

WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF THE BLIND NEWSLINE

Winter 2020 Edition

“Uncharted”

Opportunity, Equality, Independence

Founded 1935

Visit our website at <http://www.WCBinfo.org> or call us toll-free at 800-255-1147. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 675, Yakima, WA 98907-0675.

WCB's Newsline is a 2011 winner of the Hollis K. Liggett Braille Free Press Award presented by the Board of Publications of the American Council of the Blind, promoting best journalistic practices and excellence in writing in publications of ACB's state and special-interest affiliates.

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WCB is a 501(c)(3) organization, which means those much-needed contributions are tax deductible. Payments should be directed to Treasurer Lisa George at TreasurerWCB@gmail.com or mailed to P.O. Box 675, Yakima, WA 98907-0675. For other ways you can make a difference, please visit our Donate page at <http://WCBinfo.org/?s=donate>.

To remember Washington Council of the Blind in your last will and testament, you may include a special paragraph for that purpose in your will or trust. If your wishes are complex, please contact WCB at 800-255-1147.

Calling all members:
**We will publish the next WCB Newsline in the spring and are
anxious to read your quality content.**
We require all submissions by Feb. 29, 2020.

Publication Guidelines

- All opinions expressed are those of the individual authors, not WCB or the Newsline committee.
- We do not accept anonymous letters.
- We reserve the right to publish unless you explicitly tell us not to in your comments, and to edit all submissions for brevity and clarity.
- Articles should be 1,000 words or less and submitted as Microsoft Word files whenever possible.
- Chapter updates may be up to 350 words and may include pictures.
- Do not use indents or tabs.
- Send all submissions to theWCBNewsline@gmail.com.

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Address changes and subscription requests should be sent to Lori Allison at lori.allison2002@gmail.com or by leaving a phone message at 800-255-1147.

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President's Message

by Julie Brannon

So many thoughts flood my head as I reflect upon my vision for the future of WCB. I am honored to have been elected to this position, and will do everything in my ability to serve this great organization as it continues to grow. We are well-respected in the blindness community. Our plan is to go forth with momentum and purpose.

WCB performs a necessary role in the areas of advocacy, leadership, and government affairs. We provide support and education to interest groups such as guide-dog users, families of blind children, sports enthusiasts, and the older blind.

Members lose something when not involved in a local chapter. This is where connections and partnerships begin. However, there are many state committees and special interest affiliates who desperately need WCB member involvement for work to be accomplished. In the future, we will continue strengthening our foundation by finding new and better ways to meet the needs of our community. This will require more active engagement from our membership as a whole.

I am thrilled with the leadership potential of our WCB board, which will provide direction and guidance. There's truly a whole new feel about it all.

I hope many of you continue in your WCB committee work. Let's make this the year our members who haven't previously participated rise up and do so. We will provide ongoing support and training to accomplish our goals. Here's to a year full of participation, growth, and teamwork.

Julie Brannon: jbrannon0612@gmail.com

Letter from the Editors

It is with a sense of enthusiasm and anticipation that we embark on our journey into this year called 2020. We strive to have clear 20/20 vision for our Newslines publication and for the people it represents. What does this vision include? A few things that come to mind are voice, education, inspiration, and information.

We wish to provide a place for your voice. Tell us what is on your mind, make us think and start conversations. This is a place for all to be heard, so make us listen.

It is a place to educate and be educated on topics such as advocacy, history, books, hobbies, and the latest trends in technology.

It is a place to inspire each other by sharing our gifts and talents, and opening ourselves up by discussing the things that are difficult to talk about, but that we all experience.

It is a place to communicate information about upcoming events, celebrate each other's achievements, and learn what is happening all around our state. We have the opportunity to connect with an expansive and wonderful community. We simply have to choose to take advantage of it.

Lastly, our goal is always to continually grow by adding relevant new features, columns, and sections. In this issue, we are debuting a technology column, "Technically Speaking," by Frank Cuta, and a book column, "Book Chat," by Alan Bentson. We are also adding a whole new section called "Brain Food," which features blog posts from a wide variety of writers, a podcast column, "Podtastic Casts," by Reginald George, and so much more. In addition, we have added author contact links at the end of articles for you to reach out to them for further discussion

regarding their submission. If you have an idea for a recurring contribution you would like to take on, please let us know.

Let's chart the course for 2020 together and discover an endless world of possibilities.

Best wishes,

Heather Meares, Content Editor, and Reginald George, Technical Editor

It's Your Newsline... Just Say It!

We are pleased to present your very own section to express your most important thoughts, voice your valued opinions of our articles, inspire us with your grandest ideas, and share your honest concerns so that we may continue to evolve our publication into the Newsline you can't wait to read. Opinions expressed here are those of the individual members, and not those of WCB.

Frank Cuta:

I loved hearing the stories on Steve Pierce and Talking Book Ministries that truly captured how much of a team effort goes into the production of the Newsline. From Vivian I learned about phone checkup services and from Carl about County Emergency alert phone apps. I think that Kim's report demonstrates just how much a good candidate can absorb from a first timer convention experience. It was great! From Around the State I picked up no less than seven ideas for projects and presentations I want to implement here in the Tri-Cities.

Calling All Members

Remember to give us your votes for the best story or article in this issue. Send them to TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com

The piece with the most votes will be announced, and it will be one of the top articles considered for this year's Reader's Choice award.

Also please recycle your large-print issue by passing it on where someone else can see it and benefit from it.

We will publish the next WCB Newsline in April, and we are looking forward to your quality content. The deadline for all submissions is leap day, February 29.

*****FEATURES

Cheshire Cat Interviews #7,

Walls, Windows, and Doors

by Heather Meares

As I thought about the concept of navigating uncharted territory and what that really means, I asked myself whose life represents an example of this. Who would I want to use as a model, mentor and guide? My first answers were Yoda from Star Wars, Dumbledore from the Harry Potter book series, and Gandalf the Great from J.R.R. Tolkien's writings. Since these are all fictional characters, I kept coming back to Carl Jarvis, who in many ways is like all of these iconic magical entities. He is one of our original Washington Council of the Blind members and, at the age of 82, has led quite a life. They all exhibit a lifetime of wisdom and knowledge beyond measure, the ability to show others the path without traveling it for them, and an intriguing aura of mystery that leaves you wondering about their own journey. On rare occasions, we are allowed a glimpse into their past, which made them who they became. One thing is clear. None of it was easy. In fact, many treacherous roads were traveled, sorrows and difficulties experienced, and much was sacrificed. One thing I know is when you are given the gift of time with someone like this, you don't talk – you listen and absorb everything they have to say. I am pleased to give you all a little peek into the window of Carl Jarvis.

Carl: "It's been an interesting, changing world that I've lived in. Things happen sometimes slowly and without us even being aware of it, and then one day we wake up and we're living in a totally different world.

When I was 4 years old, I was diagnosed with cataracts and was already starting to walk into walls and doorways, and falling down stairs. I had cataract surgery at Harborview in 1939, and was sent

home with a pair of bifocals for the first time. I hated those glasses. It's funny because I think, gee, what I would give to have the vision I had with those glasses today. Things are relative. Later, when they put the first white cane in my hands, it was the same reaction. I absolutely hated being given a white cane. It signified something I didn't want to deal with. It signified that I was blind. Blindness, in my mind, meant helpless and basically charity. Of course, I didn't want to be that. That came when I was 30. In 1965, I became a member of the Washington State Association of the Blind, the future Washington Council of the Blind.

The biggest drawback of going through the training center in Seattle was that I was getting all kinds of help, and there was nothing for family members. I think things pretty much exist that way today. I don't think we're doing much better. As a blind person, I was learning Braille and cane travel and all the other daily living skills, getting ready to go out and conquer the world. My wife of five years had absolutely no confidence in my being able to do everything. In spite of doing some heavy counseling, eventually we broke up because she really had lost her way more than I'd lost mine. Even today, it's a trick or treat for the newly blinded person, to know that all this help is there, but not available to the family. I think that's a role we (WCB), as an organization, come closer to helping with, in the sense that we embrace the whole family. We provide a lot of guidance to the family that way."

Heather: "Do you think this is a big thing you would like to see change in the future at the Orientation and Training Center, and other places like this, to incorporate family training?"

Carl: "Well, I think it is one direction we could go. Of course, as I get older, it's all about lack of services to the older population, which is fast becoming the majority of blind people. Let me back up. When I was working at the Orientation and Training Center, I came to the conclusion at one time that our family and friends conferences were causing more divorces than helping people.

We'd take them to an environmental learning camp for a three-day training session for family members. It was my dream that it would expand and eventually we would have a regular program. We were doing these conferences four times a year, away from the center, so the students had to find their way around the area, as well as their family members, learning some of the adaptive skills. It worked well at times. At other times, it caused a lot of friction, things came to the surface we hadn't anticipated. There was eventually no budget for that kind of program."

Heather: "That's really sad, too, because you are hitting on a crucial aspect of blindness that is probably not talked about very often. When the people you are with before you become blind have difficulty, or even the inability to adjust to the drastic changes in your life, even when you can, the transition becomes even more chaotic. This probably happens more often than we realize."

Carl: "Yep, and the government is pretty straight about what they are paying for. They provide rehab training to the blind individual and then it's up to them to pass it along to their family. The problem is that becoming blind is probably one of the most traumatic events a person can go through. To suddenly be blind, especially later in life, for many people, is a hurdle they can't get over."

Heather: "When you mentioned running into walls earlier, it made me think of the times in life when we run into walls that are in our way, or doors that are shut suddenly. What would be the advice you would give us to push through those to find new paths and to keep going?"

Carl: "Although I grew up believing I was clumsy, my parents believed that everyone pulled their own weight. I'd stand on a chair and do dishes, I'd sweep the floor and take the garbage out, and take turns with my sister mowing and raking the lawn."

Nothing was ever said about my inability to see as well as the other kids.

So many of the young blind students that came to me while I was running the OTC came from homes where everything had been done for them. The prevailing attitude is that blind people are less capable. Because I was told I had to do all these things as a kid, this never factored in for me. I tell parents they have to expect a high level of achievement, or you're going to get something less. Kids are going to rise to your expectations.

I remember my dad saying to me, 'I really believe you can do anything you want to.' I was stopped cold, thinking that all these years he had agreed I could do this or that, and wondered what changed. He said, 'Yes, I always believed you could do it, but now I know it.' There's a big difference."

Heather: "Did you ever doubt this for yourself, or did you always know you could do anything?"

Carl: "I was a big chicken!" We both laughed.

I then asked him if he were to leave us with a "Carl Jarvis wisdom to the world" statement, what would it be?

He replied, "Learn to believe in yourself. I don't think we can accomplish much individually if we don't have some level of self-belief and self-worth. Believe that you are worth as much as anyone else. We have to learn to be equals with all, whether sighted, blind, deaf, or whatever. We need to have one big family. There are too many people who don't buy into this. We need to work towards obtaining a higher level of service and training for blind people. We ought to be expecting more out of ourselves."

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The Uncharted Territory of the Heart

by Chris Coulter

Most people who know me and will be reading this article may be very surprised to learn that I spent much of my youth and young adulthood being a “good girl.” I rarely strayed much beyond the areas of life and my neighborhood because I was afraid that if I made one tiny mistake and people ended up seeing me make that mistake, that I would be diminished in their eyes. I never took “the road less traveled by,” even though I loved that particular poem by Robert Frost. My love for “The Road Not Taken” would have been a clue to me that I should be going off into uncharted territory, going where no man (or woman) ever went before. No, I missed that little speech from God. I’ve made up for my lack of insight during the past few decades, though.

The first thing I learned about moving in unfamiliar territory is that someone wanting to do that needs to be very secure in his or her ability to trust every bit of sensory input that he or she has. We also need to learn that sometimes, even among blind people, our senses tell us more than we think they do. A good example of this is the experience that many guide dog handlers tell us about. The dog and the handler communicate by subtle cues that run down the dog’s harness and can be felt by the human hand holding the harness.

Then there is the uncharted territory that is more like learning to expand our horizons and beginning to think about new ideas and understand different ways of communicating with each other. That particular uncharted territory of the heart and mind seems to be all but lost in the noise and rage most of our country now uses as its primary method of getting attention. Even at that, it is still possible to learn to gain new understanding or learn a different language if we reach up and out of our turtle shells and enter the uncharted heart, especially if that heart belongs to someone else and the act of understanding that other person brings joy into the hearts of

both the giver and the receiver of the step into newness of life and freshness of heart.

I took off on a huge tour of the uncharted course of a heart that is inspired by love. I had given up on ever finding someone to spend the rest of my life with. But, when I was 51 years old on a lovely evening in May, my father walked with me down the aisle of a small church filled with a diverse group of my family, friends, friends' guide dogs and many other people I had grown to care about because of our connections. At the altar stood the man I was about to marry and, although I had no clue as to what marriage would hold in store for me, I went joyfully to him and we said our vows with sincerity.

Do you ever think of joy and uncharted territory in the same experience? If you do, you are blessed. If you don't, it's a rare and wonderful thing to learn. Sure, we all embarrass ourselves; we each have trouble saying the absolutely perfect words that we dream about saying. Sure, every one of us feels clumsy as we take on ideas and jobs and technologies that are totally new to us, but embarrassment isn't life-threatening; the sting only lasts a few minutes. The clumsiness may make us scrape our knees or end up with a black eye now and then, but it's better to make the attempt than to wish we had tried.

The uncharted mind and heart are both very interesting and filled with wonderful ideas to explore, including creative ways to think about our blindness. This writing is a step into what's left of my uncharted heart. I hope you've enjoyed this small exploration.

Chris Coulter: forestelf2@comcast.net

Charting the Great Unknown

by Holly Turri

Long ago and far away, before Columbus and others realized that the world was round, on the edge of the marine charts of the period appeared the legend “Here Be Dragons.” To people who had just survived the Black Death, in which between one-quarter and one-third of the world’s population had perished, the Great Unknown was a scary place. A courageous few had an overwhelming desire for knowledge. Others thought that new places would equal new markets. They listened to rumors from other countries and cultures and learned that different lands existed. So, without cell phones, GPS, and TV, they left for the Great Unknown.

As blind people, we may not discover new continents, but we have the strength and curiosity to flourish. We possess more grit and determination than many sighted folks. This is because we have to develop these traits in order to survive with dignity and joy.

Many people assume we will stay at home and live a life of dependency. Striving for goals is not expected. The dreaded statistic – 70 percent of blind people don’t work – is often used to justify this view.

People tend to fall into two distinct categories: dragon slayers and dragon fearers. The dragon slayer asks, and sometimes demands, “Give me that cane,” or, “Where’s a good guide dog school?” Or, “How do I learn to ride a tandem bike?”

Even for grand explorers, the first day of high school can feel like venturing into a pit of vipers and lions. We walk into the building with the appearance of hope in our hearts and smiles on our faces. It may be tough at first, but we usually find friends and a purpose.

Crossing a major intersection sometimes feels like it has dragons lying in wait. We go ahead and walk over them.

When we go to a job interview, the person we meet with may seem as if they are breathing fire or bearing 10-inch fangs. Instead of running from the office screaming, we sit down and calmly answer all those questions like “what is your best characteristic?” Or, “if you were an animal, what would you be?” And my all-time favorite: “How will you find the ladies’ room?”

Parents embark on the greatest adventure of all. When their child goes to school for the first time, they can choose to break down in a puddle of sobs and misery. That’s the dragon fearer. The dragon slayer says, “Honey, enjoy this wonderful day. Can’t wait to hear all about it.” Then they vent their emotions privately.

When the boss, parent, teacher, or spouse says “you can’t....” we journeyers to the unknown say, “Why can’t I?”

The most dangerous attitude is complacency. Just because things are great now doesn’t mean they will remain so. If we are not vigilant, the rights we take for granted will disappear.

Attending conventions of consumer organizations, such as Washington Council of the Blind and American Council of the Blind, can provide wonderful opportunities to learn, grow, and determine what needs work. We can always find areas that need improvement on the home front, as well. After all, we slay dragons. Oh, yes, kindness and encouragement are our best secret weapons.

Holly Turri: holly.turri9@gmail.com

Being 70 and Blind: Launching into the Unknown and Uncharted

by Debby Clark

Well, the decade of the 60th year was certainly startling. There was the good, like going to Spain and getting a new guide dog at the age of 69, starting a new ministry at the age of 68, and helping a new start-up church here in Spokane. The not-so-good included breaking my neck in 2012, and fracturing my sacrum and pelvic, plus concussion, in 2014. Fortunately, it has now been five years since these incidents. I am still trucking along with my teenage guide dog, Hummus. The young dogs do the craziest things. I always forget until I get a new one. Hummus is my 4th guide dog. I am able to walk outside for exercise. I have really had to push for more courage just to walk out my door with my dog. I don't know how anyone could do it without Jesus.

So, this is my 70th year and I truly do not feel any older except that my body does not cooperate with my desires like I want it to. I live in a small rural town, north of Spokane. We have no buses or special transportation. This means that I must ever be more creative in how to get around. I have already had 26 years of practice in this endeavor. Some of my best friends are the ones that give me rides. Relationships are truly what life is about. Each person brings color and flavor to my life.

I love to read, sing, listen to music and birdsong, pray, lunch with friends, eat good food, smell beautiful scents, and hang out with my husband, Jeff. I am looking into my 71st year with my head held up, shoulders back with my guide dog at my side, facing forward into the unknown. Away we go! God has given me a wealth of skills and wisdom with which to confront the waves in a presently uncharted future.

Debby Clark: debbyclark@truevine.net

My First Aira Experience

by Julie Harlow

(Editor's note: Aira is a monthly subscription service for blind and low-vision people. Using a pair of smart glasses or a phone camera, the system allows an Aira agent to see what the blind person sees in real time and then talk them through whatever situation they're in.)

After arriving at the Seattle airport from the ACB national convention, I held my new Aira glasses firmly in my hand and asked myself, "Will this work?" I walked off the plane, up the ramp and into the lobby, with my newfound confidence. I got my Aira glasses situated on my face, while airport personnel kept telling me to stay put and they would get me assistance. Even though I kept telling people I had assistance, they were not going to take no for an answer. I was continually told to stay put and that someone would be there soon.

With my heart thumping in my chest, I said to myself, "You can do this." I nervously dialed for an Aira agent for the first time, and when the friendly and lovely voice of Emmy answered my call, it was music to my ears. Once Emmy began to guide me per my instructions, my whole demeanor changed. I had not felt so independent in six years. I moved through the airport as if I was like everyone else, not this poor disabled person who needed to sit in that chair. I felt so free, yet it was eerie as I was not shore lining anything. I just walked through the airport as if I was a sighted person again.

It was not long before I was completely frustrated -- not with my wonderful Aira guide, but with airport personnel. A few times, I was grabbed and told that assistance would be called and I needed to stay put. Armed with my newfound confidence and my guide, I said once again that I had assistance, and continued to move through the airport. Although this continued a few more

times, Emmy and I just plotted our course and I ignored everyone else. At one point, Emmy asked if I wanted the elevator or escalator, and I joyfully responded, “The escalator, of course!” Then a man shouted, “The blind lady must take the elevator!” I stopped listening to Emmy for a moment as the man got louder in his instructions for me. I absolutely had to take the elevator, he insisted. As Emmy guided me onto the escalator, I smiled to myself and thought, “No I don’t. I can do whatever I want.”

While I had a few more incidents of people deciding that I needed some other sort of help, I was armed with my bold confidence and a smile, and I thought, “I don’t need any more stinking airport personnel.” Then, I lost connection. I felt the life drain from my face, and wondered what was I going to do now? I had lost my Wi-Fi connection and I had no way to get Emmy’s lovely voice back. I began asking nearby people to guide me to my carousel to collect my luggage. Feeling a sense of loss and my confidence deflated, panic began to set in – but then my phone began to automatically dial again. Emmy was back! I thanked the lovely people trying to help me and I was off again, as my deflated confidence blew back up with each step. I collected my bags, with the help of Emmy’s eyes, and walked outside to wait for my friend. As I set my bags down, I felt an overwhelming surge of emotion and I profusely thanked Emmy for changing my life. I took off my glasses and began to cry. For the first time in six years, I felt free and independent in such a crowded and busy venue. I had choices, and the choices were mine, not someone else’s. We have more work to do in teaching others how to talk to us, about asking us rather than telling us. However, that is another story. Today, thank you Emmy, and thank you Aira for giving me more options and more freedom to make those choices.

Julie Harlow: julesgg@comcast.net

*****LIFESTYLE

For the Love of You: Mindful Thoughts, Healthy Recipes, and a Happy Heart

Listening to your inner voice

by Hayley Agers

Whether you believe that that little voice that nags at you from time to time is intuition or something more divine, how often do you listen? I recently I had to make that choice: to listen or not. For some people, trying something new is a welcome adventure, and for others it's something they avoid with every ounce of their being. So what is it that makes some of us go for it and others to stay where we are comfortable? There may be many reasons:

1. While doing what's familiar can be safe, it doesn't really require us to stretch. It's as if we are running on auto pilot. This can often result in boredom and, thus, inspires some to take the plunge and try something new.

2. How about that little surge of energy or tingle that you feel when you read an exciting article on traveling to a foreign country or that tickle in your belly when you step out of your door on a new mobility route? Is that nerves or intrigue? Some of us are so curious to explore the unknown that intrigue is enough to give us that little push we need.

3. Sometimes trying something new comes from a need or an opportunity that falls into your lap.

So, which one am I – the person who listens and steps off the ledge, even if it means I might fail over and over again, or the person who stays wrapped up in the comfortable because the fear of success is scarier than the fear of failing? I'm a little of both. For several years now, many WCB friends have been talking to

me about running for a position on the board. While it sparked my interest, I made excuses for why it wasn't right for me. Truthfully, none of those excuses have changed: I am too busy, I don't know enough about the operations of the organization, I'm not techie enough to get done what is needed, etc. The difference this year came down to two important factors for me.

The first is that I was involved in planning the youth conference again this year and these kiddos knocked my socks off. Even with nerves and fears and unknowns, they came and they conquered.

The second reason I decided to go for it, despite my fears and excuses, was because I chose to listen to that voice inside me, the one that has been following me around for weeks. Here I was, sitting there at a critical moment and needing to shush that voice away or give in to the fact that maybe I was in this moment for something bigger than myself. Sometimes we jump, hoping the safety net will be there in case we change our mind. Sometimes we just don't jump at all because we don't trust that it will be there. I trust this voice, as it never steers me wrong and the safety net is always there to catch me, soften my fall, and tip me out to try again, all the time bringing resources into my life that keep me on the intended path. I've packed my bag with all the tools I have and I'm sure I will buy some on the way. I will read when the answers need to be clear through a knowledge I don't yet possess, and I am excited to get on the boat and ride the waves, no matter how rough the waters may get at times, how lost I might sometimes feel, or how tired I may get from trying and possibly failing. The beautiful thing about the waves is that they come and go with a promise of returning again and we get another chance for success.

And speaking of unchartered, I have mentioned before that very seldom do all four of us like what I make for dinner – usually a 2 out of 4 is about as good as it gets, but not with this recipe. As I write this, I just finished dishing up leftovers to go to work with

David and to school with each child. Each person, of course, has their favorite thing: Brayden the broth, David the sausage, and Sydne and I the veggies, but it was enjoyed by all. I thought I'd pass it along to you, to keep you warm as the temperatures begin to drop.

Zucchini Tomato Italian Sausage Soup

Prep time: 30 minutes. Cook time: 30 minutes. 8-10 servings.

Note: Once the zucchini is added to the pot, avoid over-cooking, as the zucchini should be just tender.

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lb. Italian sweet sausage, skins removed
- 2 cups onion, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 2 cups red bell pepper, diced (1 large pepper)
- 2 Tbsp. fresh garlic, minced
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 5 fresh plum tomatoes, diced
- 2 lbs. zucchini, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 quarts good quality vegetable broth (8 cups)
- 1 cup coarsely-grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
- 2 Tbsp. fresh basil, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. fresh oregano, chopped

Instructions:

In a large soup pot or Dutch oven, place olive oil over medium heat and once hot, add sausage meat. Break up meat until it cooks.

Once the meat has browned, add onion, celery, carrots and bell pepper and sauté for 4 minutes.

Move the vegetables to the sides and lower the heat to medium. Add garlic, pepper flakes and tomato paste to center and cook for two minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tomatoes, zucchini, salt, pepper, broth, Parmesan cheese, fresh basil and oregano. Stir to combine.

Bring to a medium simmer and cook just long enough until the vegetables are tender, about 10-15 minutes.

Remove from heat and serve immediately with additional Parmesan cheese on the side.

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Book Chat

by Alan Bentson

Readers' Advisor, WTBBL

I grew up in Denver in the late '50s, in the last days of what we now call "old-time radio." I spent many Sunday evenings listening to "Suspense," one of my favorite shows. The episode I remember best was an adaptation of a story by H.G. Wells, called "Country of the Blind." I loved the idea of a village of nothing but blind people, and I enjoyed the ironic ending. So, I was pleased to discover a book on BARD the other day called "The Country of the Blind and Other Stories" (db#65130). I have been wolfing it down all week, and it must be a good book because it kept me awake on my two-hour bus ride to and from work, and I found myself reading more and more slowly because I didn't want the book to end.

This is a 2005 reprint of a collection assembled by Wells in 1911, and contains what he considered to be his best 33 stories to date. Apparently, Wells was not as inhibited by all the literary classifications we have today, so in this book you will read stories of humor, horror, adventure, psychological fiction, fantasy and, yes, the science fiction Wells is best known for. The writing is vivid, witty and imaginative, so that even stories I found a little weak kept me interested. The book is narrated by Steven Carpenter, from Potomac Talking Book Services, and he does a great job. He's one of these narrators who like to do a lot of different speaking voices, which is an asset in a book so full of different characters as this one. He likes to put on a British accent, which is not natural for him, but with so many of these stories being first-person narratives, the temptation must have been irresistible. Overall, his narration is crisp, rapid, accurate and very satisfactory.

Many of my blind friends have said they don't like books of short stories, as they prefer a longer novel that allows one to get more involved in the universe of the tale. Though this is a book of short pieces, it is a long one, running 14 hours and 40 minutes, and it gives the reader a chance to live in the mind of a very brilliant person and experience his development as a writer. I think I have come to know H.G. Wells better, having read this book, than I would have from your standard literary biography. Turns out Wells was very interested in vision – his training as a student of science made him aware of the importance of accurate observation and how the brain can be tricked by visual delusions. Wells lived in the last days of a world lit only by fire, before electric light became ubiquitous on Earth at night, and several of these stories involve people struggling in the dark, including “The Red Room,” a good, old-fashioned haunted-house story. Also, these were the last days of a planet that was mostly unexplored and undiscovered, so many of these stories are set in remote places like Madagascar, Borneo or Ecuador. Wells had no reason to set his science fiction on other planets when a lot of the world was very strange to his readers.

I grew up in the last days of the 33 1/3 RPM talking book, and shortly after that “Suspense” episode, my library sent me a set on 32 records called “The Far Side of the Moon,” edited by August Derleth, which contained a nifty end-of-the-world story by Wells called “The Star.” You can't get this anthology anywhere, not even Kindle, but it was nice to run into “The Star” in this collection, and it was just as good as I remembered it.

So, what about “Country of the Blind?” It was the next to last story in the book, and it made for a great climax. I still found the imagery powerful -- he really had worked hard on the premise of what a village inhabited by blind people might be like. The ending was different than what I remembered, so I cheated and looked at Google and, sure enough, the ending of the radio show was much different than the original story. Turns out, the “Suspense”

episode was originally a 1947 episode of “Escape.” I liked both endings, though Wells’ ending was pretty ambiguous, but I won’t tell you what either ending was because I know how people hate spoilers. I think of “Country of the Blind” as a story that has enough stuff in it that it would make a good book club discussion. There is a reason it has been adapted so often for radio, television and theater. Wells expanded the story in 1939, but from the synopsis in Google, it doesn’t sound like he improved it. I think the story is just fine as presented here.

I hope you’ll try out this book, as it’s a chance to get to know one of the great writers of our time – the “father of science fiction,” yes, but so much more besides. This book is only available in audio and only available on BARD, though Bookshare and audible.com have collections of Wells’ stories, but neither as comprehensive as this one. Happy reading!

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Kirkman House Museum: Creating Community Through Accessibility

by Susan Monahan and Heather Meares

Kirkman House Museum is not a place where one will find roped-off areas or “Do Not Sit” signs on the chairs. The museum prides itself as being a place where visitors can get up close to artifacts. This accessibility was especially important to a group of visitors, the United Blind of Walla Walla, who toured in September. This group, which has 14 local members, is a chapter of the state organization, the Washington Council of the Blind, an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. Three or four times a year, the Walla Walla group joins other Eastern Washington chapters for social or educational get-togethers. Members of the Yakima Valley Council of the Blind and United Blind of the Tri-Cities chapters joined the event at Kirkman House.

Susan Monahan, the Kirkman House volunteer hosting the group, asked Heather Meares, the UBWW president, about the goals of their visit. She answered, “We wanted to take a little trip to the past of our very own city of Walla Walla and be able to do so by using all of our available senses.”

Heather and her friends, Annee Hartzell, Reginald George and Tim Van Winkle, visited the museum first to check out the possibilities. Tim is sighted and is a big enthusiast of architecture, and was able to provide lots of detailed descriptions of the museum and grounds. Heather immediately saw the potential in Kirkman House’s music room, where one can find Fanny Kirkman’s piano, a Victrola, a vintage pump organ and a recently acquired player piano. She knew her group would really enjoy the hands-on experiences in this particular room. Annee volunteered to do Braille descriptions around the museum. Reginald was the brains behind making the descriptions in an audio format that would be easy and functional for future needs of recording new descriptions as they are added or changed.

In each room at Kirkman House, informational signs inform the visitor not only about the Kirkman family, but also the features of the room. To make this written information available for their visit, Heather brought some exciting technology with her. A “wand” device served the double purpose of recording and then playing back each sign’s content. The process was simple. A small dot was affixed to each sign. Susan pointed the wand at the dot, and recorded the printed material. The wand then became a “reader” and played back the dot’s information.

All three chapters arrived on Sept. 6 and two hours were spent listening to the wand-recorded information and experiencing the furnishings, the musical instruments and the architectural features. Reg, the group’s musician, delighted us all by playing the instruments in the music room. Tim described the crown

moldings, the plaster medallions and the high ceilings so all could appreciate the elegant features of the house.

“The ability to gather tactile information about the fabrics in the clothing, the wallpaper and wood carvings and dishes around the house was wonderful and, of course, the music room was a very fun experience in so many ways,” Heather said. “My personal favorite was exploring a closet full of vintage clothes and quilts and we all loved that nothing was blocked off, telling us not to touch anything. Thank you for allowing us to have the full, accessible experience.”

Everyone agreed that the wand was a useful tool and the audio description made it possible for the written material to be accessible. The UBWW donated the wand to the museum so it will be available for future visitors, and they have plans to work on similar projects in other locations around town. There are also Braille translations of the information signs in the works.

Mourning a Loss but Celebrating a Legend

by Malissa Hudson

Growing up blind and living in the South, my parents and I listened to the radio, especially country radio. When I was 2 years old, I remember sitting up in bed and hearing this incredibly rich voice coming through the small speakers. This person was counting down the country hits of the week, and I was saying to myself, "Where's that coming from? Can I meet him? Where is this individual?"

What I was listening to was American Country Countdown, hosted by none other than Bob Kingsley, who passed away of bladder cancer Oct. 17 at the age of 80. Many may not know that name, but there's a good chance you've heard that warm, rich voice coming out of your speakers.

Bob was an amazing storyteller, and to hear him speak on the history of the songs, it made it feel like you were in a country music history class, but without all of the tedious homework.

While serving in the U.S. Air Force, Bob started his career in Keflavik, Iceland, where he learned the ropes as a radio announcer. Ever since childhood, Bob fell in love with radio and knew that's where he wanted to be. From 1978 to 2006, Bob hosted American Country Countdown, where he won numerous awards for his work, including Billboard's Network/Syndicated Program of the Year an incredible 16 times. Bob was also inducted in several halls of fame, including the Country Music DJ Hall of Fame in 1998 and the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2016, and deservedly so.

In 2006, Bob Kingsley's Country Top 40 was launched. This was a lot like Casey Kasem's American Top 40 program, but country style.

One of the features on that show is called Listener Requests, where you email a letter, telling Bob what song you wish to hear, and a story to go along with it. I knew I wanted to submit a listener request myself, but I just didn't know what song I wanted, or what story to tell.

While I was at work one day, I remember hearing someone asking me, "Malissa, can I give you a hug?" Of course, I said yes. It was former WCB member Debbie Peterson. She had just lost her sight, and as she was embracing me, she asked me, "Why am I blind? There's no hope for me."

I told her there was hope, but that she just needed to find it. Well, I recall hearing a song by Joe Nichols called "The Impossible." This song is about having a can-do attitude about life, and that there is no such thing as hopeless, if you believe.

When I was 27, I submitted a letter to Bob and told him the story of my blindness, and I dedicated "The Impossible" to those with disabilities who had the can-do attitude about life that's mentioned in the song. Oh, did I mention that I spoke of WCB in that letter?

When Bob read my request on the air, I cried. After my request was aired, Bob and his crew sent me a CD copy of that program, which I still have in my possession.

Well, one day, I wrote to one of the staff of the Country an email, asking if I could talk with Bob on the phone because I wanted to find out more about his radio career and his life, since I've been listening to him all of my life.

While I was taking a day off work, my telephone rang. I didn't know who it was, but it was like God just tapped me on the shoulder and said that something good was about to happen. After I said hello, this big voice says, "Malissa, please?" I said, "This is Malissa, who's this?" To which he replied, "Hi Malissa. It's Bob Kingsley."

All I could say was, “What?” I was completely speechless, and I couldn’t say a word. This is the only time in my life I’ve felt this way – speechless. We had a wonderful conversation for about 45 minutes, and we remained friends until the end. He would usually wish me a happy birthday either on Facebook or via email every year. He was just so humble.

On Oct. 17, while I was on my morning break at work, I was looking through my Facebook page when I learned Bob had lost his battle with cancer and passed away while being treated. All I could do was cry, and my heart was broken. Bob lived life to the fullest, loved country music, loved his country, and was a true believer in his Lord and Savior whom he loved. Most of all, he had huge respect for his fans, including those who were blind or visually impaired. I was so honored to have gotten to meet him voice to voice, but I wish there was a way I could have met him in-person. Country music has lost a legend, but celebrates a life that will never be forgotten. Bob Kingsley, Godspeed my friend, and I’ll see you on the other side face to face with the Lord, where he said to you, “Servant, well done.”

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*****ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

Chronicles of a Happy Warrior #2 You Are the Face of Advocacy

by Mark Adreon

In my last article, titled “Advocacy Has Many Faces,” I explored the definition and meanings of the word “advocacy.” An agreed-upon meaning of advocacy allows us all to have a shared starting place for discussions about it.

From the last article: “Advocacy is not a new idea and is a concept that is used widely by individuals, groups and organizations to achieve their outreach and cultural-change goals.”

This article will focus on the individual, or self-advocacy.

In my first article, we identified two elements that need to be present for engagement advocacy: 1) the goal (what is it you want to change) and, 2) the action steps required to achieve the goal.

I know that all of us are engaged in self-advocacy daily and we all have established our methods and means. When we are talking about self-advocacy, these are individual issues we are trying to solve for our personal reasons. They may take on community as you move forward. However, the origination of the effort is for personal reasons.

The problem:

I shop at a local drugstore and use a debit card at the point of purchase. The store only has a touch screen and, therefore, is not accessible for putting in the PIN number or answering any on-screen questions.

The goal:

This is the store where I shop and I want them to be inclusive and value me as a paying customer. I want an accessible debit machine I can use independently.

There are several potential action steps I can take with varying degrees of effectiveness. See if any of these action steps sound familiar:

Express anger that they are not accessible and threaten them with a lawsuit.

Tell them they are non-ADA compliant and run the risk of someone suing them and this is not going to be you – just a heads-up.

Insist that they take steps to fix this access issue, talk with the store manager and share information on accessible debit machines and point out that their competitor down the street has an accessible machine.

Ask for a manager and suggest they close their eyes and use the debit machine.

Become angry, throw your items on the counter and storm out of the store saying as loudly as you can, “I will never shop at this disability-discriminating store!”

Ask them to run your card as a credit and then sign the receipt and be done with the transaction, all without mentioning that the machine is not accessible.

Take a picture of the machine, maybe with the clerk in it, and send the picture to your local WCB affiliate and ask them to boycott the store and try to get media attention for this issue.

Contact others in your affiliate, family or friends and complain about the store and try to get them to understand your pain.

Keep shopping at the store and every time you check out, tell them they are non-compliant, running the risk of a lawsuit, and not respecting you as a customer.

This list can go on and on, and everyone will have their own strategy for dealing with this problem. So, how do you determine which action plan will achieve the change or goal you are seeking? Do you have any preferences, or did you see your strategy in the list above?

It is sometimes easier to eliminate actions that don't work, as you find the "magic" action steps that net the result you are looking for. Has anyone personally had success telling a store or business that you are going to sue them, especially when you know you will not be following through with this threat? Have you had success being angry and throwing a hissy fit at the counter, storming out and saying you will never shop here again?

Self-advocacy is personal, and sharing experiences can expand ideas that can work for you and others.

First rule: Stop taking action steps that are not working. They are not achieving the goal you want and don't move to the results you want. It is surprising, as we establish our own methods, how often we don't stop and evaluate if we are having any success.

Second rule: Know the difference between self-advocacy and the need to "call in the troops." If you immediately go to your affiliate, the advocacy committee or consumer group to have them provide your solution or action steps, try a self-generated action step or plan and see what results you get. Be brave, stand up for your rights and be an agent of change, not a victim of circumstance.

Rule 3: Know your rights. Equip yourself with knowledge of the ADA, in Washington state the Law Against Discrimination, White Cane laws, service animal legislation and basic civil and disability rights. Knowing your rights should empower you to fight for them.

Rule 4: Know when your fight is a community fight and have a plan to bring it to the community for action. To be clear, most of your daily needs for advocacy, even if they are similar to others, are your opportunity to speak up for change.

A golden rule is to demand inclusion and equal rights. Show others your humanity. Be a real person, not a problem.

This article is to get conversation started and is not a map for all to follow. Having conversations and sharing methods that net change and meet the goals of your advocacy will build your success skills in self-advocacy.

A happy warrior with focus, knowledge, passion, compassion and insight can change all that is around them.

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Ask

by Hayley Edick

Raising our two children has come with its challenges. My husband and I expected this as we brought them into this world. One challenge we faced came when it was time for our son to go to kindergarten and our daughter to preschool. The issue was transportation, particularly regarding the location of the bus stop for our kindergartener. You see, the bus stop was six blocks away – plus the fact that our 3-year-old preschooler couldn't ride the bus unless she was "special needs."

The problem for us was that my husband and I are blind. We were faced with the prospect of walking 12 blocks (6 blocks each way) to our son's bus pick-up location – through intersections with no accessible pedestrian signals – or, instead, walking them both to school at different times. This would take up about three hours

daily and make it nearly impossible for either of us to work outside the home.

When I called the bus company to get specifics on where the bus stop was located, I was told that our children were definitely eligible to take the bus, but according to current regulations, a child under 10 should not walk more than two blocks to get to a bus stop. I asked whether the bus stop could be changed to a safer location further off the busy street and possibly benefit our neighbor, whose son goes to the same school, or whether the regular school bus could detour to pick up my kids since we are close to a safer intersection. I even suggested the possibility of the kids being picked up in front of our house, having prior knowledge that my 3-year-old was not allowed to ride a bus unless she had special needs. I was told, "You and your husband have the disability, not your children. We can't do anything to accommodate you."

I then called the school. I didn't think they could do anything to help. However, I asked that they stay on our side and assist with any ideas they had. When my family went to my son's first back-to-school night the following week, we met the principals. They told us that they were fighting to get our kids transportation. The president of the parent/teacher association had also heard of our plight and wanted to help in any way possible.

About two weeks after my son started kindergarten, my husband informed me that our son would be picked up and dropped off in front of our house, and that both of our children would have transportation to and from school on Special Ed buses.

I thought the challenge of getting our kids to school would take a village of people, a lot of kicking and screaming, and maybe even a higher advocate. Instead, asking a question started a solution. Many times, people who have had challenges such as ours have to achieve it by involving a lawsuit. Luckily, we did not have to go

to that extreme. We presented our hardship and asked for possible solutions.

Fortunately, current school regulations support our contention that children this young should not have to walk that far.

When you make your needs known, and remain stern and calm, people will often rally to support your cause. Now, off to spend time doing something fun with my kids.

*******HISTORY**

Which Am I – Spectator or Participant?

by Carl Jarvis

My dad had no interest in team sports, like baseball, football and basketball. While he never put them down, he just never spoke of them. So I don't know where I caught the sports bug. But when each new season came around, here I was, hopping up and down and shouting my head off cheering for "my team."

In school, I turned out for everything, but to no avail. My sight was so bad that I bounced basketballs off my fingertips or my nose. And baseballs? Forget it. I remember the big baseball game between the John Hay 8-A team and the 8-B team. Both teams were undefeated so the winner would become school champs. I played on the 8-B team.

"You go to right field," Butch Snyder told me, "'cause none of those guys hit to right field."

I could see the batters pretty good, but not the baseball. It looked like everyone was throwing air at one another. Inning after inning

I trudged out to right field with my heart thumping, hoping against hope that no ball would be hit my direction. It was the final inning in a scoreless game.

Crack! I heard the opponent's bat connect with the ball. I heard all the spectators gasp as the ball rose into the air. They were yelling at me, "Run Carl, run!" But I didn't have a clue which way to run. And then I saw the ball. It soared past my head, out of reach, dropping to the ground and disappearing into a clump of weeds. We lost, 1 to 0. That was the day I realized I was never going to be a sports hero.

But that's not the story I had set out to tell, at all. The story I was headed toward was why my dad never cared for team sports – well, at least as far back as I knew him. This was in the year 1954 and I was 19 years old. I'd just come home from a rousing victory by the Seattle Rainiers baseball team. Even after an hour bus ride, I was still pumped.

"What a game! What a game!" I shouted. I was met with a lukewarm reception from Dad. I asked him, "How come you don't like sports?"

"Well," Dad said, "it's not that I don't like sports, it's that I don't really care who wins or loses. But here was a time when I did care."

In those days we lived in a small mining town. Mother and I would pack a picnic basket and walk to the ball yard, where the teams were warming up. There were a few rough-plank benches, but most of us tossed blankets on the ground and spread out our lunch.

Dad went on to tell me that the team was made up from the company miners. His big brother, Bill, played third base, so he and his mother sat along the third base line where they could cheer him on. The little town was Burke, Idaho. They were

defending their crown against the hated rival, the Wallace Wildcats, a team made up from Wallace, Idaho, townspeople.

“Everybody knew all of the players,” Dad went on. “My uncle was pitching and Bill was third base, and a second cousin was our catcher. It was almost a family affair.”

“But Dad,” I argued, “today’s players are so well trained and professional. They play far superior ball.”

“Do you know any of the ball players personally? Are any of them related to us?” Dad asked me. “Having family or friends on the team makes the game more exciting than how professional the players are.”

“Well,” I said, trying to salvage something from the discussion, “I do pay at the gate, so I guess that I’m invested in the game that way.”

Dad was never at a loss for words: “We pay taxes as Americans. That’s sort of like paying to be part of the onlookers. But if all you do is pay for the ticket and take your seat, which is going to hire the manager and pick the players and make the rules and keep the score? If all you are is a spectator, then you are limited to cheering when the team wins or crying when it loses. Others hold the control.”

Letting my mind wander back, I got to thinking just how different the world is from the one I grew up in. Back then, we could hardly wait for school to let out. We burst onto the school yard and involved ourselves in all sorts of games and competitions. No one played indoors. The girls I grew up with were mostly called Tom Boys and could outrun and out-wrestle many of the boys. If we didn’t like the game, we made up new rules. We had bicycle races and took to the new smooth blacktop covering Queen Anne Boulevard, zipping along on our street roller skates. Have you ever owned a pair of clamp-on skates? Have you ever had one

come loose just as you were reaching sonic speed? But bruises and cuts were part of the price we paid for being involved in life.

I wondered just when we Americans turned down the wrong road and became a nation of spectators instead of participants. It happened so smoothly and so quickly that it came about without much notice. One day we were all involved in town meetings, churches, school board meetings, volunteering our time and offering our money to help those around us who were in need. When did we become “couch potatoes?” Are we happier letting others have the control? Are we more comfortable just paying for our ticket and settling back to watch the game, rather than being a player?

And what about those organizations we claim to be near and dear to us – like the Washington Council of the Blind? Are we content being spectators, observing from a safe distance? Or, do we see ourselves as being part of a moving force, involved in making change and paving the way toward a better life?

Next year, 2020, WCB and I will both turn 85. We’ve both had our ups and downs, but we’re both still here. Looking back, it is amazing the changes that have taken place in 85 years. Life is far more positive for blind men and women than it was in 1935. Just think what the world may be like in 2105.

By being a participant, by being involved, we will be doing our bit to ensure that WCB is still on the cutting edge in 85 years.

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History Quiz

by Carl Jarvis

Question: We all know Oct. 15 is White Cane Safety Day, but do you know what year the White Cane Safety Day Proclamation was signed and by whom?

Answer: White Cane Safety Day was established in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson to honor the commitment of our society to accessibility and opportunities for blind individuals. The white cane is a symbol of independence, safety, and dignity for blind and deaf-blind people.

Additional Information: White Cane Awareness: A History of White Cane Safety posted Oct. 12, 2017, by Steve Kelley.

Today, the white cane isn't just a tool used by travelers with vision loss. It is a symbol for members of our community who are blind or visually impaired.

White Cane Safety Day is observed annually on Oct. 15 to recognize the many achievements of blind and visually impaired citizens and the white cane as a tool promoting independent travel.

There are references of blind travelers using a stick, cane, or shepherd's staff as a tool for independent travel since biblical times. It has only been during the last century that the white cane has served the dual role of both a tool for travel and symbol identifying the user as a blind traveler.

As early as 1921, artist James Briggs, who lost his sight in an accident, claimed to have used the first white cane as a symbol when he painted his cane white to alert passing motorists that he was a blind traveler. Ten years later, in France, Guilly d'Herbemont undertook a national "white stick" movement to promote the use of white canes. This idea spread to England when the BBC suggested, in press coverage of this movement,

that all citizens who were blind or visually impaired be provided with a “white stick” as a universal symbol for a blind or visually impaired traveler.

In 1931, the Lion’s Clubs in North America independently began promoting the white cane for travel when one of its members observed a blind traveler at a street crossing using a black cane for mobility, which was barely visible to motorists and passersby.

After blinded World War II veterans began returning home in greater numbers and seeking greater reintegration into their communities, Dr. Richard Hoover developed a longer white cane, or “Hoover Cane,” to be used both as a tool for travel and as a symbol. In the decades prior to the Hoover Cane, the white cane was often held outright by travelers in a fixed, diagonal position.

Peoria, Illinois, was the first community to pass a special ordinance for white cane travel in 1930, which granted travelers with a white cane the right-of-way. Five years later, Detroit passed a similar law, later adopted by the state of Michigan.

On Oct, 6, 1964, after lobbying by various organizations, a joint resolution of Congress was enacted, which read, “Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives that the President is hereby authorized to issue annually a proclamation designating October 15th as White Cane Safety Day and calling upon the people of the United States of America to observe such a day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.”

Within hours, then-President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed Oct. 15 as “White Cane Safety Day.”

In 2000, President Bill Clinton reminded the nation that “with proper training, people using the white cane can enjoy greater mobility and safety by determining the location of curbs, steps, uneven pavement, and other physical obstacles in their path. The white cane has given them the freedom to travel independently to

their schools and workplaces and to participate more fully in the life of their communities.” White Cane Day reminds us that the only barriers against people with disabilities are discriminatory attitudes and practices that our society has too often placed in their way.

As we observe White Cane Safety Day, let us recall the history of the white cane and its emergence as a tool and a symbol through history as a staff of independence. Let us also recall the events that have permitted us to celebrate Oct.15 as White Cane Safety Day.

Part 2:

Remember those childhood stories about our early American pioneers, those rugged, lean and sinewy rough-and-ready folks? Today’s Americans are far removed from such images. We have gadgets and machines to do most of the heavy grunt work of our forefathers.

Today, we tend more toward the chubby couch-potato image. We know that good health is enhanced by good diet and lots of exercise. We know that, but hey, what did I do with that box of chocolates – and while you’re bringing them to me, grab me the remote control.

We blind folks are often forgotten when physical exercise is most important to our well-being. So, our next History Quiz question is meant for you and your good health.

Question: What does USABA stand for, when did it begin, and why is it important to blind people?

Answer (from the USABA Abstract by Sarah K. Bradley): The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) emerged in 1976 when a group of individuals met at the Olympics for the Disabled in Toronto, Ontario, to discuss their vision of the future of sport for athletes with visual impairments.

In the beginning, founder Arthur Copeland ran the organization from his kitchen table on a shoestring budget in Beach Haven, New Jersey.

Since then, USABA has evolved into a national organization that provides sports opportunities in 11 sports that impact the lives of more than 2,000 athletes of all ages and abilities each year and has reached more than 100,000 individuals in its 30 years of operation. The organization has emerged as more than just a world-class trainer of blind athletes. It has become a champion of the abilities of Americans who are legally blind. In fact, USABA athletes have served as U.S. Olympics team members and won medals against sighted competitors.

USABA had 34 of its athletes compete in the 2006 Rocky Mountain State Games, the first state games in the nation to fully integrate athletes who are blind and visually impaired into competition. More than 25 medals were earned by USABA athletes from the ages of 7 through adult who were able to showcase their talents and abilities in a competition with more than 5,000 competitors.

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*******ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

Increasing Profit by Adding Value by Nathan McCann

In the last article, I wrote about some ways to cut costs without reducing the value of a business's product. This time I will share some methods for showing your customers the value of your product.

First, emphasize that your products were made by you or your small team. People appreciate the work it takes to create something, and most also love the touch of personality that comes from being made in small batches. Consider – if you could buy a soap that smelled like lavender from Wal-Mart, or you could buy a soap that smelled just about the same but was created by a single person from the same city as you, which would you pick? As a vendor or small business owner you will likely meet the small batch criteria by default, so the only work that needs to be done is to communicate to your customers that the business is run by one or by a few people. The most direct way to achieve this is to sell your products at an event of some kind and simply tell customers when they come by. It is also quite helpful to prominently display this information on any pictures or product description of what you are selling.

Second, a product will be worth more to a customer if it is unique. This includes creating an entirely new product of a type that is not available anywhere else, which is an excellent strategy if you are able to do so. There are many ways to make your product feel unique even if there are somewhat similar items available for purchase. For non-consumable products, customers often appreciate being able to get their initials or a short message engraved. A more involved but even more exciting possibility is

giving your customers options as to the construction or composition of the item itself. To go back to the example of soap, you could offer the ability for customers to change the blend of scents or colors. This would certainly make the product feel unique to the customer and they are likely to value the fact that they had a part in designing the final attributes of their purchase.

Third, you can increase the amount your customer values your product by improving the quality of the product's presentation. Packaging does not need to be too ornate, but small gestures like tying a small piece of ribbon onto an item will go a long way. The most overlooked way to present your product in good light is to ensure the price of your product is high enough for its quality. A more traditional way of making this point is to use the phrase "Don't sell yourself short." Charging a much lower price than a customer would otherwise be willing to pay will make the customer value your product less. This sounds almost counterintuitive, but studies unambiguously conclude that pricing a product too low will make them appreciate it less. Do a little research into the price of similar items. If you are charging significantly below the average, you can likely charge more. Of course, earning more money per item sold benefits you directly and significantly. Make sure the price of your product matches its quality to ensure both you and your customers get the most out of each transaction.

Nathan McCann: wm.nathaniel@gmail.com

Technically Speaking

by Frank Cuta

This is a new column. In each issue, I will inform and/or rant or rave on one or more technical issues. At the end, I will provide three short, unrelated evaluations of products that I have found useful. To get started, let's discuss the future of paratransit.

Many of us seriously depend on our community dial-a-ride service for local transportation. In the Tri-Cities, where a small population is spread out over a very large area, this service is critical.

Walking to most stores and doctors' offices is only possible for a few of us, and using the fixed-route bus system puts us at the mercy of distracted drivers who like to go everywhere at 70 mph.

We have a great paratransit service here, but we need to face the fact that it's 30-year-old technology. Despite constant belt-tightening measures, it is under constant attack for being very expensive. Our 24-hour-advance-registration, shared-ride services will not last indefinitely.

Your local transit administration is probably already investigating an alternative mobility paradigm involving some combination of an Uber-based service and a service that utilizes self-driving vehicles. Such a system could likely cut paratransit expenses in half.

Although it would be great to not have to make reservations a day in advance, and great to always go straight to my destination, I see some obvious problems. Of most concern is retaining a service that is actually door to door, and maintaining a driver pool that is well trained and competent to handle the needs of special-needs clients. I suggest that each chapter identify someone in their group to represent them on their local transit consumer advisory committee, and carefully monitor these developments.

Meanwhile, the first tech product that I want to bring to your attention is the inductively coupled amplified speaker from Guidelights And Gadgets (617-969-7500). When I want a little more volume out of my Victor Stream or my iPhone, and I want it to always work the first time without pairing or wired connections, this is the speaker I reach for. You just set your phone on its surface and you get immediate gratification. You get only a modest increase in fidelity, but it is the immediate increase in volume that is amazing. My battery has lasted several months. This model from Berry is about \$40, but if you are willing to accept a little less quality, you can find them on Amazon for less than \$20.

The second product is the Eltronics recorder from LS&S (800-468-4789). This is the ultimate digital pocket recorder, with built-in stereo microphones, external connections, bookmarks, variable-speed playback, editing functions and selectable bit rate and microphone quality. Other features, like the FM radio, are too numerous to list here. The reason I bought it is its ability to power up at a given time and record off the radio for a designated duration, then shut down. All menus talk. It will record continuously for 24 hours on 2 AAA batteries. It's about \$169.

The third product is the elastic can labels from Adaptations (888-400-8933). You get a bundle of plastic labels that accept Braille very well. Each has an elastic band attached to hold it to a can of food or a medicine bottle. This is about \$20.

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*******BRAIN FOOD**

Clarifying My Disability Identity

by Robert W. Kingett

Reprinted from his blog with permission of the author

(Note: Robert Kingett is a totally blind author and accessibility advocate. He writes fiction and nonfiction and is often involved in many accessibility projects and campaigns.)

I love all of my fans. They keep me writing, after all. Even though I keep my offline and online lives relatively separate, with a few exceptions, there's one aspect of my identity that I won't hide or put in second place: my disabilities.

My fans make me think, which is amazing because I don't know the majority of them. In truth, I have no desire to get to know my fans on a deeper level than, well, fans. That kind of special designation goes to my friends. Of course, there are some fans who think they know me and, thus, can call me a friend. They can't. In fact, they don't have the right. My fans are not my friends. My friends are my friends.

Still, like I said, fans make me think. Introspection is always good. I encourage every content creator to do a little introspection from time to time. I also think you should do more listening than responding to fans. Don't respond to your fans that demand an answer. You don't owe them a thing, honestly – except when you feel you have something valuable to say. I'd like to share with you the text of an email I received today, and, my response:

Hi Robert! I've always loved your work. I love your disability-related stories and essays and more. But something has always bugged me about how you identify yourself, which is problematic, in my opinion. You always put your disability and orientation

before your personhood. For example, Robert Kingett is a disabled gay man. Robert Kingett is a blind gay man. Robert Kingett is a blind writer. It honestly sounds like you are diminishing yourself because you're really smart and funny and just a great writer in general. Blindness doesn't define me, so why do you let it define you? I don't get it.

And here's my reply, for what it's worth:

This goes for anybody else who's furious or confused because I appear to play what the Internet, un-ironically, calls identity politics. Yes, disabled people and people with disabilities think this way – that you shouldn't have to play identity politics. I reject this mindset completely. It's toxic thinking and gets in the way of doing effective activism. In short, it's such a non-issue that it makes me roll my eyes every time I see fellow disabled people say stuff like the above.

When I say it's a non-issue, I really do mean it's a non-issue. Anybody who knows disabled people will know that the disability does not define their personality. But, even if you don't want to admit it, it affects all of our daily lives. Disabilities have an impact on how we travel, consume media, deal with the world.

An epic personality won't make accessibility problems go away. A great personality won't stop your non-disabled friends from thinking ablest thoughts, no matter how you identify yourself. In fact, to me, it looks like the above fan wants me to hide my disability, which I will never do.

My blindness is a huge part of my life. My friends can say that my personality is unique also. It doesn't matter how I identify myself because my personality will shine through, regardless. Plus, well, I want people to know that I have a disability. I want people to know they will need to make their content accessible when sending me something digital. I want people to know I'm blind and gay, so take it or leave it. It's less work for me in the long run,

even though it opens me up for greater judgment and discrimination. Still, I'm doing mainstream work, and I want other visually impaired and disabled people to know there's a space for them, too. I'll continue, as the Internet says, to play identity politics.

Also, let's make another thing clear: It's true, I'm very much left-leaning. Some say I'm a socialist. Some say I'm liberal. I'm all of those things, and then some. I'm definitely not right-leaning, at all.

Is that all you got? I've got way too much stuff to do to worry about how I'm portraying disabilities and the disability experience to people without disabilities. At the end of the day, advocacy, media, and change are far more important than first impressions.

Robert Kingett:

<https://blindjournalist.wordpress.com/contact-this-blogger/>

Podtastic Casts

by Reginald George

These days, if you want to learn something new or tap into the creativity of others, listening to podcasts are one of the best ways to do that. However, if you are new to this world, it can be overwhelming. Podcasts are not always easy to find. With the demise of the cassette tape and so many of our wonderful audio magazines, knowing more of what's out there and how to access it makes for happy listening – hence this new section of Newline. The good news is you don't have to wait for them to come in the mail, and there is much more to choose from at no cost but your time.

Most podcasts last between 10 minutes and an hour, compared to radio shows that cover a lot less content and have many more

commercials. There are great documentaries, music, and audio dramas – all podcasts to help you save money, shop better, improve your health, start a business, find love, learn about true crime, or for any purpose you can imagine. Winter is a great time to find out what you are missing. In future issues, I will highlight some of the most interesting and important podcasts I have found.

Twenty Thousand Hertz is a podcast about sound – natural sound, designed sound, recorded sound. If you love to explore the shimmer of the water in a brook, or beautiful bird songs and birds that talk, or the sounds of animals and cars, or sound as it is created for games or movies, this might be for you. It comes out every two weeks, and this one is about language. From the website: “The stories behind the world’s most recognizable and interesting sounds.”

Current episode: Historically Speaking

<https://www.20k.org/episodes/historicallyspeaking>

More from the website: “Language is a uniquely human gift. We have shaped it to our individual and cultural needs, and it has shaped us in return. Professor Lera Boroditsky reveals how the sounds we make with our mouths influence what’s going on inside our brains. And podcaster Helen Zaltzmann shows us how important language can be to our identities, and what happens when those language identities are challenged.”

Twenty Thousand Hertz is produced out of the studios of Defacto Sound and hosted by Dallas Taylor.

The website has a very accessible player and contains full transcripts of the shows.

There is a lot to unpack here. Many of us aren’t aware that you can find a show just by asking your phone or smart speaker to play podcast 60 Minutes, or NBC Nightly News. When you find

something you enjoy, you have the option to subscribe and be notified every time there is a new episode. You can download them to your phone or computer and keep them forever, or you can just stream them to save space. Most programs, like Apple Podcast, will delete anything older than the last three episodes by default. However, you can adjust this in the settings to keep them forever and delete them manually.

The Historically Speaking podcast is first-rate and runs about 30 minutes. If you write to the producers, they will generally write back. This episode starts by discussing the intelligence of all the creatures that make sound, with examples. It's backed by beautiful music and sounds wonderful on headphones. A typical 20-year-old human, speaking English, has a vocabulary of about 42,000 words. We are social creatures who love to chat. Bees do complicated, lovely dances to show other bees where the nectar is in the flowers, but that is their main purpose for language.

In the podcast, they read a sentence that contains all the phonemes available in English. Humans talk about present, future, and past. There are currently about 7000 languages, and many are under threat. We could lose half of them in the next century.

The podcast explains how Scots is now an official language in Scotland, but people were beaten in schools in the past for using it, and it was ruthlessly suppressed for a long time. This matters because of the history and identity that is carried in the words, and they need to be preserved. This show guides you through dry topics in an entertaining way that conveys so much knowledge. It encapsulates the essence of a subject in ways that nothing else could. You learn as much about the people being interviewed and their passions as you do about the topics they are discussing.

Every week, there is a mystery sound for you to guess, along with the reveal from the week before. The sound they played recently is what Stanford University says we would hear if you could hear

the sun on earth. It takes 8 minutes and 20 seconds for the light to travel, but if sound could travel through space, it would take 14 months to arrive. It's the consistency, extremely high production values, and little touches like this that make this program so special and memorable to me.

They even have T-shirts. Ask your smart speaker to play podcast Twenty Thousand Hertz and hear what they are talking about.

Reginald George: reggeorge@gmail.com

*******AGENCY UPDATES**

DSB Director Update

Dear WCB Friends,

Your recent convention in Seattle was terrific! I hope that many, or most of you, were there to enjoy all the fabulous resources, support and fun that everyone shared. I was especially encouraged by the youth participation. (Hey – some of us are getting older.) It is so important that we mentor and develop our youth into future leaders. Bravo to WCB for your focus on youth. DSB and WCB collaborate to grow our youth programs, and we want to keep reaching more kids across the state in the future. Let's continue to do this important and fun work together.

At the convention, I talked about how your organization is part of DSB and we are part of you. We are a community. Many of you have been, or are now, DSB customers. Many of you have been part of the DSB staff earlier or are now. Some of you have served previously on our State Rehabilitation Council or are serving now. I so appreciate that we create the future together.

Many of you already know that I have announced my retirement as DSB director, effective Jan. 1, 2020. I love this agency, our work, and our community so much. After 15 years as DSB director and 43 years in public service, it is hard to let go. But very talented and committed individuals are ready to take us all forward. Let's please join to support them. I am working with the Governor's Office for a smooth transition for the agency and I will keep everyone posted as this develops.

I am so pleased that DSB has been able to generate additional resources through our recent state legislative budget process (which allowed us to capture additional federal re-allotment dollars) and move VR customers off the wait list into active status. We are working now as rapidly as possible to get back to the pace of normal service delivery for new applicants by the New Year. I am also pleased that our Independent Living funding is stabilized. Our challenge with IL now is to develop the capacity for local providers to deliver the services.

The holidays are upon us and time certainly flies. People ask me what I will do after I retire – will I travel? Just now I say, yes, I plan to Time Travel. Smile.

Cheers and happy holidays to you all!

Lou Oma Durand, Executive Director, Department of Services for the Blind

*****WCB HAPPENINGS

A Great Convention and a Cookie a Day

by Frank Cuta

Congratulations, you survived another Washington Council of the Blind State convention. Or, perhaps if you were not there you listened to it on the web. And if you did not manage either of these, you can now listen to the recordings available at the following link: <http://wcbinfo.org/2019-wcb-convention-audio/>

It was an incredibly diverse program and I will bet there is something of interest to just about everyone. No one actually could have seen everything, but here is a smattering of what I caught.

Friday morning, Julie Brannon and I spoke at the Around the House breakout. The room was packed and everyone took home a lot of home and kitchen labeling and organizing tips. Most of these were provided by our professional lead on the panel, Jackie Cabrera.

At the noon lunch, we heard from Deja Powell, the new Orientation and Training Center program manager. She is a powerhouse, and it looks like the OTC will remain in excellent hands.

In the afternoon, there was a presentation on bike riding, and some strong volunteers managed to haul three tandem bikes up the stairwell after discovering there was no way they were going to get them in the elevator.

The next session was on ham radio. The front table was loaded with a sophisticated pile of radio gear brought in by Craig Phillips.

With three breakouts happening simultaneously, the whole afternoon was hopping – but for details on the other sessions, you will need to listen to the audio files.

That evening, we again indulged our performance fantasies at the Talent Showcase. I performed my song from close to the back wall. The result was a lot of sound problems. If you are in the Showcase next year, remember to avoid this issue by moving farther away from the wall.

The jobs panel continues to be a high point of the convention. This year we were impressed with the stories told by Christel Hustad, loan program associate, Northwest Access Fund; and Roberto Cordero, assistive technology specialist, Department of Services for the Blind. Then, panelists Meka White, Jim Turri, and Alan Bentson helped us explore some of the alternative resources where accessible books can be obtained.

Meanwhile, in another room, a group of parents and students were engaged in learning how to deal with their issues. At their lunch meeting, Ursula McCully and I got a chance to speak to them about our life and work experiences.

On Saturday afternoon, immediately after “In Memoriam,” we held our annual elections. The officers were elected by acclamation but, as usual, the board positions were highly contested. Starting Jan. 1, 2020, the WCB will be led by the following new board members: Julie Brannon, president; Meka White, first vice president; Lisa George, treasurer; and board members Sheri Richardson, Lori Allison, Nathan Brannon, and Hayley Agers.

The following officers and board members were not up for re-election, and their terms will be up next year: Jeff Bishop, second vice president; Frank Cuta, secretary; and board members Reginald George and Heather Meares.

Three constitution and bylaws changes were brought to the floor of the convention.

First, a motion was passed adopting amendment 2019-1, which changes the selection and approval of financial institutions, the authorized signatories on accounts, and the process and method of payments.

Then, a motion was made to adopt amendment 2019-2. This amendment would require new affiliates to be registered in the state of Washington, and all affiliates to maintain an active status as a nonprofit. After sufficient debate, it was agreed that this change should include the provision for a probationary period prior to revoking an affiliate's charter, and a motion was passed to refer it back to committee for a rewrite.

Last, a motion was passed to adopt amendment 2019-3. This amendment holds the board accountable to the approved budget, allowing changes only under extraordinary circumstances, and simplifies the grant process.

Resolution 2019-1, urging members to work against the passage of state initiative I-976 that would reduce car license tab income, was adopted. This decrease would hurt local transit system budgets.

The WCB budget for 2020 came to the floor with a do pass recommendation from the board and it was adopted by a majority of the members.

Everyone agreed that the DoubleTree staff bent over backwards to make it a great event. It did not feel over-crowded, and I liked the fact that every room came standard with a refrigerator. We are going back there for next year's convention.

I will leave you with a little secret that you likely do not know about DoubleTree Hotels. The free warm cookies at the front desk are

not just available on the first day of your stay. You can keep going back. You qualify for another treat every day of your stay.

Frank Cuta: frank@cuta.net

Pride Cometh Before Destruction

by Holly Turri

Of all the wonderful, fun and fascinating things I learned and participated in at our convention, the following story will stick with me forever. It was a real “ick-sperience” that taught me a lot about myself.

My husband, Jim, was the master of ceremonies for the banquet. How honored I was to be asked to sit at the head table with him and all the other bigshots.

So, I went out and bought a dress. It was a designer one that I got for a quarter of the original price. The jewelry was also on sale for a reasonable cost.

After attending the business meeting, I put on the new clothes. My, oh my, did I feel special. I flounced and preened like what I imagine a fashion model does. In my deep heart of hearts, I figured I'd be the most fascinating, gorgeous, and unforgettable banquet attendee.

On the way to the big hoedown, I took my guide dog, Pima, out to the relieving area. Some other pup had defecated right outside the relieving box. My impractical dress shoe slipped on it. Down I went face-first in that lovely area where feet fear to tread. I got up, brushed off the woodchips, and went in to clean off my shoes. What fun I had. Fortunately, the dress was multi-colored and several people said, thank heavens, no offensive items were on it.

So, after I stopped laughing at myself, Proverbs 16:18 came into my head: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Thank you, God, for bringing me down several pegs. I needed the reminder. But why, oh why, did It have to be my dress?

Please, dear readers, promise me that no one else will experience this method of bringing them down a couple pegs. Pick up after your pooch, please!

Holly Turri: holly.turri9@gmail.com

Let's Make a Fashion Statement

by Hayley Agers and Cindy Van Winkle

At this year's WCB convention, one of the breakout sessions covered 10 must-haves in a woman's wardrobe. Our fashion show put to work the following formula, and each model walked around the room, allowing 30-plus women in attendance to see and feel what each was wearing.

The 10 must-haves:

Three bottoms, which can include any combination of the following: jeans, black pants, skirt, leggings, khakis.

Four tops, which should include a plain T-shirt (white or black), plain camisole or tank, button-down blouse, and turtleneck.

Two toppers, such as a cardigan, blazer, vest, or jacket.

One black dress.

Staying in the same color families, you can use these 10 items in your closet to create more than 30 outfits, from casual wear to workplace and anything in between. Any of these outfits can be

dressed up or down by adding the right accessories, whether it is shoes, a scarf or belt, jewelry, or purse.

Why worry about what you wear? When you know you look nice, you feel good. You may not see what others are wearing, but they see you. Blindness often serves as a barrier for us as blind women. Our clothes say to the person serving us in a restaurant or store that we want to be treated like any other customer. It demonstrates to our boss and co-workers that we care about our job and our reputation. It sends a message to prospective employers that we mean business. And it gives another reason for our spouse, family members (including our children), and our close friends to be proud to have us by their side.



Meka White wears Laurie Feltheimer embroidered jeans, and a light gray tank top with a gray cardigan. She accessorized with a red scarf.



Cindy Vanwinkle wears Laurie Feltheimer jeans, and a black camisole underneath a black flowing top with red roses. She wears a deeper red cardigan over the top.



McKenna Percy wears Laurie Feltheimer skinny jeans, a black tank top, and a patterned chiffon duster-length layering piece over the top.

How do you find your style? You know what feels good on, but if you can't see, you may not know what looks good on you. Your style is individualized to you, but you may need help from others to figure it out. So, take heed when someone gives you a

compliment that you look nice. Is it the color you're wearing, length of the top or dress, your shoes, or something else? Be bold and ask for feedback. Find someone you trust to ask those tough questions about your clothes, including to share with you if they're stained or worn.

Here are some shopping tips shared during our breakout session:

Using an app like Aira or Be My Eyes can be one way to identify your clothing and put outfits together. They can also help you in a physical store.

Calling ahead is helpful if you know you're going to need extra assistance to find the perfect dinner dress or interview outfit. Nordstrom and Macy's are two stores identified for having good onsite help.

QVC is a popular cable TV shopping channel. They are wonderful at describing while items are being shown. They have live customer service available 24/7 to assist with purchases, including describing the clothes. In fact, QVC fashionista Laurie Feltheimer became involved in our breakout sessions by sending many items from her clothing line for our models to take home with them.

Stitch Fix can be found at www.stitchfix.com or use the app. It is a personalized shopping service. You open an account by filling out a style quiz to identify things about you, including size, price range, and more. Your personal stylist sends you a package each month and you pay for what you keep and send back anything you don't want, in a pre-addressed envelope that is included.

Amazon, of course, has a very accessible app and website, www.amazon.com, and has lots of clothes to choose from. They also now have Amazon Wardrobe, which is very similar to Stitch Fix, and although none of us have tried it out yet, the operative word here is "yet."

LulaRoe is a clothing line that provides style with comfort in materials that don't need ironing and travel well. The key is finding a representative who will work with you and describe the different clothes to you. Although you can read about the different clothing pieces on their website, www.lularoe.com, you need to find an individual retailer from which to purchase.

For the full-figured gal or standing taller than most, here are some other websites to check out for your shopping pleasure:

www.Torrid.com

www.WomanWithin.com

www.Blair.com

“What you wear is how you present yourself to the world, especially today, when human contacts are so quick. Fashion is instant language.” – Miuccia Prada (at her spring 2011 runway show)

Hayley Aygers: haydav8@comcast.net

Awards Committee Report

by Danette Dixon

I want to thank Joanne Hunter for her commitment and awesome work on the certificates and framed awards. Joanne's work behind the scenes was very much appreciated.

Congratulations to our WCB convention first-timers: Donna Pitcher/Oakland from Anacortes, and Paula Devins and her daughter Teri Devins from Kennewick. Thank you to all the first-timers for coming and building the WCB community.

At the awards lunch, four chapters received certificates for 10 percent growth this year, and seven certificates were given out to officers or board members.

At the banquet, we gave out three framed awards.

The Business of the Year Award went to Trader Joe's grocery stores. Accepting the award was a manager from the Ballard Trader Joe's, in recognition of their excellent customer service to blind patrons – something that is experienced statewide. Trader Joe's employees take pride in their store and its products and willingly take time to assist blind patrons, with the desire to make sure customers know all about the products. Their excellent customer service is consistent, affirming and appreciated, making shopping at Trader Joe's a true shopping experience.

The WCB Newslite Editor's Award went to Carl Jarvis for his article, "It's What You Do with What You Got." Carl's writing style makes you feel like you are right there with him.

The Outstanding Service to WCB Award, which honors members for their consistent donation of skills, services and time, went to Rick Lewis. He is tremendously focused, working all year long behind the scenes to maintain our email list structure. For the past 12 years, he has been a dedicated volunteer at Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. Rick is the foundation of our

convention network streaming project, which is a huge boon to our national presence.

Thank you to WCB for allowing me to chair the Awards Committee. Another convention is behind us – WCB, we are community!

First-Timer 2019 Convention Reflections

by Donna Pitcher

The suitcase is unpacked, laundry done, and I have finally caught up on my sleep after attending the WCB convention as a first-timer. As I reflect upon my experience at the convention, I sincerely thank the awards committee for giving me the opportunity to participate without cost.

I can sum up the weekend event in three words: astonishment, admiration, but also disappointment. I was astonished at the skills and strengths of many of the people I observed or interacted with. They displayed the independence that many of us “newbie” visually-impaired people strive for in the realms of using public transportation, walking the city streets alone without fear, and reading Braille with flowing fluency. The young lady who graduated cooking school and was a gourmet chef was a wonder to behold, as well as the young people who were working in technical fields. Also, many of the board members, chapter leaders, and breakout-session presenters possessed strong leadership skills, along with loving, caring attitudes. I send out a special shout-out to Hayley Agers for her fashion breakout session that allowed us to discuss our problems with shopping and learn valuable suggestions. I also appreciated the demonstration of Be My Eyes and Aira. And, the Showcase of

Talent was a joy. I applaud Meka White for all her work, along with her voice, for organizing this event.

As well as strengths and skills, I was astonished how talkative and loud a group of visually impaired folks can get. The hospitality room at the close of the day was a very different atmosphere than the very quiet chapter meetings that I am used to attending.

Another aspect of the convention I really enjoyed were the activities that were done with the young people. It was so joyful to hear about them enjoying an escape room, playing games, having their own talent show, and interacting with the guide dogs. I felt true pride and admiration for leaders like Colette Arvidson and other presenters of these activities. What a wonderful way to break down barriers and build up the confidence of our youth.

I wish I could say I felt good about the entire convention experience. However, I am sad to say I have feelings of disappointment. The exhibitions seem lacking, and I was hoping there would be more items, other than computers, that would have been available to help us in our daily lives. Also, for those of us who were basically alone at the convention, it was uncomfortable having to find a place to sit at mealtimes and feel you were not intruding at a table. But the area of the largest disappointment was that the convention did not allow time for different chapters, as well as members at large, to have team-building opportunities with other chapters to discuss what our groups were doing to promote independence, opportunity, equality, and enjoyment of life. Without any cohesiveness or togetherness, chapters lacked feeling a part of the whole Washington Council of the Blind. The issues of transportation, employment, education, entertainment, recreation, and services are very different for chapters and members living in the greater Seattle area compared to outlying areas of Washington, like where I live.

In closing, I did come away from the convention experience with some good memories and appreciation for the many friendly people I met.

Donna Pitcher: donnajanepitcher@gmail.com

WCB Convention Experience from some OTC Students

by Christi Sobieski and Victoria Hatch

We are students at the Orientation & Training Center with the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind. As new students attending our first WCB event, we were excited to see what the weekend had in store for us.

It was a gorgeous fall day in Seattle, and the landscape was painted with splashes of brilliant red, bursts of orange, and drops of lemon yellow. The colors shimmered against the backdrop of the Emerald City as we made our way to the convention.

We met at the Observation and Training Center in Columbia City, and walked to the light rail station dragging our luggage behind like well-seasoned travelers. We have been working hard in our mobility classes, and we felt confident going to the convention using public transportation.

We caught the light rail like champs and headed to the airport. After we arrived at the airport, we took the escalator to the mezzanine. We walked right past the courtesy shuttle and went on to the terminal on foot. No silly electric cart for us – did we mention we are well seasoned travelers with mobility training?

We were originally motivated to go to the conference after listening to Kevin Daniel at one of our OTC seminars. He's the

one that got us fired up about going to the conference in the first place. He was so excited about the convention, and he got us excited about going too. We registered for the weekend, and we were all ready to meet our community!

The annual WCB Convention was held at the Hilton Doubletree in Sea-Tac this year. It ran for three days, and we were able to attend all of the scheduled events we signed up for.

The WCB is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to promoting opportunity, equality, and independence in the blind community through education, public awareness, and advocacy. It was definitely a weekend that showed both of us opportunity, equality, and independence.

We had opportunity after opportunity to meet people who are active in their chapters, and were able to see how the individual chapters make up the WCB, which is part of the ACB.

The WCB fights hard for programs in their communities. It was interesting to see how involved each chapter is in the WCB, as well as how their members keep up with all the concerns of the blind community in Washington state, across the nation, and globally. We thoroughly enjoyed the competitiveness of the different chapters during the various presentations and raffles...

As far as promoting independence goes, we witnessed people living very happy and full lives despite their disability. We certainly felt like we saw people who were getting out there, and living their best lives.

We demonstrated our independence by going to and from the convention via the light rail/airport hotel shuttle. We challenged and pushed ourselves out of our comfort zones, and practiced cane travel the entire weekend. We pushed others to get out and meet new people, and to be active participants in the conference.

“We are Community” was the theme of this year’s conference and we really got a sense of what it’s like being part of the blind community, *our* community.

Both of us live in Snohomish County. We were able to connect with and talk directly with members of the Snohomish County Council of the Blind, Everett.

We came away with contact information for the Snohomish chapter, and we are looking into attending some of the monthly meetings after we finish school at the OTC.

The convention was an excellent place to find out about many things happening in or affecting the blind community. We were able to peruse the various exhibits and vendors tables, watch the workings of the business meetings, and have some fun while we were at it. We attended three breakout sessions on a variety of subjects. We especially enjoyed the Essential Oils session, and the 10 Essential Wardrobe Pieces session. It was a fun time that fed our bodies and our minds in a positive way.

We signed up for and were really looking forward to the Assistive Technology session, but we were disappointed when it was overbooked. There was a lot more interest in the session than they were able to accommodate.

We enjoyed hearing from Lou Oma Durand, the director of DSB, and about what is happening with the Department of Services for the Blind. Our retiring OTC Manager Julie Brannon was very involved with many presentations. Christel Hustad, a former OTC student, gave an awesome presentation on her journey to employment. Deja Powell, the incoming OTC Manager, gave an inspiring speech on her vision for the OTC. It was inspiring that our classmates Anisa Proda received a scholarship and Roberto Cordero, a DSB Technology Specialist, gave a presentation on his journey to employment. He is emblematic of someone who

overcame adversity, and who is sharing his story to advocate and inspire others.

We had an eventful weekend where we made new friends, we networked, and we got a better understanding of the blind community in our area. We met our community, and we liked it.

Helping To Make Dreams Come True

by Kim L. Moberg

2019 WCB Scholarship Committee Chair

There were five of us this year on the Scholarship Committee. Every year is different. I am always surprised who gets a scholarship and who does not. You see, it is both an individual and a group decision. Each of us submits a score for each applicant based on the documents provided by the applicant and also by each of the interviews we conduct.

We had 10 wonderful applicants for scholarships this year. We chose five of them to receive a WCB scholarship. The following is a little bit about each of the scholarship winners. Let me say that all 10 applicants are winners, as far as I am concerned.

Isaac Heiman, from Mukilteo, is a student at Western Washington University in Bellingham. From a very young age, Isaac learned to advocate for himself. He has made it his mission to not let his vision stand in his way. Isaac was diagnosed as an infant with ocular albinism. Isaac says his visual impairment is one of the things that push him to try harder, to become the best he can be in his academic career. Isaac is majoring in behavioral neuroscience with a minor in Spanish. He received an award of \$4,500.

Anna Ohrt, from Issaquah, is studying at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Anna is a computer whiz kid. Her major area of study is in computer science, with a minor in cognitive science. She will be one busy young lady. Anna convinced her science professor to allow her to take a computer science class and TA for another class, all at the same time. That is to say that the two classes were both at the same time of day. The professor was hesitant but finally allowed it. Anna received an award of \$3,500.

Anisa Proda, from Seattle, is studying at the University of Washington in Seattle. Anisa came to the United States from Albania. There, she was the first disabled woman to serve in the central government of her country. In the schools that she attended, Anisa was the first disabled person. She was the first disabled woman from her country to travel around the world alone. Anisa is majoring in applied international studies. She received an award of \$3,500.

Chloe Pearsons, from Port Orchard, is attending Olympic College in Bremerton. Chloe was home-schooled since kindergarten, so attending college classes is a huge adjustment. Chloe's major field of study is in engineering, and she is seeking a minor in mathematics. Chloe has a passion for running and loves to run marathons. She says she does her best thinking while running. Chloe did a year of Running Start her last year in high school. Chloe received an award of \$3,000.

Angel John Dailey, from Puyallup, is attending the University of Washington, Tacoma. His major field of study is in the area of psychology. Specifically, Angel would like to be a child psychologist. He is the oldest of the Dailey children. Angel and his brothers and sister all have retinitis pigmentosa. At 15, Angel began noticing changes to his eyesight and realized something was wrong after running into the corner of his dresser. Angel was very active in sports, and has long been interested in

understanding what makes people do what they do and why. Angel received an award of \$3,000.

I am excited that sometime in the future these awesome students will return to share with all of us how they benefited from a WCB scholarship. Congratulations to you all.

Membership Memo

by Julie Brannon

Membership Chair

Number 1, 2020

The importance of follow-up in regard to membership!

So often, we might say at our local chapter meeting, something like: "I wonder what happened to blank, they came once six months ago and we never saw them again, that's too bad!" Or, we might say in regard to convention first-timer or scholarship winners, "Sorry we couldn't get them involved in WCB!"

It's easy to get busy and not have processes in place to make sure follow-up is done with these potential members noted above, but, what a loss for the organization.

When a meeting attender or convention and/or scholarship winner hears from someone from WCB after their attendance, it could be the difference between never hearing from them again, or from them becoming contributing members of the organization.

All this to say, it truly does mean putting follow-up contact processes in to place at all levels of the organization: i.e. within both chapters and WCB committees.

This article is to encourage chapters and committees to discuss how best to develop processes so that follow-up can occur which could incorporate the following components:

Choose a person or persons who will be responsible for follow-up.

Decide how that follow-up will best be made: phone, email-etc.

Decide how frequently that follow-up will be made.

Develop a survey to check in with new attendees or first-time convention attendees or scholarship winners as to how they felt about their attendance, and what they would like from an organization.

Let me share with you what the scholarship committee is now planning to do to hopefully resolve some of these issues; a facsimile of what other WCB entities might get ideas from:

At this year's convention, the scholarship and membership committees combined to dine with the scholarship winners who could attend the convention for Friday night dinner; allowing for conversation with the winners about WCB, ACB and local chapters; and the benefits gained from membership in this organization, along with answering any questions that were brought forth.

Having committee members contact current and previous scholarship winners and applicants to see how they're doing.

Invite all interested persons who have been contacted to join the scholarship committee members and other scholarship winners and applicants in a couple of zoom conferences to share about their college journeys, and a chance to again share about the benefits of the council.

Stay tuned when the scholarship committee can share at a later date the success of this connecting plan.

Our Future Was Present at the 2019 WCB Convention by Hayley Agers

Colette Arvidson and I co-chair the WCB Families Committee. This year, we've been working with a committee of dedicated individuals with a passion for serving families in our local areas. We have had many things happen that the entire committee has worked hard on throughout the year, but our biggest by far was this year's Youth Track with the enormous support of Janet George and Jennifer Scheel from the Department of Services for the Blind.

The families that attended the youth conference this year were engaged and inspiring. The parents were honest and candid about their challenges and concerns, each supporting the next in such a loving way. The students were brave and fun and decided to hold their own talent show during our welcome dinner. They connected with one another, took chances, met new friends, and tried some things for the first time.

Our program consisted of things such as an ice-breaker session on Friday night, an impromptu talent show, and an accessible "escape room." Some attended the WCB Showcase of Talent, as well. On Saturday, they intermingled with WCB membership at breakfast and attended some of the general sessions. They also had a special youth lunch and a separate parent lunch. Thank you to Frank Cuta and Ursula McCully for leading the youth lunch and to Julie Brannon and Holly Turri for leading the parent one. The afternoon happenings involved talking about how our clothes truly are our introduction to the world and how that matters. Thanks to Keiko Namekata and Linda Wilder for their willingness to lead this portion of the program.

Many of the families ended up coming for much more of the convention than planned, and we are so grateful to have welcomed these 16 teens and their accompanying family

members. Now continue reading for authentic perspectives from two of our youth participants.

Reflections on the Youth Track, by Charles Johnson age 13

I originally went to WCB because my mom said she signed us up for a conference. I was a little nervous about going because I didn't know anyone else that was going, but after the first night I was no longer nervous and was looking forward to the next day's activities. The first night we did an escape room that was pretty cool and it was great to work together with other youth attending the conference. It was fun to win prizes, too.

I had a lot of fun and enjoyed it a lot. I learned that blind people can do some pretty cool things despite having a visual impairment. In the end, I was glad my mom signed us up.

Convention Impressions, McKenna Pearcy age 18

Imagine life blurry, only light perception, looking through a pinhole or looking in all sorts of directions trying to make out what you are seeing. Some things are easy and some things you might need some help, but in the end, you find a way. Having a disability, no matter what it is, can be hard. But, today we have access to so many resources, literally at our fingertips – like Braille, guide dogs, and the Washington Council of the Blind.

Becoming blind as a pre-teen, I felt as though having a visual impairment was a death sentence; of course, it's not. I felt so alone in the beginning, and it was not until I attended the WCB 2019 convention that I felt like I found my second family. I did not have to think twice about asking for help because everyone understood.

I am 18 years old and was in both the adult and youth portions of the convention, and I loved it. There was not much at the convention that I would change. All the sessions were beneficial and informational. I connected with so many new people, younger, older, and my age. Through this, I have made a wonderful friend group. Together, we are already talking about being involved in the planning of next year's youth program.

We would like the 2020 Youth Track to be more interactive and have the older youth direct the sessions. We'd also like to help get the word out so more young people will participate next year. I believe having younger faces and voices talk about WCB will encourage younger people, as well as those who are nervous to come and be a part of our community.

I cannot wait to be back and more involved next year. I have never felt confident in myself to go to anything like this and I am beyond appreciative I could go. WCB, we are community!

Hats Off

Compiled by Reginald George

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to, and celebrate with, the following WCB members:

Debby and Jeff Clark on their 50th golden wedding anniversary.

Mildred Johnson is 94 years young.

Carmen Walker celebrated her 80th birthday with her family in Hawaii.

Annee Hartsell of Walla Walla is celebrating the birth of her first grandson, William Owen Fritsell, born December 11.

If you or someone you know has something for inclusion in Hats Off, email TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com with “Hats Off” in the subject line. Those items that may not meet the criteria listed below may still be very appropriate in your local chapter’s “Around the State” article.

The following are reasons for inclusion in this column:

Birth of a child, grandchild or great-grandchild

Birthdays 75 years and older in 5-year increments (yearly after age 90)

Marriage or wedding anniversary 25 years and more in 5-year increments

Graduation from high school, college or vocational program

New job, career promotion, or retirement

Partnering with a dog guide

Appointment to a city, county, statewide, or national board or commission

Exceptional recognition or award

*******AROUND THE STATE**
Guide Dog Users of Washington State (GDUWS)
by Vivian Conger
President

GDUWS had a great Friday night social dinner, breakfast business meeting, and sharing at lunch. Friday night's dinner had around 30 attendees. We got to visit with old friends and make new friends.

The breakfast business meeting had a GDUI update with Penny Reeder, president. We held elections for president, treasurer, and one board of directors position. Vivian Conger was elected president, Holly Kaczmariski was elected treasurer, and Deb Cook Lewis was elected for the director position.

At our luncheon, we shared stories of our guides and had a great time. Thanks to Danette Dixon for donating a folding kennel, and to Josette Kernaghan for donating many treats for our auction. Some of the funds went to our general fund and some went to our Marlaina Lieberg Memorial Scholarship fund.

It was acknowledged that we lost two great people this year: Gary Lieberg and Kevin Daniel. They are definitely missed.

Plans are being worked on for our 2020 Spring Fling. Look for details to come.

Jefferson County Council of the Blind

by Carl Jarvis

Right here in little old Jefferson County, we have something that you don't have. We have James Walkowski. Disguised as our fire chief, he is actually a star entertainer.

Earlier this fall, we invited Chief Walkowski to talk about fire prevention around the home. Not only did he provide good sense information, but he was highly entertaining.

As he was preparing to leave, he happened to mention that the fire department also did a "hands-on" presentation on the proper use of fire extinguishers. Since most of us have home fire extinguishers, but have never actually used them, and since we had a fire chief who seemed to be one of those folks who can make a chess tournament sound exciting, our president Nancy Villagran quickly engaged him for an encore presentation. And so, at our October meeting, we not only had Chief Walkowski, but about eight additional firefighters and volunteers. After a lively presentation, we all trooped out to the restaurant parking lot and took our turn putting out actual stovetop fires. Most importantly, Chief Walkowski advised us just when to use the extinguishers and when to drop them and run for our lives – and call 911.

While our membership appears to be on the upsurge, only three of us made the trek to SeaTac and the WCB convention: John Ammeter, Cathy Jarvis and Carl Jarvis.

Here's wishing all of you a joyful holiday season and a safe landing in 2020.

Pierce County Association of the Blind

by Julie Harlow

The Pierce County Association of the Blind (PCAB) Chapter has had a busy year. We started with our annual Spaghetti in the Dark fundraiser, and despite some volunteer hiccups, several of our members' friends and families jumped in to turn out a wonderful event.

Our longest-standing member with PCAB, Mildred Johnson, turned 94 this year, and we celebrated her. Also, our trusted and wonderful go-to guy, Arnold Kammeyer, turned 80. We appreciate both of our helpful members.

In August, we had our annual picnic BBQ and a great turnout from members around the sound. We had our fundraiser at the rest stop along I-5, spreading the word of our WCB community.

Closing out the year, PCAB hosted the 2019 annual WCB convention, the theme being "We Are Community," which we strived to accomplish this year. And, we signed off the year with our holiday dinner at the Tacoma Sizzler.

Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind

Andy Arvidson

Up here in the hinterlands of the Skagit Valley, we took a field trip Oct. 3 to the Heritage Flight Museum in Burlington. It is owned by Jim Anders, an astronaut who was the man who took the photo of the "Blue Planet" while searching for a landing spot on the moon in 1968. It was a rare sighting when they saw the earth rising over the crest of the moon and he said, "hand me a camera" and took the magic shot that is still an inspiration today. He was actually there on site the day we toured the museum.

The museum is filled with aircraft from the Korean War, the Vietnam Conflict, and WW II, all in working order. We got to touch the planes and their engines to have real hands-on experiences with the aircraft. The docents were extremely descriptive, enabling us to see without vision, just like watching a movie with audio description. It was an awesome experience.



We are looking at winter concerts again for this year. One of our members teaches tap dance, and we are considering going to one of his classes to get that experience, too. We are not a glum lot. We try to have fun and make vision loss not the end of the road. It can sometimes be the beginning of a new adventure that makes us stronger advocates for life.

South Kitsap Council of the Blind

by Kim L. Moberg, President

We love our holidays, you know. I always love our November meeting. It usually falls two days after Thanksgiving. This year, however, it was almost a full week before Thanksgiving. The meeting was a potluck affair. What I like best is that nobody signs up for anything. What we get is a surprise to all. Along with that great meal, we have our election of officers.

Our chapter has been busy making some changes to our constitution. One amendment would change the length of service for our officers from one year to two. We are also adjusting the roles for who is responsible for what in our chapter, in the bylaws.

We are moving forward with the 501(3) c for our chapter, and hope to have this done soon after the new year.

Several of us attended the WCB convention this year. Our chapter did a 50/50 raffle at convention. We also raffled off a couple of gift cards. We made a little money for our chapter. I think everyone who went had a grand time and learned a lot.

Did I mention that members Pat and Bod Whitlow are celebrating their 56th wedding anniversary? That is Dec. 27. A very big congrats to both of them. We also have a birthday to celebrate at the end of December – Scotty Kuntz. We also celebrate Judy Herman's Dec. 22 birthday.

United Blind of Spokane, Charting a New Course by Debby Clark

It has been pretty smooth sailing for the past two years that I have been the president here. We came up with some great ideas for new directions and have had a lot of fun doing it. We don't plan on these good things ending any time soon.

Good things that happened in August included the fun and food we had at our picnic with the beep baseball team. September brought ideas and samples for fundraisers, Jeff and Debby's 50th anniversary, and beautiful weather. Debby and her guide dog, Hummus, flew to the Oregon Coast for a great family reunion.

October had a rowdy flavor to our meeting. We had Ray and Patty Hale in attendance, along with Rick with guide dog Ipson. These former Wenatchee people are a very welcome addition to our group. The Hales and Rick are now living in our area. We all got to sample more fundraiser popcorn. Yummy!

We had five attendees to our convention. Thank you, Debby and Craig, for attending the board meeting. Thanks to Cindy Gliddon for her parts in the convention, as well.

Join us at Lilac Blind the third Monday of the month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

United Blind of the Tri-Cities

By Janice Squires, UBTC member

The seasons are a changing and so, too, is the United Blind of the Tri-Cities Board. I always say, change is a good thing, and with the UBTC elections to be held in November, the changing of the guard will be happening. Our chapter wants to especially thank outgoing president, Sherry Dubbin, for her outstanding service and dedicated work to our UBTC chapter. Also, a heartfelt thank you goes to our outgoing treasurer, Brenda Vinther, for her many years of her loyal commitment to our organization.

We are happy to announce that our narrated play program has expanded to include members of the Walla Walla and Yakima chapters. We have enjoyed the first two plays of the season, "Bertha, the Beautiful Typewriter Girl" and "Inherit the Wind." Many of our UBTC members enjoyed a beautiful evening out at the Red Lion Hotel, supporting the Dinner in the Dark fundraiser for the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. One day a week, we have some type of support group activity for our members to enjoy. Thanks to Karyn Vandecar for setting up our monthly lunches, and we are all anxiously awaiting the annual Christmas party to be held in December. The card group is just a blast, with so much laughter and enjoyment to be had by all. I am loving the fact that our book group has become so rejuvenated, with sometimes up to 10 members attending and discussing some fantastic books. Thanks to Frank for always running the tech group on the fourth Tuesday of the month, with everyone always learning something new and useful.

We want to congratulate our two first-timer winners to the WCB convention, Teri and Paula Devins. They are both very active members of our chapter and we are so excited for them both to share their experiences with us. We want to warmly welcome our newest member, Deanna Patrick. We can tell already that she is really going to be a true asset to our organization.

United Blind of Walla Walla, New Directions

By Heather Meares

It has been an active and exciting few months for the United Blind of Walla Walla. Our focus this past year has been multi-faceted, but in all areas, growth has been the key component. We started out our fall season building a partnership with a local museum and making it accessible for guests who are blind or visually impaired. This was an exhilarating project for all who were involved, and we were able to enjoy a tour with our fellow Tri-Cities and Yakima chapters, as well as our second annual picnic after the tour. Some of us were even able to sneak in a little wine tasting. Our hope is that we will be able to partner with other local attractions in the coming year to help make them accessible, as well.

As a chapter, we have been working diligently to tighten up a lot of loose ends, including constitutional amendments, striving for better fiscal responsibility through implementing a yearly budget, creating an active membership committee, and having quarterly social events. All of these things are going very well and have allowed us to grow closer as a group. We are already looking forward into next year with new fundraising ideas, community outreach goals and a new location for our meetings – the local YMCA, with whom we recently partnered for accessible signage in their facility. They are thrilled to have us and have been very welcoming.

We also had some fun custom baseball-jersey-style shirts made with our new logo on the front and our chapter name and motto, “New Directions,” on the back in both print and Braille. The body of the shirt is black and the 3/4 sleeves are rainbow tie-dye, to represent the diversity and zest for life in our group. We will be partnering with Delta Gamma of Whitman College for a fun-filled event to add some sparkly and tactile bling to the Braille to really make it stand out because, well, that’s how we roll here in Walla

Walla. We will be able to wear the shirts at local events and will definitely be noticed.

We held elections for 2020 in November and our officers will be: Heather Meares, president for a two-year term; Lucy Linker, vice president to complete the second year of Annee Hartzell's two-year term; Joleen Ferguson will continue as secretary; and Vivian Conger, re-elected treasurer for another two-year term. Congratulations to a team who is ready for another year of hard work, service, advocacy and, of course, adventures.

Finally, we are closing out 2019 with a festive holiday event where we will be painting pottery (yes, I said painting pottery!) and enjoying a catered meal. Luckily, the painting and eating are happening in completely separate rooms so there will be no painting of food or eating of paint.

It has been a year full of uncharted territory and we have embraced it all with exuberance. We are absolutely ready to chart the course for 2020, so bring it on.

United Blind of Whatcom County

By Holly Turri

We have been working closely with the Whatcom Transit Authority on talking buses. Recently we rode on a regular route with customers to make sure that all was working well.

This year we got the award for chapter growth.

We have been working with the public works in Bellingham to assist them in updating their ADA policy.

Yakima Valley Council of the Blind

By Lisa George, Secretary

Elections were held at our October meeting and we have a new president. Harold Quantrille is leading YVCB with the help of returning officers, Vice President Reg George, Treasurer Howard Underwood, and Secretary Lisa George. We're excited to hear Harold's ideas for our chapter and look forward to a great year.

We send our best wishes to everyone for a healthy and memorable 2020. You are always welcome to bowl with us if you're ever passing through Yakima on a Friday morning.

*******2020 CALENDER OF EVENTS AND DEADLINES**

January

19: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

February

1: Deadline to submit chapter membership lists and information

1: Eastern Washington Braille Challenge at Cheney Middle School

14: Deadline to apply for ACB Educational Scholarship

16: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

18: Washington Talking Book and Braille Library public meeting, conference call, 9 a.m.

22: Northwestern Washington Braille Challenge at the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library

March

1: Deadline to submit letters of application for First-Timer Scholarship to the ACB Conference and Convention

6: Washington State School for the Blind Board of Trustees meeting, 11 a.m., Vancouver

6: State Rehab Council public meeting, 9 a.m., Department of Services for the Blind, Seattle

15: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

April

- 3-4: WCB Leadership Training, SeaTac, WA (location TBA)
- 4: WCB spring board meeting, SeaTac, WA (Location TBA)
- 19: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

May

- 1: Deadline to make stipend and loan requests for national convention
- 17: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

June

- 4: Washington State School for the Blind Commencement, 9:30 a.m., and WSSB Board of Trustees meeting, noon, Vancouver
- 12: State Rehab Council public meeting, 9 a.m., Department of Services for the Blind, Seattle
- 21: Monthly Tech Chat with Reg George and Frank Cuta, 7 p.m.

July

- 3-10: ACB conference and Convention, Schaumburg, IL

August

- 1: WCB Board public meeting

September

11: State Rehab Council public meeting, 9m a.m., Department of Services for the Blind, Seattle

October

29: WCB Pre-Convention Board Meeting

30-31 WCB Convention

November

December

4: State Rehab Council public meeting, 9 a.m., Department of Services for the Blind, Seattle

*******FINAL THOUGHTS**

by Denise Colley

By the time you read this update, WCB will have held our 2019 state convention and a new president will have taken the helm. As I write this last update as your president, I can't help but reflect on how these past two years have gone by so quickly. I have been honored to share some of my leadership skills with all of you.

Together, we have worked hard on serious and important issues for people who are blind. I have had the opportunity to meet many dedicated and committed members, and learn so much from so many of you.

Over the past two years, I've had opportunities to work with so many wonderful members in the leadership of WCB – board members, committee chairs, and chapter presidents. Everyone has a strong commitment to make their local communities and the state of Washington a strong organization providing advocacy and leadership to people who are blind wherever it is needed.

Chapters have thrived and grown. Important service-animal legislation was passed. Two very successful state conventions were held, as well as two youth conferences, generating some of the highest energy and enthusiasm ever. Our quarterly Newslines has become a premiere magazine, thanks to the hard work of our Newslines editing team and the interesting and thought-provoking articles submitted by so many of you. It is truly a publication we can all be proud of.

In an effort to give more of the membership an opportunity to participate in WCB board meetings, we began holding two face-

to-face board meetings (one in the spring and the other during the convention), and holding bimonthly board meetings, as needed, using the Zoom Cloud platform. This allowed every member who wishes to listen to and participate in board meetings the opportunity to do so without having to spend the time or expense of coming to a specific place. The feedback I have received has been very positive. Not only have participants learned about the business of the board, but they have also been able to ask questions and provide input. Using the Zoom platform process was actually inaugurated for us in June 2018 when we held our first WCB caucus, prior to arriving at the national convention. This gave members unable to go to the convention an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of the national candidates and be a more active part of the process. This took place again in 2019 and will continue to be our standard practice for holding our state caucuses. We are also beginning to develop a training calendar for future leadership training using this platform.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our newly elected board members: Julie Brannon, president; Meka White, first vice president; Lisa George, treasurer; and board members Hayley Agers, Lori Allison, Nathan Brannon and Sheri Richardson. I also want to say a huge thank you to outgoing First Vice President Andy Arvidson, Treasurer Deb Cook Lewis, and outgoing board members Holly Kaczmarek, JR Kinnison and Jim Turri. While they may no longer be on the board, each has made great contributions to the work of WCB, and I'm sure will continue to do so.

Being president of WCB has provided me an opportunity to channel my interests in advocacy, legislation, and growing new

leaders. I will always value my time as your WCB president and anticipate providing support to the next president in whatever way I can. Having an active role in WCB will be at the forefront in my heart, whatever I strive to do in the future. Thank you to all of you for giving me one of the greatest opportunities to serve.

*****IN MEMORIAM

The following are members of the Washington Council of the Blind who have passed away since our 2018 convention, and who were fondly remembered with a moment of silence at the beginning of our 2019 annual business meeting.

Pat Bryant, Capital City Council of the Blind (CCCB)

Lester Cole, Skagit-Island Counties Council of the Blind (SICCB)

Kevin Daniels, South King Council of the Blind (SKB)

Patty Eaton, South King Council of the Blind (SKB)

Diane Ebert, United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC)

Lorreta Falk, United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC)

Gene Holly, Jefferson County Council of the Blind (JCCB)

Chuck Levitt, Skagit-Island Counties Council of the Blind (SICCB)

Gary Lieberg, South King Council of the Blind (SKB) and Guide Dog Users of Washington State (GDUWS)

Francis Pigott, Peninsula Council of the Blind (PCB)

Peggy Shoel, United Blind of Seattle (UBS)

Sharon Stevens, United Blind of Watcom County (UBWC)

Cheryl Stone, United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC)

*******2020 WCB OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Julie Brannon, President, Puyallup

Meka White, First Vice President, Seattle

Jeff Bishop, Second Vice President, Kirkland

Frank Cuta, Secretary, Benton City

Lisa George, Treasurer, Yakima

Denise Colley, Immediate Past President, Lacey

Hayley Agers, Director, Marysville

Reg (Reginald) George, Director, Yakima

Heather Meares, Director, Walla Walla

Lori Allison, Director, Tacoma

Nathan Brannon, Director, Puyallup

Sheri Richardson, Director, Seattle