



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

**Turning Darkness into Light Since 1982**  
**P.O. Box 782, Lemont, PA 16851**  
**814-238-0132 [www.slsq.org](http://www.slsq.org) [office@slsq.org](mailto:office@slsq.org)**

## **THE OUTLOOK Newsletter Fall 2023**

### **2nd THURSDAYS SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS Eat, Share, Connect**

- **August 10:** Preview of audio-described performances, Fall/Winter Season and how to use the audio-description service. Presented by Louise Victor and Sam Rocco.
- **September 14:** Social Meeting
- **October 12:** Centre County Office of Aging, Overview of services. Presented by the agency's director, Quentin Burchfield.
- **November 9:** The art of gratitude and thanksgiving.
- **December 14:** Christmas feast

Our 2nd Thursdays lunch group meets on the second Thursday of each month (thus the name) at Mount Nittany Residences, rain, snow, or shine. If you are new to vision loss or are an old hand, this is a good place to be. We always share a simple lunch, learn from one another, and enjoy each other's company. We share our stories and experiences, learn about services and resources, and offer support to one another. We're an informal group; sometimes we have a speaker, sometimes not. Occasionally we'll arrange a special event: a play, baseball game, or special tour. We hope to meet you soon.

- **When:** The second Thursday of each month, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.
- **Where:** Mt Nittany Residences, 301 Rolling Ridge Dr, State College, in the community room on the first floor.
- **Details:** Lunch is provided and is “on the house.” If you need help with transportation, please call Josie Kantner at 814-238-0132.

2nd Thursdays is a collaboration between the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, North Central Sight Services, and the Sight-Loss Support Group of Central PA. Each month, staff members and clients from all three organizations come together and find common ground.

## **VIEW VIA VOICE, AUDIO-DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES FALL/WINTER 2023 SEASON**

Community theater is thriving, and our View Via Voice audio describers are eager to bring a new season’s offerings to life for low vision and blind patrons. As the pandemic recedes, the number of theatrical performances is expanding to the delight of avid theater goers. Our new season of audio-described performances features productions from Penn State Centre Stage, Penn State’s Center for the Performing Arts, the State College Community Theatre, and Sock and Buskin Theatre Company. The full schedule of performances (and it’s a busy one) is presented at the end of the newsletter. Come to our August support group meeting, 2nd Thursdays, for an introduction to the View Via Voice audio-description service and a run-down of the upcoming season’s shows.

## **MEET BILL MUZZY, PRESIDENT OF THE SIGHT-LOSS SUPPORT GROUP’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Where to begin – there’s no neat and tidy pigeonhole for Mr. Bill. Computer engineer, builder of houses, an aficionado of jeeps and the finer things in life, community volunteer. Before retirement Bill worked in computer management for the likes of Hewlett-Packard, Digital Equipment Corporation, Computer Automation, Apollo, and (locally) C-COR. As luck would have it, this Renaissance guy was lured onto the

**Sight-Loss Support Group's (SLSG) Board of Directors in 2002, shortly after his wife, Cindy Shaler, joined our audio-description program. Bill worked his way up the chain of command - head of the membership committee, vice president, then president – and he has been giving his all to the SLSG for many years. As president, he guided the organization as it moved in a new direction – transitioning to a new director and a more efficient virtual office concept. By giving up our brick-and-mortar headquarters that had housed the organization for decades, we reduced office staff and no longer paid rent, allowing more of our funding to go directly to supporting our programs. In addition to his leadership role as president, Bill serves as treasurer and plays a pivotal role in our monthly support group meeting, 2nd Thursdays, a luncheon meeting. Bill knows his way around a kitchen and a thing or two about entertaining. He often plans the menu, suggesting offerings we've never tried before. He is always hands on in the kitchen making sure our VIPs (visually impaired persons) enjoy a delicious lunch.**

**Bill's commitment to community service does not stop with the Sight-Loss Support Group. When he and Cindy moved to State College in 1997 from the Boston area, they both volunteered at Centre County PAWS and sang in the State College Choral Society. Now retired, Bill is heavily involved in the Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum where Cindy is President of the Board. Drawing on his experience in home renovation, Bill is the handiest of handymen. There are projects aplenty at the Boal estate, which is over 200 years old. On many weekends, Bill and Cindy are in the thick of events, performances, and fairs on the grounds of the mansion. Their dedication to reclaiming the Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum is inspiring. They work tirelessly to make the Boal estate the epicenter of the community that bears its name - Boalsburg. Bill's commitment to his community does not end with the Boal Museum. He recently became the Vice President of the Board of the Boalsburg Village Conservancy, that helps preserve the historical and cultural resources of the village and Harris Township.**

**Here are two secrets to life – avoid pigeonholes, jump in with both feet and see where life takes you. Seems to be working for Bill – he's living his life and he is living it well.**

## **THE BEAUTY OF DUSK: ON VISION LOST AND FOUND BY FRANK BRUNI**

*A few months ago, our 2nd Thursdays support group listened to a podcast of Oprah Winfrey and Frank Bruni discussing his new book "The Beauty of Dusk." Here's a bit more on this moving and inspiring memoir.*

One October morning in late 2017, New York Times columnist Frank Bruni woke up with strangely blurred vision. He wondered at first if some goo or gunk had worked its way into his right eye. But this was no fleeting annoyance, no fixable inconvenience. Overnight, a rare stroke had cut off blood supply to one of his optic nerves, rendering him functionally blind in that eye forever. He soon learned from doctors that the same disorder could ravage his left eye too, which would mean losing his sight altogether. His world was turned upside down.

Bruni is a man who relies on his sight as a reader and a writer. A lifelong journalist, he has served as a White House correspondent, Rome bureau chief, restaurant critic and Op-Ed columnist for the New York Times. Early in his career, he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and he has written many books covering wide-ranging subject matter. His prodigious output reveals a passion for knowledge and learning and a hunger for life. What do you do when your body says you are no longer in control? At this point in his life he had to make a decision. Do I wallow in my fear or explore my options. Thankfully, Bruni chooses the latter and throws himself into an investigation.

Bruni turns to what he knows how to do well: he begins to interview people who have faced down physical decline with hard stares and wise hearts. The Beauty of Dusk holds an extraordinary collection of miniature profiles in courage and perseverance. He talks with people who have refused to let their physical limitations curtail their dreams. Bruni is inspired by the optimism of a college friend with Parkinson's disease. He talks with a blind comedian with a successful stand-up routine, a blind politician who is becoming a priest, and a blind swimmer who has set records. Everywhere he perceives gratitude,

optimism, hope, and courage in his interviewees. Rather than succumb to a downward spiral, Bruni follows their lead and chooses to see life through a lens of compassion and appreciation. “As Bruni walks alongside those who have heard the unwanted news, suffered the terrifying and somehow found intimacy, purpose and joy, he metabolized his own loss into a muscular wisdom.”

Frank Bruni’s journey into loss leads him to an unexpected fork in the road. One road, the only road he saw in the beginning, leads to limitation, loss, and fear. But diverging from this well-trodden path, he finds a new road that opens wide, leading him to a new perspective. In losing something you cannot imagine living without, you develop a deep appreciation for what remains. Grace, wisdom, mindfulness - call it what you will – are the other side of the limitation/loss coin and therein lies solace and great reward. For all of us, the day isn’t forever. All of us, in time, will face the dusk. Frank Bruni’s brush with loss helps us see the beauty in that dusk - if we find the wisdom and courage to examine it closely.

## **SURPRISING LINKS BETWEEN STRESS AND THE EYES**

*This article comes from the February 2023 Newsletter of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.*

Stress can interfere with your sleep, skin, and digestion. But did you know it can affect your eyes? Your eyes undergo changes such as increased intraocular pressure when you’re stressed or anxious, whether for a short time or on a regular basis. These changes are often temporary but it’s important to know how stress can affect your eyes, especially if you have glaucoma or an ocular surface disease such as dry eye.

The link between stress and the eyes is not fully understood, but here’s what we do know. When we feel stressed, our body releases hormones called cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones prepare our bodies to respond to perceived threats. You might recognize this as the “fight or flight” reaction. Adrenaline, for example, causes our pupils to dilate so that we can more clearly see possible threats.

Over time high levels of these hormones can lead to:

**Elevated eye pressure:** Brief changes in eye pressure aren't necessarily harmful and you may not even notice them. But over a long period of time, changes in eye pressure can damage the optic nerve. This is especially true if you have the most common form of glaucoma, known as primary open-angle glaucoma.

**Sensitivity to light:** When you're stressed or anxious, you may notice that bright lights hurt your eyes more than usual or make it harder to see. While it's often just caused by stress, light sensitivity can sometimes signal a more serious condition, so be sure to let your eye doctor know if you experience this on a regular basis.

**Eye twitching:** Eye twitching is a common reaction to stress that's made worse by caffeine and poor sleep. The good news is that eye twitching is usually harmless and often goes away on its own.

**Blurry vision:** Stress can make objects and people appear slightly out of focus. During extreme stress, such as a panic attack, hyperventilation can cause blurry vision due to an imbalance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body.

**Eye strain:** Though eye strain can have many causes, it can also be brought on by stress and anxiety. Try the "20-20-20" rule to give your eyes a rest when you're reading or staring at the computer. Set a timer for 20 minutes to remind you to shift your gaze to objects at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds or more.

**Tunnel vision:** Extreme anxiety can temporarily block your peripheral vision and make you feel like you can only see objects directly in front of you. If this lasts a long time or happens on a regular basis, be sure to tell your eye doctor.

So, it's important to be aware of the impact of stress on the eyes. The body is resilient and can generally handle short term stress well. But over time, prolonged stress can contribute to optic nerve damage.

Here are a few tips for reducing stress and anxiety that can help counteract these effects and slow the progression of eye disease.

Practice deep breathing  
Practice mindfulness  
Limit social media

Exercise regularly  
Consider mental health counseling  
Connect with friends and family

If you struggle with stress and/or anxiety and experience any of these eye changes regularly, schedule a comprehensive eye exam. Your ophthalmologist can help relieve uncomfortable eye symptoms and treat any underlying conditions. Reach out to your primary care physician or a mental health specialist if stress begins to interfere with your work or relationships.



## UPCOMING AUDIO DESCRIPTION EVENTS Fall/Winter 2023

**TO ORDER TICKETS CALL 814-238-0132**

**The Blitz Sisters – State College Community  
Theatre**

**The Boal Barn Playhouse**

**Friday, August 11th at 7:30 pm**

**RESERVE TICKETS BY AUGUST 4th.**



A play about three sisters and their kids living in London during the Blitz of 1940.



### **BLUEY'S BIG PLAY – CHILDREN'S PLAY**

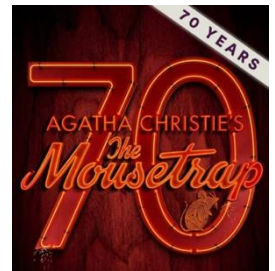
**Center for the Performing Arts,  
Eisenhower Auditorium**

**Thursday, September 7th at 6:30 pm**  
**RESERVE TICKETS BY AUGUST 24th.**

When Dad feels like a little bit of Sunday afternoon time out, Bluey and Bingo have other plans. Join them as they pull out all of the games and cleverness at their disposal to get Dad off that bean bag. *Bluey's Big Play* is a brand-new theatrical adaptation of the Emmy Award-winning children's television series, with an original story by *Bluey* creator Joe Brumm and new music by *Bluey* composer Joff Bush.

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**THE MOUSETRAP – Sock and Buskin Theatre**  
**Company**  
**The Boal Barn Playhouse**  
**Saturday, September 9th at 7:30 pm**  
**REVERSE TICKETS BY AUGUST 26th.**



After a local woman is murdered, the guests and staff at Monkswell Manor find themselves stranded during a snowstorm. It soon becomes clear that the killer is among them, and the seven strangers grow increasingly suspicious of one another. A police detective, arriving on skis, interrogates the suspects. This record-breaking murder mystery features a brilliant surprise finish from Dame Agatha Christie, the foremost mystery writer of her time.

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**HIT THE WALL – Centre Stage**  
**The Pavilion Theater at Penn State**  
**Saturday, October 7th at 2:00 pm**  
**RESERVE TICKETS BY SEPTEMBER 23rd.**

**Hit the Wall** tells the story of the historic Stonewall Riots with a spirit of rebellion and self-affirmation.



**NATASHA, PIERRE AND THE GREAT COMET OF 1812 (Musical)**

**Centre Stage, The Playhouse Theatre at Penn State**

**Sunday, October 29th at 2:00 pm**

**RESERVE TICKETS BY OCTOBER 15th.**

A fanciful retelling of Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace, this electropop opera gives musical flair to this classic work of literature.

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**COME FROM AWAY (MUSICAL) – Center for the Performing Arts,**  
**Eisenhower Auditorium at Penn State**

**CONSULT THE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS WEBPAGE  
FOR MORE INFORMATION    <https://cpa.psu.edu/allevnts>**

**Tuesday, November 7th at 7:30 pm**

**RESERVE TICKETS ASAP BUT NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 24th.  
THIS WILL BE A VERY POPULAR SHOW.**

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**BONNETS: HOW LADIES OF GOOD BREEDING ARE INDUCED TO  
MURDER - Centre Stage,**

**The Playhouse Theatre at Penn State**

**Saturday, December 2nd at 2:00 pm**

**RESERVE TICKETS BY NOVEMBER 15th.**

A Rock 'n Roll Story of Unrequited Love, one about Lust, and another about Jealousy, that fall into each other across Space and Time, ending in a total blood bath, narrated by God.

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**CHARLES DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

**Special School of Theatre and Centre Stage Event:**

**Playhouse Theatre at Penn State**

**Thursday, December 21st at 7:30 pm**

**RESERVE TICKETS BY DECEMBER 7th.**



**Sight-Loss Support Group  
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P.O. Box 782  
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**Join us for this classic holiday story! This will be a unique series of performances to benefit the School of Theatre and Centre Stage, performed by the professional artists on the School of Theatre's faculty, along with students and members of the community in a truly unique Town and Gown event for the holiday season.**

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