



# Sightless Children Club News



## Important Reminders:

November 2020

- SCC Club Meeting Monday, November 16th at 7:00.
- Remember to share SCCs amazon smile info via facebook and your other social media!



## Inside this Issue:

- 8 Reasons I'm Grateful pg 1-3
- Tell Me Something Good! Pg. 4

**Upcoming Events:**  
 Dec. 21st: Virtual Club Meeting—Storytime With Mrs. Claus



Despite the challenges of 2020, we all have much to be thankful for, so the theme of this month's SCC club meeting is "Thankful for SCC". We hope you will join us in sharing our gratefulness for all that SCC has done for the blind and vision impaired over the past 60 years!

### One young Lady's Perspective: "8 Reasons I'm Grateful for my Vision Impairment"

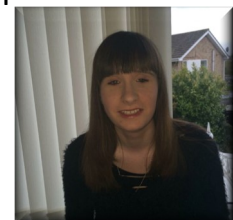
Over the years, I've realized that having a vision impairment has had such a positive impact on my life, more than I could have imagined. It may seem like an uphill battle at times, but it also comes with many gifts that are often overlooked. My vision impairment has helped shape me into the person I am, it isn't the only thing that defines me, but it is a huge aspect of my life, one that plays an important part. Having a disability isn't all plain sailing, disabled people regularly face challenges, have to jump through hurdles, break down barriers and we constantly have to prove our worth, but despite all of that, there are many positives of having a disability. My

vision impairment is something that I live with every single day so I've learned to accept and love it. There are times where I get frustrated, but that is more by society, inaccessibility, and people's attitudes rather than my lack of vision. I've been thinking a lot about my vision impairment, what life may have been like if I was fully sighted. With that in mind, I thought I'd share some reasons why I'm grateful for my vision impairment, in the hope that it might help other people view their sight loss in a positive light.

#### Being part of the disabled community

The online disabled community is honestly the best, I couldn't im-

agine my life without being a part of it. There are some incredible disabled people who are raising awareness, striving for change, breaking down barriers and tackling public attitudes. Disabled people are constantly defying the odds and expectations, it is a real motivation to be part of a community of people that don't let anything stand in their way. The disabled community has helped me learn to love and accept my disability, it has also given me the encouragement to share my experiences of living



with a vision impairment in order to help others and to strive for change.

### **The fantastic opportunities it has given me**

My vision impairment has enriched my life in so many ways and I'm truly thankful for that. I've had some fantastic opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise, such as starting my blog, getting involved in campaigns, working with charities and organizations, teaching braille and assistive technology, and being recognized for my work within the sight loss community. If I was fully sighted, then I wouldn't have had these opportunities and my life would have been very different.

### **The chance to help others**

I'm really passionate about helping others. I've volunteered within the charity sector since I was a teenager – I've volunteered with the RNIB for many years, as well as local sight loss charities. One of the reasons I started my blog was to help other disabled people. Blogging wasn't a thing when I was growing up, so I didn't really have anyone with sight loss to turn to for advice or

in some way, whether it is gaining a better understanding of vision impairment or helping a person that's on their own sight loss journey. It is such a rewarding feeling to know that I've helped someone in some way. I know first-hand what living with a vision impairment is like, from the good and the bad, to realizing that my disability isn't an obstacle for success. All of that drives me to help others. It allows me to show others that living with a vision impairment doesn't have to be negative, as well as reassure people that they're not alone, and that you can live the life you want to, despite having sight loss.

### **The life lessons it has taught me**

There are many things that my vision impairment has taught me, some of which I may not have learned if I was sighted. My disability has given me a unique perspective and really made me realize what's important in life, it has given me a sort of wisdom in a way and I'm very thankful for that.

### **The skills it has given me**

I feel like this is something

that I find myself repeating time and time again, but I've gained some rather specialist skills because of my vision impairment, and I think that's wonderful. If I didn't have a vision impairment then I wouldn't know how to use a long cane, wouldn't have had a reason to learn braille and wouldn't use a range of assistive technology. I used to think that these skills made me stand out, but it definitely is nothing to be ashamed of as they set me apart from everyone else. Most importantly, they are something to embrace and be proud of.

### **Being able to see the world from a different perspective**

We live in a society that is dominated by the visual aspects. I don't judge things on what they look like, I use my other senses. I know what it is like to face challenges, to constantly have to break down barriers and know how frustrating it can be when things aren't accessible, but all of these allow me to see the world from a different perspective and appreciate the little things.



### **The chance to educate others**

I try to educate others on what it's like to live with sight loss, and I'm really passionate about raising awareness of vision impairment and disability. Whether it is writing posts for my blog, writing for other websites and publications, getting involved in campaigns or speaking to people in person, there are many ways that I can educate people on disability and vision impairment. Educating others helps me to tackle misconceptions and change public attitudes and I think that's key.

### **It has made me a stronger person**

Living with a vision impairment or any other disability can be hard at times, but the fact that things may be tough doesn't mean that I'm going to give up, in fact, I do the exact opposite and so does every other disabled person that I know. Overcoming the challenges and hurdles makes me stronger, it makes me more determined and makes me

love my vision impairment even more, and I'm very grateful for that. I have many reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment and I think that is a good thing. I'm happy, I'm able to achieve the things I want to and I can live a fantastic and independent life, that gives me even more reasons to be grateful for my disability. There is no cure for my vision impairment and I'm ok with that. I don't wake up every day wishing I was sighted or wishing that things were different, I don't hold on to the hope that something could be done. I focus on the positives rather than the negatives and what my disability brings to my life. I have a lot of reasons to be grateful for my vision impairment.

Holly is a 25 year old blogger, who lives in York, England. Her blindness is the result of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), with only light and dark perception, but it certainly does not stop her from having a full and productive life. She is an Assistive Technology teacher, writer, and a blogger, and inspirational speaker.

There's  
always  
**SOMETHING**  
TO BE  
thankful  
FOR

**There are so many things to be thankful for; the gift of being alive, blessings of a new day to hope and dream, the gift of families, the gift of children, the gift of friends, gift of people who make you laugh and smiles, the gift of strangers who show you kindness, the gift of nature, gift of educators, gift of preachers and many more.**

**Lailah Gifty Akita**

# Tell Me Something Good!


## 8-Year-old Sees Stars for the First Time After His Blindness is Treated With Gene Therapy

Wishing on a star is one of the most magical rites of childhood:

“Star light, star bright,  
The first star I see tonight—  
I wish I may, I wish I might,  
Have the wish I wish tonight.”

But for one little Canadian boy named Sam, that simple activity was beyond his reach. That’s because 8-year-old Sam couldn’t see the stars. Sam suffers from the rare disorder retinitis pigmentosa, a form of progressive blindness caused by genetic retinal degeneration that results from mutations in the RPE65 gene. “You lose perception of light,” Dr. Elise Heon, of Sick Kids Hospital, explained to [CTV News](#). “You end up in darkness and [it’s] slowly progressive, it’s relentless, your visual field shrinks and shrinks and shrinks and shrinks.” Sam’s sight was extremely limited, especially at night. Images most people take for granted—the stars, an airplane streaking across the sky, or even our own shoes—were beyond the scope of his vision. Until recently, there was no effective treatment for his condition. Now, however, thanks to a new form of gene therapy, many patients, including Sam, are seeing huge improvements in their eyesight. The science behind the protocol is impressive. After being modified with a healthy copy of the gene, an inactivated virus is injected directly into the retina. (Each eye is injected only once.) The healthy gene then goes to work, enabling cells to produce a protein that converts light into electrical signals, which in turn, facilitates improved vision and prevents further progression of the disease. The targeted gene therapy protocol, developed in the U.S., was recently green-lit for use in Canada, but with Sam’s sight failing, he and his mom, Sarah Banon, traveled to America last year to get him treatment. Within a week’s time, Banon began to notice progress and says Sam’s condition has continued to improve over the course of the year since he underwent the procedure. She reports her son has gained incredible confidence. He dresses without help. He’s able to see, even when it’s dark, and he no longer requires lights on when it’s cloudy outside. “Now he is able to function as a normal child,” she told CTV. “This is a story of hope... A child told ‘it is what it is,’ and now, when he looks up at night, he can see stars.” And when Sam wishes on those stars, he’ll know in his heart that sometimes, wishes really can come true.

By Judy Cole    October, 2020



“Gratitude can  
transform common  
days into  
thanksgivings,  
turn routine jobs  
into joy, and change  
ordinary opportunities  
into blessings.”

— William Arthur Ward

HAPPY  
THANKSGIVING