- 2 cans refrigerated biscuit dough
- 1 can apple pie filling, cut apples into smaller pieces
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ cup brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup melted butter
- Optional: powdered sugar and milk for glaze

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to **350°F** and grease a Bundt pan.
2. In a small bowl, mix cinnamon and white sugar.
3. Cut biscuits into quarters and coat with cinnamon-sugar mix.
4. Layer half the biscuits and half the apple pie filling in the pan. Repeat.
5. Mix melted butter and brown sugar and pour over the top.
6. Bake **35–40 minutes**, until golden brown and cooked through.
7. Cool for 10 minutes, invert onto a plate, and drizzle with glaze if desired.

Resources

Visit Our Favorite Links page for helpful resources.