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**COUNCIL**

**OF THE BLIND**

Opportunity, Equality, Independence

Founded 1935

# WCB NEWSLINE

Winter 2020 Edition

**“Music brings a warm glow to my vision, thawing mind and muscle from their endless wintering.”**

**― Haruki Murakami**

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Visit our website for more information at http://www.WCBinfo.org, or call us toll-free at 800-255-1147.

## Calling All Members

**We will publish the next WCB Newsline in the fall and are anxious to read your quality content.**

**Please send all submissions by February 28.**

**Digital cartridges must also be returned to Audiobook Ministries by this date**

**for re-use in the following issue.**

## **Publication Guidelines**

* All submissions will be edited for brevity and clarity.
* We reserve the right to publish or refuse submitted content, including author contact information, unless you explicitly tell us not to.
* All opinions expressed are those of the authors, not Washington Council of the Blind or WCB Newsline staff.
* We do not accept anonymous letters.
* Articles may be up to 1,000 words.
* Chapter updates may be up to 350 words.
* Please submit in Microsoft Word format when possible.
* Send all submissions to:

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## President’s Update by Julie Brannon

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“Music is the great uniter. An incredible force. Something that people who differ on everything and anything else can have in common.”

―Sarah Dessen

At first, as I sat down to write, I thought I’d just do a quarterly review, noting happenings since the last Newsline update. However, since this will be read during the beginning months of 2021, I have decided to note some highlights of my first year of functioning in the position of president of this great organization.

As I contemplate the Newsline theme for this quarter, “music,” it truly applies to the year 2020. Within WCB, we certainly made music, albeit sometimes in different keys and with different instruments.

Just when we got WCB committees developed, and those attending ACB’s mid-year and legislative conference returned home, our lives took a turn that we never expected: the coronavirus hit our world, our country and, of course, our state. This meant doing things differently, necessitating non-in-person contact and social distancing.

But WCB, true to form, stepped up to the plate, and started thinking outside the “normal” box. Some examples include: presidents developing chapter meetings via a virtual platform; board meetings and our annual leadership seminar being facilitated via Zoom; ongoing virtual training; and the big work-around of holding our WCB annual convention virtually (see convention articles in this issue).

Truly, the creativity and ingenuity required for these transitions that have been made from “the way we’ve always done it” should be enough for all WCB members to be proud of the skills, abilities and tenacity shown by our people, the most important commodity of this great organization.

We weathered elections this year, with our Governmental Affairs Committee working hard on equal and accessible voting for blind Washingtonians. To this end, a resolution was written and passed at our annual business meeting.

WCB also served as a co-sponsor with Disability Rights Washington and Rooted in Rights, with past President Denise Colley serving on their advisory committee, to present the Washington State Government Candidates Forum.

This year, we welcomed a new WCB affiliate: Washington Council of the Blind Diabetics (WCBD). They received their charter at our May board meeting. The president and organizer is Danette Dixon. WCBD holds a call for diabetics and others interested on every second Monday of the month, often with speakers relevant to the topic of diabetes. We’re hoping the word can get out about this new affiliate, which welcomes non-members to their calls.

Piggybacking on the original WCB coffee calls begun by ACB membership services coordinator Cindy Hollis, Holly Turri now facilitates WCB’s “coffee and conversation” every Saturday at 10 a.m. On this call, people have a chance to just gab and connect with and learn about WCB members and guests. Also, this year we developed “president connections,” having chapter and affiliate presidents connect with other presidents, to share ideas, problem solve, and build camaraderie.

These are only a few of the musical pieces put forth by WCB this year. We’re looking to 2021 for continued growth and strength. Knowing that we’ve survived and risen above this very non-typical year with courage, creativity and a new clarity, just think what we can accomplish next year.

## Letter from the Editors

“One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.”

― Bob Marley

Greetings and salutations,

We are pleased to be starting the new year with what is our biggest issue yet. The response to this theme was outstanding, and it is combined with end-of-year business, convention recaps, our regular section content, and a new youth section, featuring the first installation of “Youth Speak” by Lucash Uniack. Luke is also featured in "Cheshire Cat Interviews" to allow you the chance to get to know him better. Well, we just couldn’t leave anything out!

The idea of music inspired you all in so many different ways, and it truly “brings a warm glow to my vision,” hearing the stories of the musical interludes of your lives. To add a bit more fun, a musical quote has been assigned to each music-related article (and even a few others, just because we could), some chosen by the authors, some by the Newsline editors. We hope you all enjoy this as much as we have, and that it reminds us all how connected we really are through music.

Your faithful servants and Newsline editors,

Heather Meares and Reginald George

## It’s Your Newsline, Just Say It!

Here is your opportunity to speak out. You can 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. Thanks to everyone who voted in our Readers' Choice contest and participated in our Awards gala over Zoom. Voting for this issue’s best article will close Feb. 28. To vote or submit your needed content for our next issue, send an email to TheWCBNewsline@gmail.com.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and not those of WCB or our staff.

**From Sheri Richardson**

Each of these articles made me laugh, cry, think, imagine. Since I am forced to choose, however, I cast my vote for Heather’s Dreamscape. I loved this article when I first read it, and it’s even more heart-warming now as the weather turns cold and the days grow short. As I read it, I found myself with Heather in her garden, touching, smelling and hearing all the beauty around us. One of my favorite books in childhood was “The Secret Garden,” so I guess this theme is especially close to my heart.

**From Chris Coulter**

I loved reading the article “Introducing My New Friend,” by Hayley Agers. She wrote about the Victor Reader and GPS with such clever allusions to a dating relationship that it made me laugh, as well as educating me seriously about her new digital assistant.  
  
**From Carl Jarvis**

My vote for the fall issue goes to Heather's reprint of the article by Sue Ammeter. The message shared by Sue, that each of us is our own best advocate, is one of our most basic lessons we can share with other blind people. I met Sue in a criminology class at the U, when she was just barely 19, and we had one of those rare friendships. Sue lived her beliefs and set an example for so many of us. Her story can never be told enough.

And what a magnificently produced convention it was! Our first WCB virtual convention, and it appeared as if we'd been doing it for years. Even someone as techy Cchallenged as myself was able to listen to all the presentations and vote for every candidate. And if nothing else, I found myself deciding it is well past time to come out of my cave and learn Zoom.

Of course, as well oiled as this virtual convention was, it couldn't rise to meet some of the reasons we all love our face-to-face conferences. Like tripping over a dog guide stretched out in the aisle. Or walking into the room marked "Women." Or reaching the elevator just in time to have the doors close. Or hearing that your name was called for a door prize just after you stepped out. Or the feel of hot coffee being spilled down the back of your shirt.

But other than those pleasures, I do believe that next to attending in person, this convention was a very successful event.

**From Frank Cuta**

The fall issue did an extraordinary job of answering the call to  get members to reminisce. I loved all of the nostalgic and historical contributions, both personal and strictly factual. My favorite article was the one by Sue Ammeter. This had to have been written when we were in our late 30s – before the merger, before the ADA and before we joined the American Council of the Blind. What a treat. She was a remarkable, generous person, and I miss her very much.

**From Carol Brame**

Congratulations to all the scholarship winners. I wish I could have met you in person. I do miss the getting to know everyone, and seeing my friends that I have come to know in years past. Congratulations to all the new board members.

**From Holly Turri**

Many thanks to the convention kitchen cabinet. These were the folks who streamed our meeting and were our hosts. Some of the individuals who hosted came from other states. Each of these people volunteered their weekend so we could convene. Virtual or hybrid conventions are the way to go. All of us, not just the well-heeled, can participate that way. Thanks to all who made it a superlative weekend.

# FEATURES

## Cheshire Cat Interviews #11 “The Force is Strong with This One” by Heather Meares

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“I was so keen to play when I left school, I’d have played for nothing. In fact, I did that for a long time, but my parents stuck by me.”

– John Bonham

“The Force is not a power you have. It’s not about lifting rocks. It’s the energy between all things, a tension, a balance, that binds the universe together.” -- Luke Skywalker

Yes, I am going Star Wars on you again. I know it is not music related, but just imagine the theme song playing in the background and all will be well with the universe. I believe the last time I made a Star Wars reference was a comparison between Yoda and Carl Jarvis, imparting their infinite wisdom to us. My last column was an article from Sue Ammeter, who was definitely the equivalent of a Jedi Master in the blindness and advocacy communities.

Today, we are going to the other end of the spectrum, to have a conversation with a shining new Young Jedi, Luke Uniack, the new youth columnist for Newsline. Without all these roles, we cannot function properly as an organization with a balanced equilibrium. If we do not have mentors to pass on knowledge, we will continue to make the same mistakes, and fail to thrive. Without the warriors, we will lose the rights others fought so hard to obtain, and we will not grow in our future. If we do not have a new generation that is enthusiastic about learning and taking the torch, we will die. Most importantly, we must view ourselves as a whole universe, rather than old and new stars.

Luke is a sophomore at Bishop Blanchett High School and lives in Ballard. He actively participates in the fall play and the spring musical each year, in lead and supporting roles. He is also a drummer in the band and jazz band, and is currently working towards the highest honor in Boy Scouts, the Eagle Scout, which only about 2 percent of scouts earn.

He says, “And, of course, I do all my schoolwork, and I have homework, and all that jazz that comes with going to school. I very much enjoy all of that. Beyond school, I am the founding president of the Teen Advisory Board at the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, working very hard with Danielle Miller and Erin Groth, to get things up and running. We have had four meetings in our first year. Very exciting stuff. We are currently working to create the constitution and bylaws, basing them off of what is already there, and editing them to make sense for a group of younger people, to see how we might function slightly differently than the adult board and council.”

Heather: “I know about the art project you did for WTBBL. Can you tell me more about it?”

Luke: “When I started thinking about where I wanted to do my Eagle Scout project, I thought about what places are important to me and how I could give back to them. The first thing that came into my head was WTBBL because it has had a profound impact on my life. I hated reading in kindergarten, because it was frustrating due to my eye condition, nystagmus, which made things blurry and I could not focus on the words. In first grade, we found WTBBL and it absolutely threw my world upside down. Suddenly, reading became this amazing thing, and I love to read now. I can go to worlds that I could never have gone to before. I can hear stories and learn things I never had access to through these audio books. I have flourished and have a very large vocabulary now. So back to the project, the library was working on some renovations, and they had a big blank, red wall facing the window. My idea for this wall was to have plaster handprints of people who have been deeply affected by this library, so that first-time visitors could put their hands in the prints and have this connection. The prints would be in all different shapes and sizes, to show that tons of people are affected by this library, not just adults or small children, but everyone all across Washington. The title for the project is ‘Lend a Hand so that All May Read.’ We had to adjust the concept, and sent out 200 art kits for kids to make their own tactile, decorated handprints instead of the plaster ones, which will be framed to hang on the wall.”

Heather: “I think this will be very neat and can’t wait to visit it.”

Luke: “Another thing I do is serve on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council, which is a group of 22 youth, picked from all across Washington, for their leadership potential, who work to make Washington a better place for youth. I am the only visually impaired youth on this council. We did a lot of really great things last year, but none of them involved ideas about the blind and visually impaired population, which is a bummer, at least in my opinion.”

Heather: “Do you find there are things you have to find ways to do differently, and how do you manage that?”

Luke: “It is a decent amount of work and commitment. We do a lot of volunteering and in-person community outreach work, which I excel at. Last year, I got to talk to people and be inspirational. This year, I am in public relations, and am all about the online side of things, like advertisements and making pamphlets to send out. This has been more of a struggle. I have had a lot of support from my parents, helping me find solutions for how to get these things done. They have helped me make PowerPoint presentations and pamphlets. Because of their support, it has not been too much of a struggle.”

Heather: “What kinds of technology do you use to help with these tasks? Do you use phones, computers, or something else?”

Luke: “I have a laptop. Additionally, I have a comically large monitor above my laptop, so I can make things bigger to read and work on stuff. I take advantage of the features in the system. My font is set very large and I always take advantage of the text-to-voice when it is available.”

Heather: “I want to backtrack to the topic of music. How does music influence your life?”

Luke: “This might seem a little cheesy, but I think that because vision maybe isn’t my strong suit, audio stuff has always affected me a lot. I get a deeper appreciation for music than some of my peers because I rely on my other senses a bit more than most people. A lot of art we have in this society is visual, it’s paintings, buildings, skyscrapers. We live in a visual world where lots of people express themselves using a visual medium. Music is art expressed in an audio medium, and I can take advantage of this, which is really nice.”

Heather: “Do you have any favorite kinds of music or artists?”

Luke: “My music taste has been affected a lot by my dad. He grew up in the 80s, so a lot of Led Zeppelin, Guns & Roses, and 80s music. I’m really into rock, I think because I’m a drummer.”

Heather: “Who’s your favorite drummer?”

Luke: “Oh man, I have a list of my favorite drummers on my thought board in my room.”

Heather: “Tell me about that!”

Luke: “Yeah, so I have a board here with all my favorite things. There’s a picture of my family, a picture my sister drew of me when she was six (very great!), a Seahawks banner, and a picture of me drumming, pinned next to a list of my favorite drummers. Will Smith is a pretty contemporary drummer. He has revolutionized modern jazz, and is called the bridge between classic jazz you would hear in New Orleans, vs. modern jazz you hear today. So he’s my favorite drummer. He does all these crazy things like spinning his drumstick on the top of his hand. My teacher also introduced me to another drummer, Endoas Martinez, who has perfect sticking technique, and does it with the least amount of effort possible. Because of this, he can hit the drum at unbelievable speed, for a ridiculously long time, to the point where video can’t even catch the stick.”

Heather: “You mentioned Led Zeppelin, which happens to be one of my favorites, as well. I didn’t truly discover them until later in life, and I love how they incorporate so many different styles and influences into their music.”

Luke: “Yes, if you listen to any five songs on their Stairway to Heaven album, they all have a completely different sound.”

We digressed on this topic for a while, and I loved that we could have this conversation, being from such different generations...but clearly the same universe. Music was a common denominator.

I asked him my final question: “If you could say one thing to the world, what would it be?”

His response was quite profound. He said, “Think of two houses, one has a wilting tree in the front yard, the other has a big, beautiful, blooming apple tree. Regardless of what the house is like, which one would you want to live in? The negative impact of the wilted tree is going to make this house look worse, and the apple tree will make that house look prettier. Everything we do is connected. If we realize that the good we do for other people reflects positively on us, and the bad we do to others will reflect negatively on us, it will eventually always come back. Everyone here on earth is not just individuals. We are connected in a web of one person who affects someone else, who affects someone else, and so on. We should remember that we are not isolated from each other, even though we live in an isolating society that promotes individualism, which can be good. We forget the idea that we are all together in this struggle to find the meaning of life. If we realize this, the world would become a much more caring place, we could stop having those wilted trees, and the whole world would be a big, beautiful apple tree.”

## Chronicles of a Happy Warrior #6: Life Happens Between the Notes by Mark Adreon

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“A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence.”

― Leopold Stokowski

As of late, we have all had opportunities to spend more time with family, friends, and neighbors. The nature of this last year has brought people closer to themselves as they distance from others. Introspection can reveal many life threads that, under “normal” circumstances, would have never revealed themselves.

One of those primary life threads for me is, and has always been, music. Some of my fondest memories were family gatherings at my grandfather’s small farm in rural eastern Oregon. His house was the place we all gathered on holidays or family celebrations. The gathering would always evolve into a family jam session as, slowly, a guitar would appear and just strum some warm-up cords, and would be joined by another guitar tuning to the first. People would choose a rhythm instrument, like a guitar case, or maracas, or a tambourine. A song would emerge and melodies, harmonies, and vocal accenting would blossom into a fully engaged bonding with the music and each other. These were my early memories, and when I consider a sense of belonging and family, these musical threads connect me to a sense of where I came from – and I was also prepared for my second-grade choir experience (ha-ha).

I always wanted to play the piano, and can remember sneaking behind a curtain at the local armory that was opened for kids to play basketball and indoor sports during the summer. As I crept around in the dark looking for my prize, I had to be oh-so-careful not to be discovered off the play courts. Ah-ha! I found it, a piano under all kinds of moving blankets, which I carefully removed, memorizing the exact order in which they were placed. I would open the keyboard lid and quietly start fingering keys. There was no order, no trying to play a certain song or melody. There was just listening to the sounds of notes and how they sounded together or by themselves. I learned to love clashing notes or, as I learned, dissidence.

I always got caught, and had to re-cover the piano, leave the stage, and join others on the floor.

This pattern followed me through time, as I got braver and braver, owning the notes I was playing. There were months, and sometimes years, between my opportunities to play with a keyboard.

As an adult, I found myself joining the Seattle Men’s Choir. I sang with them for 27 years. I was exposed to wide varieties and genres of music through those years. Lots of this music stuck with me, maybe a series of 7 or 10 notes, or a specific line or series of measures. It might have been a particular series that evoked a genuine reaction or emotion. There were pieces of music that brought me to tears, sometimes even during performance. It might have been the lyric. However, without the music, it would not have broken through the protective walls we all build to keep us safe from emotions or feelings.

I also experienced how our music would open people’s hearts to understanding the lives of others with the emotional exchange of our shared humanity. Words try to change the mind, while music changes the heart.

When I began losing my sight in my mid-30s, I had to eventually stop driving. This meant selling my car. The car represented a certain freedom and independence, so I replaced it with a Kawai Grand digital grand piano. This would be my new car.

Finally, as an adult approaching my 40’s, I was now living with a piano, the emoji of my musical soul, and the thread that tied my life together. I could now learn how to make this instrument communicate my feelings, emotions, fears, and aspirations. The instrument is my voice, unfiltered and unapologizing.

Let me tell you more about this instrument so you have a sense of the palette at my creative fingertips. The instrument is a 5½-foot baby grand with 18 onboard speakers on a spruce sounding board. It has a weighted, full 88 keyboard with the touch of a Steinway grand, and a matching grand piano sound. It also has a full orchestra of instruments and varied sounds – horns, brass, woodwinds, harp, strings, guitar, organ, and so much more. The amazing part of this instrument, with all its pure sounds, is that Kiwai did not just isolate the string(s) that equal a C note, but captured the resonating strings around it. So, the reproduced sound is what you would get on an acoustic piano or instrument. Lastly, I have the ability to record 16 tracks on a floppy disk (yes, it is that old) and, thus, have the ability to improve back to myself if I lay down a track, say with strings or piano.

Now that you know the instrument, let me share how it is the vehicle for my emotional expression, as well as an outlet for my fears, pain, apprehensions as well as my peace, understanding, exploration and interest in all that is ahead of me. Again, words change the mind, while music changes the heart.

I’ve been asked if I play by ear, and then often it is accompanied by a special musical request. I have not taken piano lessons, and learned notes playing a clarinet. I must gently reply that I don’t play by ear, I play by heart and the music I produce is what it is. To give you an idea of what I compose, think of “soundscapes” or “musical scores” or “audio paintings.”

I oftentimes feel that I am having a conversation with myself as I sit at the keyboard deciding “that” sound, “that” combination of instruments and “that” mood, is where my interpersonal discovery or expression needs to be in “that” moment. Each creation is unique to itself.

My music is an expression of what I’m feeling or where my emotional being wants to speak – to the heart, not the mind. My music is not for everyone nor is it being created for anyone. I am continually experimenting and creating sound, or compositions with a story line, not a melody. It brings me comfort, fills moments of aloneness, and provides a snapshot of my soul.

Yes, as I consider where I have been and where I may be going, the common thread for me is music. It is in me, it is part of my fiber, it is essential for my expression and well-being. Indeed, life is occurring, between the notes.

## Do You Hear What I Hear? by Andy Arvidson

“Music brings a warm glow to my vision, thawing mind and muscle from their endless wintering.”

―Haruki Murakami

The buzz of neon lights, the clink of glasses, the clack of pool balls, and the nagging of wives come to mind with this topic as I start out this article. For many years, that was where I spent most of my time. That old country song “My Home Has a Bar Stool and a Fancy Neon Light” was a theme song for me. My life, as you have read in the past, was quite troubled. I do not joke about the nagging wives; Colette is number six, and who would put up with a guy that only came home to sleep sometimes?

The roar of a chainsaw, the sounds of whistles blowing and the rumble of engines come to mind when I look back at my career. I worked in the logging and construction industry for many years. And, on the sidelines I built race cars – the faster the better. Two years in a row, a car that I built came in second place for the season.

The music I hear nowadays has a much calmer sound – quiet cars, calm wife, and no sounds of the neon lights, clinking glasses or clacking pool balls. Instead, I get to listen to meditative music while I do Tai Chi, and a wealth of music that Colette and I both enjoy. One sound that I really love at times is the sound of silence. Getting away from televisions, radios, cell phones, etc. is really soothing. Walking in nature and listening to the birds, the wind in the trees, the rustle of leaves, and the howl of a coyote can bring such a peace of mind that nothing else can bring. Also, the sound of my guide dog plodding along the way and breathing heavily when we are on a long hike seems like magic to my ears.

Soo Bahk Do, the martial art that I teach along with Tai Chi, have music of their own, as they both have a different rhythm to the movements of each pattern. Tai Chi has a silent breathing, and Soo Bahk Do has a heavy breathing, at times incorporated with silent breathing and breath. This creates its own music, as timing is relevant to the process of each pattern. Have you ever listened to martial artists when vocalization is part of their movements? The vocal aspirations of creating energy become the culmination of the individual that it comes from, and can be musical in its own realm.

Back to birds: When you hear the spring robin chirping in your yard, can you dream a picture of that orange-breasted, worm-hunting, beautiful creation of nature? Or, when you hear the sound of an eagle overhead, can you draw the picture of the symbol of the bird of America and not see the turkey that was another bird that had a vote to be our American symbol? What about a walk through the park and coming across the sound of a woodpecker and the percussion sound that it makes as it is pecking away at a tree, trying to find that worm inside the hollow of the trunk? To me, all of these make nature sound like a symphony and are beautifully appealing.

Life can be very musical as I lay in bed at night, the breathing of my wife as she slumbers, the occasional yip of the dogs as they chase a squirrel in their dreams, and then the pure silence of the cool night as I drift back to sleep. In the morning, as I arise and take my dog out, I hear the sound of freedom, as the Navy jets fly overhead, and the rumble of the rotors on the helicopter that flies to the hospital two blocks away, trying to save lives. The music of the universe is so dynamic that I could go on, but I believe that I will stop here so that I will not intrude on your sounds of silence.

## Music, the Melody of Life by Alco Canfield

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“There are two means of refuge from the miseries of life: music, and cats.” ― Albert Schweitzer

I played piano as a child, but never really fell in love with the instrument.

When I was 16, my parents bought me a Silvertone guitar from Sears. I figured out how to make the chords. When I went for some lessons, I discovered that all of my fingering was wrong. I still keep one chord I call my Illegitimate D. It is just easier to make it the way I do.

My first gig was a Sunday school class. The song I did had only three chords. I had my first fan club, a group of four-year-olds.

The guitar I had the longest was a Harmony Classical. I wrote all of my best songs on it. We really bonded! From coffeehouses to classrooms, from trains to retreats, my songs have surprised me, expressing emotions and ideas I didn't know I had.

I find it easier to sing what I feel. There is a certain magic in creating. Melodies and words come to me unbidden. Each time this happens, I am filled with awe.

I treasure this creative gift, and am grateful every time it manifests itself. I am honored to share my melodies of life with others.

Some people think they don't know how to sing. They bury their song inside.

Everyone has a unique melody. Share it, do not hide it. No more need to hide.

## Music Kept Me Sane Through Cancer by Zack Hurtz

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“I like beautiful melodies telling me terrible things.”

―Tom Waits

We all have a story to tell that highlights our trials and tribulations, and this is a small part of mine. In order to set the story correctly, I must first tell you some background information so you don’t have to play the guessing game.

At a month old, I was diagnosed with a fairly rare eye cancer called bilateral retinoblastoma, which in 1990 was considered a death sentence. Of the four children treated by my doctor with this cancer, only two of us survived. I was given large doses of radiation, which will make a return later on in this narrative. Eventually, the cancer kept fighting and to save my life, both of my eyes were scooped out with great skill and showmanship I’m sure.

I grew to be a cute, sarcastic punk of about six years old when this story really begins. Small signs made sure we knew about the tumor eating its way through my skull, like myself at a fried rice diner. The osteosarcoma was a happy, healthy tumor ripping apart bone, feasting on my blood, and targeting my brain for dessert. Doctors at the time thought the tumor was cancerous caused by the previous radiation and told my family I had three months to live.

I was instantly put on chemo and was kept in Seattle Children's Hospital for weeks at a time, with a week in between at home. Counselors told my dad to get me interested in a hobby to help calm me down and relax me. You see, at six years old, I was a smart, hyper ADHD-driven idiot who couldn’t sit still. When you’re attached to machines, this becomes a problem – not to mention they thought having an activity would help me cope with stress.

At this point, I’d like to say I chose something easy and fun, but I wanted to be a musician when I grew up. So, I picked the piano. My dad reached out to Glenna Zinni and asked her if she could teach a student who was totally blind. Glenna had never taught a blind person before but she offered to give it a shot.

When we first met, we became lifelong friends right then and there. That first lesson really showed us both what I was capable of. She’d play a note on the piano and have me find it. I was fast, and by my third lesson was already starting to learn “The Entertainer,” along with basic levels of music theory. So, while I was undergoing chemo and operations, I learned how to play the piano and performed at several recitals. I’d practice on a small keyboard in the hospital and would play on several pianos around the hospital. This was the foundation of my musical interest.

As I grew older and hit my teenage years, I lost interest in the piano and shelved my music education for a while. One day, I decided to start playing again and wanted to learn guitar. I returned to Glenna and started back up with lessons, which helped me fight the depression caused by chronic nerve pain and heavy opioid use. While sitting outside of Glenna’s studio, I could hear an older dude teaching guitar in his classroom. He had my full focus even though I was eavesdropping.

I asked Glenna to make an introduction and that’s when I met Kevin Wyer, a local rock star in his own right. After a few lessons, Kevin told me he’d given Kurt Cobain from Nirvana his first three guitar lessons. He didn’t see Kurt until a year later, rocking out on MTV with his first hit, "Smells like Teen Spirit."

After learning that tidbit of news, I spent as much money as I could spend taking hours and hours of lessons. Both of them worked together to provide an amazing experience of music, knowledge and lifelong friendship. They helped me escape physical pain and gifted me with understanding and empathy.

What I learned from Kev and Glenna will continue to shape my life and my ability to cope with stress, anxiety and depression. They’ve helped me turn negative emotions into positive ones and helped me strengthen my memory and mind.

Music is a constant in my presence and keeps me on track. Through their knowledge and teaching, I found a skill where vision wasn’t required, and I could be on equal footing with everyone else.

While I’m not a professional rock star, I still break out the guitar and let myself fall into at least an hour of playing a day when possible. I’ll get back into the piano soon. I’m looking for an easy-to-use MIDI keyboard, as I move a lot and can’t drag a full-size piano with me. My ear training has increased, and melodies are my puzzles. I appreciate Kev and Glenna and would like to say “thank you so much!”

This is just a small look into my experiences with music, cancer and all that comes with it. If you have questions or want to know more, please feel free to reach out.

## What Does Music Mean to Me? by Nathan Brannon

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“Music . . . can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable.” ―Leonard Bernstein

When I was asked to write about this, it took me a while to figure out what to say. Music is very personal to me.

I play guitar, keyboards, bass, and sing.

As a musician, it is a big part of my life.

I don’t know where I would be without it.

It is the creative force that has propelled me forward the majority of my life.

To me, music speaks the international language of the soul.

When I’m sad, music expresses my tears.

When I am happy, it expresses my joy.

When I am angry, I can express my rage.

Music can provide the translation when I have not the words to say how I feel.

Music is magic, it can transport you to any place, anywhere present or past.

Music is medicine, it has the power to cure your pain.

It communicates the language of love to one and all.

You probably have special memories you like to reflect on from time to time. Perhaps, it was your first date with that special person. Maybe it was the moment you knew you were really in love.

Whatever it is, there is probably a song for that.

What a gift we have been given.

It has helped me through many struggles in my life.

Now, here we are in 2020.

It has been a challenging year. I don’t think I could have made it through if it wasn’t for the loves of my life...my God, my wife, and my joy of music.

## Soulful Music by Holly Turri

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"Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.”

― Confucius

In this time of serious sadness and soul searching, I desperately need music. We all do. If it is the song of morning birds, the laughter of good friends, or our favorite artist or genre, we must relax and listen to transform our lives from existence to living.

To keep our minds young and flexible, it's great to try something new that we have never heard previously. Now, for all you musical purists, I have a confession to make: Easy listening has become my go-to for those stressful moments. Jim's mom always said it was valium for the ears. During the COVID-19 crisis, elevator music has kept me sane. This is a tough admission for a heavy metal girl.

My absolutely, positively, without a doubt favorite music genre is that which celebrates Christmas. In my world, carols and songs of the season are the happy soundtrack that accompanies the most wonderful time of the year.

Carols are the music which honors Jesus's birth. As my dear daughter said as a kid, "They're the churchy ones with Jesus’s name in them, right?" Everything from "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" to "Go Tell It on the Mountain" falls under this category. Although childhood has passed me by many years ago, my favorite is "Away in a Manger." Did you know there are three versions of this wonderful song? The one most commonly sung and heard is the least appealing to me.

Christmas songs are those which celebrate the temporal, some say commercial, side of the season. You know – snow, fireplaces, roasting chestnuts and, of course, Santa Clause. The one I absolutely adore is "The Christmas Song." It should have been called "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire," but I didn't write it. Originally, Nat King Cole performed and presented it with the most feeling and beauty. Whether I'm in a subway or a meeting, when it plays, I get all choked up.

On the kid front, my absolute favorite is Rudolph. His saga can be related to by most of us. Even better, the underdog, or in his case, red-nosed reindeer, prevails. Beat down the bullies, baby! His TV special is wonderful, too. Since I can watch it any time on Netflix or my DVD, sadly, some of the glitz and glam has faded.

The carol I absolutely despise is "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Excuse me? "Westward leading still proceeding" sounds like a morning traffic report on my radio. Although I know the history of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," it still makes me tired. For those who don't know about this, it was composed during a time of religious persecution in Britain. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus on the cross, and the three French hens are the trinity. There are coded meanings for all the other 10 gifts, which I don't remember. My main beef is it is repetitive and played too often.

Please, oh please, oh please don't ever make me sing "Deck the Halls." That is my No. 1, least favorite song of any. Look at my name and you'll figure out why. As a tender young flower, I was mercilessly teased about it. People wanted to hang me on the mantle, etc. Being high strung, I'd get mad, which just egged them on.

The best part of all this beautiful music is caroling. Singing this gorgeous music with friends and family on a crisp, cold night in front of neighbors and friends' homes is so tender and lovely. Eating cookies and drinking a hot beverage afterward isn't bad either.

The great composers wrote their best work celebrating Jesus's birth. The highest revered orchestras have produced their most amazing arrangements with this genre. Even pop and rock artists seem to enjoy singing songs old and new.

When I was a child and had two digits in my age, I was considered mature enough to attend the 11 o'clock candle-lighting service at our church, which was a highlight of my life. Putting on a dress was worth the chance to attend. Before the main event, the handbell choir performed. Their sound was so rich and melodious. My childhood church had a big pipe organ. After the candles were lit, “Silent Night” was sung, and the room was filled with a peaceful, warm feeling. Our organist would, with a huge flourish, segue into “Joy to the World.” We'd blow out our candles, and sing it at the top of our lungs. Holy hot cder, Batman! That was just like being in heaven.

To survive and flower, our souls need and should crave music. It's the balloon that lifts us over the ruts and bumps in the road of life, the balm that soothes our troubled hearts, and the vehicle that transforms an ordinary day into a joyous one.

## Voice Tonality: The Music in Our Speech by Chris Coulter

“To me, the greatest pleasure of writing is not what it’s about, but the music the words make.”

―Truman Capote

Not long ago, I was spending a little time watching YouTube. I was listening to someone preaching. He was one of those preachers that becomes so genuinely passionate about his cause that, at some point, his voice began to soar way up into the high tenor range, and he actually held some of the high notes so long that it sounded as if he was bursting into song. As the arc of his story continued, he was bringing forth a true melody, although the notes were held for a shorter time than a singer would have held them. I never heard his name, although it was probably right up there on the screen, but his melodic sermon made me think about what the human voice can do when called upon to ring out with truth and power. It is truly a form of music.

How does the music of our speech happen? Is it just a matter of someone being flamboyant and showing off? I don't think so. I've heard too many people, from children to old folks, talking about experiences they've had or pictures in a book, to believe the music in their voices is just showing off. It is possible for each of us to unlock the melody in our voices when we know that someone wants us to listen, with total attention, to something they care about with all their hearts.

I began studying the melody in my own voice when Anthony Stevens, one of our American Council of the Blind leaders, joined one of our community calls to teach us about storytelling. Each one of us was asked to tell a story about how the pandemic was affecting us. I knew that the particular experience I wanted to share would be difficult for me to talk about, so I started slowly, dipping my toe into the story, so to speak. As I began to open up, I noticed that my voice was beginning to grow more expansive, and it was ringing in my head. Then I heard myself using my voice as I spoke in the same way that I use it when I sing. My voice became an instrument, rather than just the conveyer of words from my mouth to the listeners' ears. As I came to the end of the story, I found that I had scared myself to death. I ended with my melody fading away and my speech coming back to its usual role as a lecturer.

I am setting myself the task of becoming friends with my vocal instrument as a means of talking, instead of just performing as I have often done when I've sung onstage. Since I heard that preacher on YouTube, I now hear music in all kinds of speeches and broadcasts. Oh, some politicians and CEOs still use a dry and serious way of speaking, but maybe they haven't learned yet how to open up their hearts. Certainly, Anthony Stevens opened up my heart, and he probably did the same for others on the community call about storytelling. I know that I'm becoming braver and less awkward as I speak out in love.

## Music Between Friends by Hayley Agers

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“Where words fail, music speaks.”

―Hans Christian Andersen

So many times, words are unnecessary to understand what’s going on in a person’s heart. I recently heard a quote in a movie that really brought this home for me. The quote went something like this, “Love is knowing the song in a person’s heart, and learning to sing it to them when they need it most.”

Isn’t that a lovely concept? Taking the time to listen to what moves a person’s soul to soar, and being able to recall that information when a person may no longer be able to put into words what they need.

When I saw the theme for this Newsline, I knew immediately who I should write about. Have you ever had that friend that when you are together, you never run out of things to say? A friend whose words lift you so high that you feel you could do anything?

What if one day, almost without warning, that same friend was no longer able to be there because they need you, instead? And what if that friend relies on you being able to read her facial expressions and body language to know her thoughts, but you are unable to see them due to blindness? That’s where music can fill the gap.

When my daughter Sydney was only five years old and off to kindergarten, I wondered if I was sending her off to school too early, and whether she was mature enough to sit in a classroom all day. On the first day, David and I decided to drive both kids, get photos of them in front of the school sign, and hopefully with their new teachers.

I first met Sydney’s kindergarten teacher, Ms. Akervold, in September 2013. I knew right away this friendship would go way beyond the one-year span of time Sydney would spend in her classroom.

Over the years, we spent many hours together. I would prepare a meal for the two of us, and meet her in the lobby of the school during her lunch break.

Did I mention that this date meant a two-hour bus ride each way to make it happen? Ms. Akervold, also known as Lynn, was worth it. It was a great opportunity to work Farley, and Lynn may not have agreed to lunch with me if I didn’t have my guide dog.

In the years following kindergarten, no matter how far Sydney's class was from Lynn’s, Farley always wanted to take me to that same classroom. It was a great excuse to stop by for one of Lynn’s amazing hugs.

Fast forwarding a few years, and after several attempts to reach out to Lynn to make a lunch date, I received a message from her with devastating news. She hadn’t been feeling good for a while, and now we both knew why. Lynn was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. I could not believe what I was hearing. This amazing, kind, and beautiful lady had come into my life when I wasn’t looking for it, and now she was going to be taken away. Inside, my heart was broken but I wanted to be strong and be there for her no matter what life was about to dump on her.

After months of chemo and losing her hair, intensive hospital stays, and the many meals I prepared to give her family time to spend together instead of in the kitchen, her battle was coming to an end. There was no more the doctors could do. Now, it was a matter of making her remaining days full of love and comfort.

On one of my visits, I played a song for Lynn – one that I had heard on the radio that made me think of her. At this point, she was still able to talk to me. She told me how much she loved the song, and how the words encouraged her and brought her peace on difficult days.

We had many heartfelt conversations in the months that followed. As the weeks progressed, the words became harder to comprehend, in part due to the effects of the chemo therapy on her thinking, the extreme fatigue she was now feeling, and the strong medications she was on to keep the pain under control.

We would always take time to listen to our special song. Often, she was too tired to talk, so we’d just hold hands and listen.

A few days before her passing, her family called and told me to come see her, as it wouldn’t be much longer. I showed up, hoping I could be what she needed that day.

As they wheeled her out to the living room, there was a part of me that was glad I could not see what this horrible disease had done to my sweet friend; a strong woman of tall stature, beautiful long hair flowing down her back, a laugh that filled the room, hugs that were so enveloping you wished she would hold on forever, and a child of God who loved him with all her heart. Lynn was now a frail figure, needing to be brought to me in a wheelchair. She could barely hold up her head. Her hands barely had enough strength to hold mine, and she was no longer able to talk.

But here is what’s important: “Where words fail, music speaks,” said Hans Christian Anderson

I sat next to her while our special song played. I laid my head on her shoulder, and she then laid her head on top of mine. She tried to speak, but the words just wouldn’t come. When the words weren’t there, the music spoke for us. The tears from her still beautiful eyes rolled down her cheek and onto mine, which was all we needed in that moment. I didn’t need to see her face to know she was smiling for our times together. I didn’t need to see at all to feel what the words were saying to both of us. We had all those wonderful years together, and we knew how much our friendship had meant to the other.

Her hand in mine was weak, but I could feel her fingers trying to curl around mine, as if to say “I’ll never let go, I’ll always be here.” The words would not come out, but the way she tried to hum the words of our special song told me that she really wanted me to listen and hold onto them, thinking of her when I felt lost and alone.

Lynn lost her battle with cancer on Easter morning. What an ironic thing, or not, that she would be taken home on this day that was so meaningful to her.

I often play this song – in times when Lynn has been on my mind, on days that I don’t feel so strong, and mostly when I just want to feel her close to me.

Sometimes, I cry because I miss what we had. I grieve what should have been for us, but I also am incredibly grateful that I had years with Lynn in my life. I know I have our song, which binds our souls forever.

Take time to listen to the songs that are sung in the hearts of those you love. Never take for granted the friendships you have. Create memories that will last forever.

## Must Have a Song in My Heart by Danette Dixon

“We are the music makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams.”

― Arthur O’Shaughnessy

All my life I have had a song in my heart. When I was in grade school, I started playing a song flute in my school band. All through middle and high school, I played a clarinet in the marching band and concert band. My senior year, I played an E flat clarinet, which is much smaller than a regular clarinet, like the piccolo to a flute. To this day when I attend or watch parades hearing the drums, I get all choked up when the marching bands come down the street.

My sister had a saying. When she saw my school band coming down the street in a parade, if you do not see someone in the row, look down shorter and there I am. This was a huge joke in my family. Even attending my friend’s granddaughter’s concert band, I still get a little teary eyed.

After high school, I sang in a choir at church for many years. But I found out that my favorite times were playing my clarinet in the marching band.

These days, I really enjoy worshipping our Lord. This is my favorite time at church. Having songs in my heart brings me much joy and happiness when times are hard. I am grateful I grew up playing instruments, and with music. It changes my outlook on life for the better.

## The Music of My Life by Hayley Edick

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“Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife.”

― Kahlil Gibran

I am not sure exactly for what reason my parents started me in piano lessons when I was five. I thought perhaps it was because my grandparents told them I had piano fingers. Possibly, they thought because I am blind, I should have some automatic fascination with music, or maybe I actually showed interest in it. Since I was so young, I don't remember.

Thinking back even further, perhaps it is because music is in my roots. My grandfather came to the United States from Sweden when he was 17, truly believing he would come to streets paved in gold, and have much more than the poor farm life he grew up in. I was told that he could have studied music with Pavarotti. I do not know whether he had formal training or not, but heard that he had a good voice. I am told that he was a good singer, and being a sixth-generation carpenter, he likely built a person’s coffin and sang at their funeral.

Either way, music was infused into my life from a young age. I enjoyed playing piano, and would play anything with keys, whether extremely out of tune, or a grand piano. My aunt told me that as I played the latest piece I had learned, the smile on my face showed how happy I was. I usually enjoyed the opportunity to play piano, and annoyed my brothers when I would sing to the latest song I loved with studio headphones on. From the tape recordings I heard of myself singing, I definitely had to keep my day job.

As I grew older, I changed piano teachers. The most recent knew my first piano teacher and obtained a tape of me playing in 1985, which would place me at the age of five. I was playing with chords in my left hand, seemed to enjoy playing fast, and had an energy I would pay a lot of money for today. I vaguely remember using an old phone book on my piano bench so I could reach the keys properly. Either I was a tiny kid or just young.

Near my 15th birthday, I performed my first and only solo recital for my friends and family, with about six pieces that were not short by any means. We rented the recital hall where I had performed in recitals with all of my teacher’s students, which were nerve-racking, especially when I heard students flipping through their printed piano music. They were likely studying parts they were unsure of, while I hoped I remembered all of the chords in my head. I never learned Braille music, though I tried to read an adult Braille music guide until I got busy with something else. My mind, and rote memory of where my fingers needed to land is what carried me through.

By the time I went off to college, piano took a back seat. I rarely played the music I loved to play, such as Bach and Mozart. I knew people who could just sit down and whip out a jazz piece, and I started to wonder if all of my years of lessons and playing were worth anything. I grew more engrossed in college work, and went through really challenging medical issues, which made it hard for me to even accomplish the things that had been easy for me. I would sit down and try to play the many songs that came easily to me, and had a huge block in remembering what the notes were. It was too difficult for me to face this challenge for a long time, but I still loved music. I figured perhaps piano just wasn't the instrument for me. I couldn't exactly put a keyboard or piano in a backpack to play wherever I wanted to.

As my health challenges affected my memory, I would make up little songs to sing to myself to get my activities done, and to help me remember the latest information I needed for tests, in hopes I wouldn't fail them again. Sometimes I would sit down and play loudly and in the most minor key I could figure out, to express anger from the confusion in my life, in a tangible way. When I was about 23, I came across the phone number for my last teacher. We reconnected, and I started lessons with him again. Now it was different, we had coffee in his home, caught up on the struggles of life, and got down to the work of my lessons. We even enjoyed playing duets together.

I knew that music would be part of my life with kids. I got the songs stuck in my head, when they loved a certain song, or we had watched a show for the hundredth time. I made up songs for each kid to help them learn to spell their name and sang it with them from about the age of one. They still remember their "Name Song" today. I let them decide whether they want to do more musically, and will not push them to learn music unless they show an interest. I am happy to see that our son can sing on key. He sings while he is playing in the house, and if he has interest, I have no problem allowing him to learn music. It kept me from going insane, helped me memorize things, express my feelings, and carry on a part of my family’s musical abilities.

## Dance with Me by Julie Harlow

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“Music is an outburst of the soul.”

― Frederick Delius

I am standing in line, and my cane, named Jake, becomes my dance partner as I move around it, listening to the music in the store. I giggle and laugh, as some might think I am a little crazy. This may be so, at least a little, but music is the cloud that can carry you to so many places. Perhaps it reminds you of the past, your first kiss, a friend or loved one, a child, or a moment that can bring you joy. Music can emit a host of emotions, but for me, the best ones are those that make me want to dance.

I am in line at Fred Meyer, and I am taken back to this very store over 20 years ago, remembering my free-spirited son throwing his head back with his arm outstretched towards me, armed with his best English accent, saying, “Dance with me, Mother!” I would take his hands, as we began to dance through the aisles twirling, while his stepsister mumbled under her breath, “I do not know you people.” That was not the only time my beautiful stepdaughter scooted away from us, always shaking her head, and turning red. I laugh as I think of my rigid upbringing, and how music just makes me want to dance. I could never have done something of this nature in the presence of my parents.

My military father loved his country 8-track tapes in the 70s, while my German-born mother would play what I call her polka music. Although finding myself leaning toward the current music of the time, we did not have radio tuned to any genres other than country or polka in my house. I lived overseas, and only had one radio station for all of Europe. My father felt that The Beatles ruined music, and he then insisted on switching to music that made sense to him. I loved going to my friends’ houses. They shared with me music that their older siblings were listening to, and I was excited to hear groups such as Three Dog Night playing “Joy to the World.” The teenagers were doing the “bump” in their living rooms. I was so fascinated, but afraid to move, to try to do something like this, even though it looked and felt like fun.

The military base where we lived when I was 12 had a dance one Friday night. My friends convinced me to go, despite being terrified to ask my parents or also admit that a boy had asked. I did go, and found out it was the quarterly dance contest. I was mortified. I had never danced before, not even alone in my room. I got up the nerve, did it, and Vincent and I came in third place.

For my 13th birthday, I was given my first little boombox. I couldn’t have been more thrilled as I put on headphones, cranked up the volume, and wore out the cassette tapes of my favorite albums. I began to secretly dance in my room, never having the courage to do it in front of anybody.

Because of the rigidity of my own upbringing, with my kids, I felt if they had to listen to our music, then we should listen to theirs. Through my kids, my interest grew, expanding to a larger variety of music, and I loved so many different styles of songs. We had a blast in the car, as my ex-husband taught our children his favorite rock and roll songs, while I introduced them to disco, R&B, and other dance music. One of our family’s favorite memories was bouncing down the highway, my ex-husband driving, with me and my three kids motioning each letter to the song “YMCA!” I was intrigued with the choices my kids preferred compared to my one radio station of choice.

Once I got the dance bug, I wanted to be a professional dancer. I did not know how to make that dream a reality. I dreamed as I watched the Solid Gold Dancers, American Bandstand, and Soul Train, and found my own groove, feeling how each song made me want to perform. I was fortunate to live overseas, where dancing in the local clubs was not restricted due to age requirements. At 16, we found ourselves dancing Friday and Saturday nights on a regular basis. My love of dancing to music has taught me to learn all types: country line, the two-step, swing, hip hop, ballroom, the Macarena, and most of the slides. Today, I teach my love for music and dancing to my granddaughter as we dance to the “Elmo Slide.”

With my hearing loss, I always struggled to hear all the lyrics to songs and made up my own versions. My friends and I would laugh, as they told me what the words really were. Oh, how the internet helped, as I spent hours looking up lyrics to my favorite songs, giggling to myself, saying, “Oh, that does make more sense.” Due to this issue, and not being able to carry a tune, I never sang, not even in church. I just mouthed whatever I thought people were saying. So do not ask me to sing karaoke, but while you sing, I will be your “Fly Girl,” with Jake as my dance partner.

The blessing of being blind is we can dance, enjoy our partners, and not see judgement as we embrace a song. Be ready, because if you are with me, I may grab you with my outstretched arm and say in my best English accent, “Dance with me!”

# LIFESTYLE

## Book chat Winter 2020, Musical Memories by Alan Bentson,

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“Virtually every writer I know would rather be a musician.”

-- Kurt Vonnegut

As you may recall, we were discussing memoirs. In his excellent memoir, “And Then There Was Light” (br#11692 and DB46611), Jacques Lusseyran, a blind man who was a leader of the French resistance and a survivor of Nazi concentration camps in World War II, says, “Music is for the blind, but not all the blind are for music.”

I am sure most of us, as blind or low-vision persons, have found music to be especially important to our survival, whether we can play and sing or not.

As it happens, the three books I read about music this year are all memoirs that depict the important part music played in their authors’ survival. In “The Good Life,” by Tony Bennett and Will Friedwald (available from bookshare.org), the well-known singer offers a straightforward autobiography.

Anthony Benedetto might have been an ordinary working-class guy from an Italian American family in New York, except that from his youth he had a strong and immediately recognizable singing voice. He spent most of his apprenticeship singing in a jazz band in Italy in the closing days of World War II where he met many musicians who would assist him in his career. The book contains many anecdotes, which the author has obviously used in many interviews, and mentions many famous people he has worked with. This is a celebrity memoir after all. The name dropping did not bother me; it was like traveling through a tapestry of names to evoke the decades Bennett has lived through. It is clear that among his many talents he has a talent for making friends.

National Library Service has a couple of recent shorter books by Bennett, but they do not give the comprehensive picture of his life contained in this story. Though it is a sunny, optimistic book, he does not leave out his failed first marriage, failed business ventures and struggles with record labels over artistic integrity. His refusal to give in to rock or disco or whatever the current fad might be has been rewarded by the rock generation with enthusiastic loyalty and respect.

He also talks at length about his love for painting. Apparently, this was not just a casual hobby, but a real second career. For the fans, this book mentions many records that you have probably never heard of and will want to acquire.

In her award-winning audio book, “Society’s Child: An Autobiography” (available from audible.com), Janis Ian also describes the entire breadth of her life.

Janis is a singer, songwriter, pianist, and guitarist, and the book is dotted with recorded snippets from her songs. She has a great love and devotion to music, which saw her through a difficult early career trying to survive as a budding pop star and finish high school at the same time. As a creature of the 60’s, this book is a lot more personal and emotional than Bennett's. She discusses her disastrous marriage, her illnesses, both physical and psychiatric, her long battle with the IRS caused by an unscrupulous accountant, and much more.

I had not known that after stepping back from her career as a recording star, she eventually made it to Nashville, and what a profound effect this had on her musical life. Here, the song snippets are very revealing. She has also recently developed a career as a science fiction writer, anthologist, and judging by the list on audible.com, has done quite a bit more book narration.

A different kind of musical survival is described in Steve Lopez’s book, “Soloist: A Lost Dream, An Unlikely Friendship and the Redemptive Power of Music” (db66602), narrated ably by Gary Tipton.

Lopez, was a reporter for the Los Angeles Times when he encountered a homeless man playing a two-string violin on skid row, became personally involved with him, and tried to improve his life. This was not easy as Nathaniel Ayers behaved just like any homeless person you have met on the street, could be vile and abusive, berating our author with foul and racist language, and being totally unpredictable and resistant to being changed.

Ayers was one of the first African-American students at the Julliard School of Music in the early 1970’s, but he also suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, and the pressures proved to be too much. He ultimately withdrew from school. Lopez is a novelist as well as a reporter (with other books on BARD) and he tells an overly complicated story in an eloquent and concise narrative that barely runs 300 pages.

As a totally blind person, I have thought a lot about help, how to get it, who to ask for it, how to reject it when it is not wanted, how to accept it even if unneeded in order to promote social connection. I have thought a book could be written about how to do a good deed, which we are advised to do, but it is also true that the Good Samaritan was undertaking a risky venture. Now I think there could be a whole bookshelf devoted to this topic. This book should be a prominent entry. It is full of descriptions of music, and music was a path that led Lopez and Ayers to respect each other and see each other beyond the labels.

If you want to hear a bunch of this music, I recommend the movie based on this book starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jamie Fox.

Gentle reader, I hope we all survive the winter, and listen to a lot of music to enable us to survive with style.

## Virtually Live Concerts by Sheri Richardson

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“If you were music, I would listen to you ceaselessly, and my low spirits would brighten up.”

―Anna Akhmatova

No matter one’s age, gender, location, or any other grouping you can think of, I think the one thing we can all agree on is that 2020 has been jammed full of new challenges and opportunities. Many pitchers of lemonade have been made from the lemons brought to us and grown by us this year. When I first heard about the new coronavirus and its potential, I promised myself that I would take every challenge that came my way and try to see if it could be transformed into an opportunity in some positive way. While I cannot say my efforts have always yielded success, I think I have lived up to my promise overall.

Take music. Music, especially classical, has played a major role in my life. In fact, my college degree is in music education. While I have not pursued anything related to music professionally, I have sung in church choirs or community choral groups throughout my life. The performance and enjoyment of live music is definitely a source of spiritual renewal and inspiration for me.

For the past eight years or so, I have been singing with the Columbia City Chorus, a small community chorus led by a musician/composer with an incredible sense of community and inclusion. We are definitely an amateur group as far as musical ability, but we are mighty in spirit. So, imagine how difficult it must have been for our director to make the decision to stop singing together in the same physical space. As we all know now, that was a wise and conscientious decision since we learned soon after about the danger of viral contagion in choirs and communal singing. Now our group meets via Zoom every week and, I have to admit reluctantly, I have not chosen to participate in that way. Nevertheless, I am very proud of our director and those who do continue to keep our group alive until we can all come together in the same space once again.

My husband and I enjoy attending Seattle Symphony concerts and the Seattle Opera. I remember when I got my first career job thinking that I would be able to hold season tickets to these events one day, and I achieved that dream. As the years have gone by and we have gotten into a pleasant routine of attending these concerts, I am not sure I realized how much the music and the performances really meant to me until they were suddenly taken away.

About this time, I received an email from Groupmuse, a house concert group for classical music lovers. They decided to try streaming a live concert on Zoom almost before I had even heard about Zoom. I decided to give it a try, and what a wonderful surprise. With my small Bose speaker sitting on the back of my sofa, it sounded like the musicians were right there in my living room. The only difference was that I could sit comfortably in my favorite chair, wear my most casual clothes, and sip my favorite wine without hassling with transportation and navigating unfamiliar environments.

Next thing I knew, my husband and I had live concerts several evenings each week, and the technology was improving all the time. We have learned about many incredible classical musicians around the world as they have performed, first from their own living rooms or bedrooms, and then from churches or small concert venues. Not only have they shared their musical talent, but they have freely given of their experiences, hopes and dreams to bring hope and strength to their listeners. This fall, there has even been a return of the Seattle Symphony doing live concerts, as well as the opera to a lesser degree. While I can enjoy recorded music any time, I have found an incredible amount of joy in being able to participate in many live concerts this year, far more than I could ever do in normal circumstances.

I have also reconnected in a meaningful way with my love of classical and jazz music. I have been moved to tears and found peace, as well, in the beauty and magic of music. I believe that when I look back on 2020, I will probably not recall those moments of fear and uncertainty, or sadness and loneliness, or disappointment in not being able to do all my favorite activities. I will, I believe, remember the hundreds of hours I have spent sitting with my husband in our cozy living room while transported to another plane by the majesty of the sharing of the gift of music through virtually live performances.

If you would like to know more about Groupmuse concerts, which are quite affordable and rely primarily on donations, check them out at www.groupmuse.com.

## Music And My Memories by Bob Cavanaugh

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"It's so nice, I want to hear the same song twice."

--Bradley Nowell

I was visiting with fellow Washington Council of the Blind member Jenny Anderson when she published her book earlier this year. That got me thinking: What would a book written by me look like? I came up with a list of songs that have significance to me, the stories behind which would be told in chronological order. I’m just going to pick a few at random, some based off the playlist I’m listening to as I write this article.

First up, we have Lizzo’s “Truth Hurts,” a song you couldn’t get away from last summer. I attended day camps through Outdoors for All. The whole attitude of those two weeks was about playing and having fun, and when I hear that song, it makes me so happy. Every time we got in the van, it was on. Truth is, I heard it five times on this particular day. It was playing on the bus, then in the van on the short trip from Magnusson Park to Mathews Beach. I heard it again on the return trip, and in the car on the way to my study, and yet again on the Access bus trip home. That’s not the only song I have from that summer, though. I also fell in love with Post Malone’s “Goodbyes,” and Saweetie’s “My Type.”

Next up, Rihanna Featuring Jay-Z, “Talk That Talk.” This memory comes from 2012, which was the year I graduated from high school. On our way to the after-graduation party, we had the bus radio blaring the top 40 station. I was tired all day, so didn’t think I had enjoyed the party all that much, but the next day after some sleep, I realized how big of a night this actually was. I went to the station’s website and copied the playlist from that night to a file on my BrailleNote, which I still have to this day.

The next story involves the 2005 hit, “Move Along,” by The All American Rejects. It is Saturday, June 12, 2010. At the time, I was playing in a baseball league for people with all types of disabilities, and I had just returned from our end-of-season jamboree. I set up Audacity, a free Multi track audio editor and recorder for windows, Mac and other operating systems, to record the Saturday Night Shuffle, from WRQX in Washington, D.C., which would quickly become my favorite Saturday night program. This song came on about halfway through the recording, and though I had never heard it before, I fell in love with it right away. It was what would happen the next day and in subsequent months that would cement it for me as a significant song in my life. I had been planning for months to go to a trampoline place with some friends from school. I had so much fun that day that I couldn’t stop talking about it, and decided to take one of my friends as a weekend outing. As we walked in, what’s playing? You guessed it, “Move Along.” Seattle wouldn’t get a station that played it in regular rotation for a few years, so that trampoline place was the only place I would hear it until I got it for myself a year or so later.

Last but not least, I want to share a memory from Sunset Lake. This is the summer camp I went to as a kid and that I came back to in 2017. I could write a whole article just about what camp means to me. Starting that January, I began working extremely hard to make new friends and have as much fun as I possibly could. While there were many successes in this, there were also some pretty spectacular failures. Camp gave me a week of exactly what I wanted, and I felt something I hadn’t felt in a long time. That year, and every year since, I’ve liked the theme song and bought it. That year’s was “How Can it Be” by Lauren Daigle. That was also the year I discovered For King and Country, who I saw in concert last November.

I could go on and on with stories of what songs have been associated with my memories. I can’t wait for the day when more take their place alongside these and many others, as significant songs in my life.

## The Benefits of Herbs and Spices – Part Two © November 2020 by Leonore H. Dvorkin

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(Note: The original version of this article was published in the November 2008 issue of a Denver publication called Community News. That publication no longer exists.)

Here's the basic difference between an herb and a spice: The leaf of a plant used in cooking is an herb, whereas any other part of the plant (often dried) is a spice. Spices can be buds, bark, roots, berries, aromatic seeds, and even the stigma of a flower, as in the case of saffron.

The record of the use of herbs and spices goes back thousands of years. The traditional Indian system of medicine known as Ayurveda evolved more than 5,000 years ago in the Himalayas. Emphasizing diet, it focuses on the prevention of disease. In Ayurveda, basil is used to protect the heart, cinnamon is used to stimulate circulation, and ginger is the "universal medicine."

The ancient Sumerians recognized the health benefits of thyme as early as 5,000 BC, and the Mesopotamians cultivated garlic as early as 3,000 BC. The ancient Egyptians fed their slaves radishes, onions, and garlic to keep them healthy. In ancient Greece and Rome, mint was used to aid digestion, and rosemary was used to improve the memory. Rosemary is still burned today in the homes of Greek students who are preparing for exams. I tutor German and Spanish, and before I do any kind of studying on my own, I often mix a few drops of rosemary essential oil with unscented hand lotion and massage the mixture into my hands and forearms.

Nowadays, scientists are researching the effects of herbs and spices as they affect cardiovascular health, metabolism, aging, cancer, mental health, and cognition. There is growing recognition that herbs and spices can do far more than simply make food taste better or provide extra nutrition.

Some like it hot, and with good reason. Cayenne pepper, Tabasco sauce, ginger, and even cinnamon can increase metabolism and the body's fat-burning ability. Mustard also has fat-burning properties and can relieve respiratory complaints. Ginger can also relieve motion sickness and nausea. Be careful with it, though, as it can hinder blood clotting. If you're going to have surgery or if you take blood thinners or aspirin, you might want to avoid ginger.

Good, and good for your heart: The consumption of garlic and garlic oil has been linked with the reduction of total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol (the "bad" kind), and triglycerides. Rosemary can help prevent damage to blood vessels that raise heart attack risk.

Battling cancer: As a breast cancer survivor, I am always interested in anything that research says can help protect against cancer of any sort. One lengthy and scholarly article I read (it had more than 100 scientific articles listed as references) named basil, lemon grass, mint, nutmeg, parsley, rosemary, spearmint, and turmeric as having shown anti–cancer effects in animal studies. Turmeric, a main ingredient in curry, seems to be especially good at helping to prevent cancers of the colon, skin, liver, and prostate. In countries where a lot of curry is consumed, the rate of prostate cancer tends to be relatively low. Certain components of rosemary may inhibit breast cancer.

Plants and mental health: There is a long history of using plants to influence psychological states. Various herbs have long been used to reduce anxiety and promote relaxation. Even Peter Rabbit's mother knew about the relaxing properties of chamomile, and passion flower is recommended as a sedative by the German Commission E, a government-supported committee that evaluates herbal preparations from medicinal plants. Valerian also has sedative properties. I frequently use chamomile tea or valerian capsules if I have trouble sleeping. Both are available in health food stores, and even many grocery stores now stock a wide variety of herbal teas.

If your goal is to perk up your brain and/or improve your memory rather than to relax, try ginkgo biloba or ginseng, both used in traditional Chinese medicine. Sage is also potentially helpful to the memory, and there is some evidence that garlic can slow brain aging through its antioxidation properties. However, no study that I read suggests any more than a slight boost to cognition from any one food.

Most people find that reliable old caffeine, as found in coffee, tea, colas, and chocolate, gives them as much of a mental boost as they need. Just be careful with those popular "energy drinks," as they can contain excessive and even dangerous amounts of caffeine and other stimulants.

Herbs, spices, and Type 2 diabetes: I found many references to herbs and spices that can help manage diabetes. Italian herbalists use bilberry, cinnamon, dandelion, garlic, ginseng, and prickly pear cactus for glucose control. Ginseng can help some people lose weight, too.

Osteoarthritis: Ginger has been shown to have a mild to moderate effect in reducing knee pain. In spite of its hot, spicy taste, ginger appears to inhibit the inflammation process.

It's common for older people to have some loss of the senses of smell and taste, especially if they take several medications. By increasing their intake of herbs and spices, seniors can increase their enjoyment of food without increasing their salt intake. Basil, oregano, and thyme are not only delicious, but also provide valuable antioxidants.

So, dear readers, enjoy all those wonderful herbs and spices, knowing that they are both good and good for you!

## Mushrooms: What on Earth Are They Good For? by Anne Biswell

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When you think of mushrooms, what comes to mind? Magic mushrooms that can take you on a psychedelic trip? Poison ones that may pop up in your yard and can cause sickness or death? Delicious edible ones that you find at the grocery store or farmer’s market? What about powerful medicinal ones that can boost the immune system and help protect the body against many illnesses, conditions and diseases?  The reality is that mushrooms are all of those things and so much more.

For the past year, I’ve begun to delve into research about mushrooms, and what I’ve learned is amazing. There are more than 10,000 different species of mushrooms and fungi in the world, and many of them are useful to humans in myriad ways. They are an ancient, noble and vast kingdom, separate from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and powerful in their own right. Their immense diversity and incredible beauty rivals anything else on Earth.

“Magic” mushrooms produce psilocybin, an alkaloid that can induce hallucinations and out-of-body experiences. Recent research has shown that taken in the right amounts and under the right circumstances, they can help people overcome debilitating fear and anxiety. This can be especially helpful for people with a terminal illness or post-traumatic stress disorder. Promising research shows they can, in the words of Merlin Sheldrake, author of “Entangled Life,” “loosen the grip of our habits and release old ways of thinking.” This can often lead to transformation, acceptance and peace of mind, even with only one treatment.

Culinary mushrooms, like the common white button mushroom, portabella, cremini, chanterelle, shiitake, oyster mushrooms, Lion’s Mane and others, are a delicious, very nutritious part of many dishes, especially in Asian cuisine. Edible mushrooms are low in fat, containing protein and many other nutrients that nourish the body and support and improve health. As long as one is not allergic (and some people truly are), mushrooms are a beneficial part of a healthy diet. If one type is not appealing, try another or try different recipes.

Edible mushrooms can be stuffed, broiled, or added to just about any recipe. I like to slice them thin, sauté them in a little olive oil, season with garlic and onion powder, add a little Tony Chachere’s and enjoy them as a side dish. For me, they count as a vegetable and a protein. Because of their protein content, mushrooms can even help replace meat in your diet. Look for mushrooms as an ingredient in certain plant-based meat substitutes. I understand that mushrooms should be cooked rather than eaten raw, in order to reap the most benefits and avoid any potential digestive problems.

Mushrooms play an ever-growing role in helping to save the world in some very real ways. There are many ongoing projects showing how fungi and their mycelium, the network of fibers that stretch underground around the entire world, can be used to help bees survive, control insect pests like termites and carpenter ants, clean up oil spills, purify water, make sustainable packing and building materials, and even fabricate a convincing leather substitute. It seems that people are beginning to fully understand the vast potential of tiny fungi, and I find that very encouraging. Just think of the non-renewable resources this could save.

Mushrooms are considered a functional food, meaning they have properties above and beyond being a source of nutrition. Many of the edible ones mentioned above are also considered medicinal. Each variety is different, with a different combination of nutrients. Some of the most important medicinal elements in mushrooms are the polysaccharides, ganoderic acid, adenosene, Beta-glucans, and triterpenes. These elements are responsible for many of the purported benefits, such as strengthening the immune system, oxygenating the cells, restoring energy, enhancing physical fitness and even re-growing damaged nerve cells in the brain and elsewhere.

Perhaps the most famous medicinal mushroom is not actually edible because of its tough, woody texture. The noble Reishi mushroom (ganoderma lucidum), also known as Lingzhi in China, is one such fungus. It can be steeped in water, as for tea, or taken as an alcohol tincture or in powder form. In ancient times, only the Chinese royalty had access to this precious resource, as it was rare to find it in the wild. Today, however, people have developed effective ways to cultivate this wonder of nature, and it’s now readily available to us all.

Known as the “herb of longevity” and as an immuno-modulator, Reishi/Lingzhi is the subject of many clinical studies. One of the most documented effects is that it can actually boost or tamp down the immune system, depending on what’s needed. When it comes down to it, it’s our own incredible immune system that is going to protect us from invaders like viruses, bacteria and even cancer. When the immune system is functioning at an optimal level, it is capable of seeking out and destroying most pesky intruders. You wouldn’t even know they’d been there.

As we age, the immune system naturally declines. We can help to stave off decline and prevent illness by ensuring that we eat a balanced diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables (and a variety of mushrooms!) in addition to getting plenty of water, exercise and rest each and every day.  High-quality supplements made with beneficial, functional medicinal mushrooms and complementary herbs are a convenient way to get a regular therapeutic dose.

There are plenty of resources for further study out there, but to name just a couple, I recommend the following:

* “Fantastic Fungi,” a film by Louie Schwarzenberg. Renowned mycologist Paul Stamets heads a cast of experts expounding on the history and many uses of mushrooms and mycelium. The visuals are stunning, but the information presented in this ground-breaking film is astounding.
* “Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our World, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Future,” a book by biologist Merlin Sheldrake. It is available in print and audio, read by the author in what I must say is a most pleasant voice. Merlin elucidates the world of mushrooms through his vast research and shares his profound insights.

Perhaps you know now why I’m so fascinated with the world of fungi. From cleaning up the environment and saving endangered species, to making sustainable materials and nutritious food, to providing some of the best medicines yet discovered and helping us to live longer, happier, healthier lives, fungi are indeed fantastic.

(Anne Biswell is an independent distributor for Alphay International, an online-only resource for medicinal mushroom products. She’s been married to her husband, George, for 46 years. They have three children and four wonderful grandkids. She enjoys making music, and is sister to Leonore Dvorkin, also a contributor to this publication. She assists the Newsline with formatting.)

## What's On Your Plate? by Hayley Agers

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“If music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it"

―William Shakespeare

It's that time of year again, and that means cooler temperatures and more days longing for something warm to soothe you from the inside out. It is a well-known fact that I could eat soup every day of the week and not get tired of it. Oh, how I wish the feeling was mutual for all in my home. It's not that nobody likes soup at all, it's just that we all like different types of soup. Brayden likes soups that are more broth than substance, David likes a thicker and creamier soup, and Sydney and I will eat any soup, including cool gazpacho in the summer. Well, when there is leftover turkey in the fridge and I want to watch the football game that is on, the best thing to do is make soup. So that's exactly what I did. As I was chopping up the ingredients, the little voices inside my head were saying, "Brayden won't like the kale in this, Sydney will say she only likes kale when it’s in a salad, and David will say oh no, not mushrooms, count me out.”

Since I am now teacher, housecleaner, drill sergeant, dog walker, laundromat and, most importantly, cook, I decided to forge ahead and make something I knew I would like. Maybe if I didn't mention the mushrooms, David wouldn't even notice. He didn't, and the naughty little elf in me couldn't wait to tell him right after he finished telling me how good it was. Sydney ate it all and loved it. Brayden said the ribbons of kale got stuck in his braces, but hey, I could deal with that and so can his toothbrush. Most importantly, everyone liked it and that alone brought about a feeling of gratefulness to end this long Thanksgiving weekend. I hope these recipes will bring you comfort.

**Turkey Soup**

Ingredients:

* 1 tbsp. olive oil
* 1 cup chopped onion (1/2 of an onion)
* 1/2 cup chopped carrots (2 carrots)
* 3/4 cup chopped celery (2 large stalks)
* 2 cloves minced garlic
* 8 oz. diced mushrooms
* 1/2 cup wild rice
* 8 cups turkey stock (I used chicken)
* 1 tbsp. tamari or liquid aminos
* 1 bay leaf
* 1/2 cup coconut milk
* 2 cups leftover turkey, chopped
* 4 cups kale, stemmed and slice into thin ribbons
* salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

* Heat olive oil in a large dutch oven over medium-high heat.
* Add in the onions, celery, carrots and a pinch of salt. Sauté for 10 minutes or until the veggies are fragrant and the onions are translucent.
* Stir in mushrooms and garlic and cook for another 5 minutes.
* When the veggies are just tender, add in the wild rice, turkey stock, tamari, and bay leaf.
* Bring everything up to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook for 40 minutes or until the wild rice is tender.
* Stir in coconut milk, turkey and kale ribbons, and season to taste with salt and pepper.
* Simmer for another 5-10 minutes or until the kale has wilted (but is still vibrant) and the soup is heated through. Serve and enjoy.
* Notes: If you don't have any leftover turkey or turkey broth, swap in some rotisserie chicken and chicken broth.

After you have that bowl of soup and are ready to settle in for the night with a warm blanket and a good movie, why not try this delicious caramel corn? It takes a bit of time to make, so you'll need to make it ahead of time, and store it in an air-tight container.

**Caramel Corn**

Ingredients:

* 3 quarts popped corn (air popped is best, but if you don't have an air popper, use 3 bags of unflavored popcorn)
* 1 1/2 C brown sugar
* 3/4 C butter
* 3/4 C light Karo syrup
* 1/2 tsp. Salt
* 3/4 tsp. Soda
* 3/4 tsp. vanilla

Mix all ingredients except vanilla and soda. Bring to a boil. Boil for 4 minutes. Add vanilla. Remove from heat and add soda. Pour over popped corn (I use my big roasting pan). Heat in oven at 250º for 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. Remove the carmel corn to a large piece of butcher wrap, wax side up, to cool. I break it up as much as possible while it's still hot. When it cools, you can break it up more.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

## Technically Speaking Performing Music During the Pandemic by Frank Cuta

All of the face-to-face coffeehouses, open mics, sing-alongs and

karaoke venues have been shut down for months as a result of the pandemic. However, many of them still exist in some form on the Internet. This article describes some ways you can improve your online sound while you participate in social and musical activities using Zoom.

We all want our music to sound great, and we need to realize that Zoom conferencing is not principally designed with music in mind. Singing is more demanding than talking, and there are a few tricks to learn.

First, you want to minimize interference and feedback.

Second, you want to consider upgrading your microphone to get better reproduction. The microphone in your telephone and, in most computer headsets, is designed for normal speech, not for music.

Third, you want to gain proficiency in Zoom's command structure and learn how to change its settings to achieve optimal sound quality.

My personal experience is with our American Council of the Blind community open mic and the ACB karaoke performance venues. The open mic is on Wednesday evenings at 5 o’clock and the karaoke is on Saturday evenings at 6. These venues are very supportive of performers, and if your only option is to sing into your standard home telephone, that is perfectly acceptable. However, there are many steps you can take to improve the way you sound.

The first thing you should consider is moving to an iPhone and installing the Zoom app. The Apple microphone is much better than a regular phone, and the Zoom app for the iPhone allows your Zoom experience to be much more interactive. In addition, using a headset microphone stabilizes the mic and reduces interference.

When using your iPhone for performing music, be sure and locate a button called "enable original sound" and activate it. This function improves the sound of voices and instruments considerably, but it will also cause your phone to pick up more background noise, so be sure you are in a quiet environment. At this point, you will have done everything possible, short of buying additional hardware.

If you have a laptop computer, one of the easiest and least expensive ways to improve your sound quality is to use it instead of your phone. It is easy to install and run the Zoom app on it, and unless your computer is ancient, it probably already has a microphone and camera built in. Many performers just plug in a headset to monitor and get relatively nice results from such a setup. Be aware that if you choose to use the laptop's internal mic, room ambience will play a predominant role in how you sound. You should play around with working at different distances from the mic and in different rooms to optimize your acoustics. Even though the microphones in most new laptops are excellent in general, using a comparable external mic is always better because it reduces these room effects.

Whether you use a laptop or a desktop computer for your performance, and whether you use an internal or external microphone, it is very important to turn off your speakers. Monitor by using an external audio headset. This prevents feedback. When sound from live speakers feeds back into the microphone, the resulting squeal not only annoys your audience and hurts your ears, it can hurt your equipment.

Activating the "original sound" switch in Zoom is just as important when using your computer as when using your iPhone. The Zoom app incorporates sophisticated sound-processing technology to reduce background noise and optimize your speaking voice. Unfortunately, this same processing can degrade music quality. Turning on "original sound" alleviates this problem.

Thus, it is likely that with your current iPhone or laptop, with minimal or no additional expense, you already have what you need to start performing online. However, for $50 to $250 you can achieve huge improvements.

The most common items to add are an external USB microphone or a XLR microphone and a digital interface, but you can start with just the microphone. Plugging an external USB mic into your computer, and supporting it with a simple stand, gets it right in your face where it can best do its job. I like the Audio Technica AT-2100X ($99,) but much less expensive ones are easy to find. [Audio Technica Microphones at Sweetwater](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjh4MPjqLTtAhWl1VkKHclHCIoQFjADegQIBhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sweetwater.com%2Fstore%2Fmanufacturer%2FAudio-Technica&usg=AOvVaw1TEhOxsv9seAXkFDz0yPlL)

You will need to support the mic, and gooseneck clamp-on mic stands are available for under $30 that support the mic right where you want it, and take up virtually no desk space. [Amazon.com: scissor arm microphone stand](https://smile.amazon.com/s?k=scissor+arm+microphone+stand&ref=nb_sb_noss_1)

Ultimately, your iPhone and computer are not designed to be pieces of live performance equipment. However, the addition of an external digital audio interface can correct this problem. An interface lets you plug in multiple high-quality XLR microphones. If you are using your computer, I suggest you look at the Focus rite 2i2 at about $109, or the studio model that includes a microphone, at $159.

I know of no interface that is 100% accessible. It's best to visit a local sound store. You may find a model that is less expensive and more accessible. An excellent mic is the Shure SM58, but there are hundreds of choices between $50 and $100.

Finding a good interface for the iPhone is more difficult. The cheapest one we have found is the Zoom Podtrak P4. [Zoom Podtrak P4](https://smile.amazon.com/Zoom-P4-Microphone-Headphone-Interface/dp/B08F8HL7T7/ref=sr_1_5?dchild=1&keywords=Zoom+P4&qid=1607085828&sr=8-5)

This is a podcast recorder and audio interface that will work with either the iPhone or your computer. It costs about $200. As well as giving you outstanding sound quality, it has the following features: It is small and portable, simple to operate, runs from either batteries or USB power, and it is mostly accessible. The P4 podcast recorder has four XLR inputs that let you interface it with Zoom on your iPhone, play a karaoke track from your computer, and still have two inputs left for more microphones. In an alternative configuration, it can support three people with three microphones, and supply each performer with their own headphone output level.

(Editor's note: Watch this space for a full review of the Zoom P4 podcast recorder in our next issue.)

Lastly, here is a basic description of how the Zoom conferencing app works to let you participate in either the open mic or karaoke events. You come into the venue with your mic already muted by the system, and land in the participant queue. To let the host know that you are ready to perform, you raise your hand. The host will let you know how to do this for your platform – for Windows it’s alt-Y. You will be warned when you are going to be next, and when your turn comes up the host will ask you to unmute. For Windows, this is alt-A. Be sure to have your speakers off to prevent feedback. You may want to mute your speech by switching JAWS to "speech on demand mode" just before you start. You do this with insert-spacebar then s.

During your performance, you will want to be able to concentrate on your singing. "The speech on demand" mode prevents you from hearing the other participants cheering you on, and prevents you from hearing other distracting notifications.

At the conclusion of your performance, you immediately mute Zoom with alt-A. Press insert-spacebar, then s to disable the "on demand" feature. You do not have to worry about your hand. The host will already have lowered it for you.

The process is a little different for karaoke. When your turn comes up, you will also need to provide for and control your instrumental track. Either you play it from a personal stored resource, or you go out and find it on the Web. Many performers find their material on YouTube by searching for the song title and the term "karaoke."

You may also download and install the accessible Pontes Downloader app. [Download and convert videos from YouTube with Pontes](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjOivjQsLTtAhWCtVkKHaHkBr0QFjAAegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.accessiblecomputer.co.uk%2Fdownload-and-convert-videos-from-youtube-with-pontes-media-downloader%2F&usg=AOvVaw3e_a1z9yEaFAuwovDTBc9a) This app allows you to safely grab your selection from YouTube in advance and save it on your computer as a ready to play audio file.

Regardless of where you are playing it from, you want to have your karaoke track ready to go and paused before you raise your hand. In the case of playing it from YouTube, this means first getting past the "skip add" pop-up, and then pausing the track at the beginning.

When you are recognized to perform, unmute with alt-A. Press alt-S to start screen-sharing. Then tab to "share computer sound" and press the spacebar. Then tab to "share your screen" and hit enter. Alt-tab into YouTube, then enable "speech on demand" mode with insert-spacebar then hit s. Hit "play" and start singing. At the conclusion of your performance, you will want to use insert-space, then S to turn off "speech on demand." You will need to alt-tab back into the Zoom window before the final step, which is to hit alt-S to stop screen-sharing.

It all sounds very complicated, but by their third or fourth performance most participants have got it down and they can devote their full concentration to their singing.

## I Wear My Sunglasses at Night A Review of the Bose Frames Tempo Audio Sunglasses by Reginald George

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-- "Don't be afraid of the guy in shades …"

-- Corey Hart

I love good headphones and clear discrete audio. Anyone who knows me will attest that I am a speaker nut. However, I am the last person you would expect to pay $250 for audio sunglasses. I am way too cheap. I can hear my younger self saying, "Reggie, you have lost your mind."

My first pair of Bose Frames was the first-generation Alto model. They died suddenly for no reason, and it took forever to get them replaced under warranty because of the pandemic. They finally sent me a brand new, factory-sealed pair, which I promptly turned around and sold on eBay to recover some of my investment in the new Bose Tempos.

The first-generation frames cost $200. I felt insulted that they found it necessary to raise the price even higher, to $250. But for these audio glasses, I made an exception. Whether you will think it's worth it depends on your usage scenario. They are so much fun to wear, provide for good situational awareness, and sound much better to me than any bone conduction alternatives I have tried.

Tempos are good-looking, black, wraparound, sports-type sunglasses designed to stay on your face. They even come with three sets of nose pads for a good fit. Because of the design, if noise level gets too loud in your environment, just put your hands over your ears and they become much louder. Isn't that odd?

Tempos are also much more comfortable and water resistant than their first generation counterparts, and the lenses can still be changed. Prescription lenses are available, and they sell lenses in all different colors, polarized and non-polarized. They are rimless at the bottom, and the stock lenses are black and mirrored.

I have to say I love them. Maybe not $250 worth, but the battery life is more than twice as long as the original models. They are more practical for mobility purposes because they get louder, and they have a slightly deeper, richer sound signature. The glasses work well with Microsoft SoundScape (a free app used for navigating unfamiliar areas). They have a touch panel on the righthand arm for volume, or to summon your voice assistant with a double tap. This does make them easier to control without having to resort to your phone. The multi-function button under the right arm allows you to pair them over Bluetooth, play and pause your audio, skip tracks backward or forward, power the glasses on and off, and take and release phone calls. The music earcons, when they are powered up and connect, and the text-to-speech voice-prompts that speak the battery level and caller's name, are lovely.

As usual, Bose is mysteriously and unnecessarily silent, keeping their secrets about the true specifications of the glasses, such as what version of Bluetooth they are running, and what audio protocols they support, but they receive and transmit across my house through walls without difficulty, and latency is almost non-existent. They remember multiple devices, but can only be paired with one at a time.

When it comes to battery life, they claim up to eight hours. However, I get way more than that because they say they power down after 10 minutes. I can’t even tell when this happens because I still get all my iPhone notification sounds as they come in, so they must come back to life very quickly. I get closer to 12 hours out of them, depending on usage.

There are actually three new models that sell for the same price they’re just different styles. They are the Tenor, Soprano, and Tempo. However, the Tempos are the only glasses with higher volume and the best battery life. I'll take that over style. The Tempo is the only new model that supports USB C charging instead of using their proprietary magnetic cable. You can charge them fully in 1 hour. The Tenor and Soprano officially are rated at 5 hours of battery life. I wanted to buy some knock-off audio sunglasses instead, but nothing comes close to the quality of these. They are outstanding in comfort, stereo separation, and music clarity. Acoustic and classical music, and nature sounds shimmer and sparkle. I'm not kidding. Augmented reality apps that respond to head movement are interesting to play with. It's an immersive experience of three-dimensional sound, but many of the Bose apps are not very accessible.

I often wear the glasses while doing work on my computer. I can listen to music through them all day long and still hear what I’m doing. The sound is so good it makes me want to dance in my chair and sing along. If anyone was around to watch, they would think I was quite strange.

My biggest complaint is that they leak sound considerably. I believe that they could have employed better isolation or active noise-canceling technologies to keep the audio more contained within the glasses.

Also, as you turn them up over halfway, they start to roll off the bass frequencies slightly. So, for the best sound, you want to keep volume a little lower. They’re wonderful for listening to audiobooks and podcasts.

I have gotten some complaints, from people I talk to on the phone, that sometimes the sound goes wonky, like being in the bottom of a well. But they sound very good most of the time, even over FaceTime and on Zoom calls. The firmware will receive updates through the semi-accessible Bose music app. I wish they had a mute function for interruptions and conference calls.

Dictation in text messages, through the glasses, seems to work quite well, even in noisy environments. With the beam-forming microphones they advertise, it is about as accurate as my Airpods.

The Bose Tempos are not perfect. Things rarely are. But they are certainly worth exploring, depending on your needs, even if it's just to have your ears opened wide.

# HISTORY

## Honor Our Unsung Heros by Carl Jarvis

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Of course, the passing of any member, or family member, is important, and leaves us the lesser for it.

Back when I was active in the King County White Cane Association, and a member of Washington State Association of the Blind, which ultimately became WCB, an older fellow would come into our meetings with his lunchbox tucked under his arm.

One day he did not show up – or the next month or the next. Someone asked what happened to the old fellow who always sat in the back of the room.

I said, "That was Ray Garbor. Ray has been a member for years."

Following the meeting, I found Ray's address and phone number and called him.

"I'm Missus Garbor," an elderly woman said. "Ray died two months ago." And she hung up.

At our next meeting, I brought up Ray's passing. I had wondered why Ray always sat in the back of the room and never spoke. In fact, I told the group, it was partly because we never extended ourselves to our quieter members. Ray and I had talked a few times, since I tend to be a bit on the chatty side, and he told me that he stood on the street corners in downtown Seattle, passing out our brochures and urging people to contact their state legislators and demand that they pass the Commission Bill so blind people might receive the services they needed in order to get decent work.

I'm about ready to retire," Ray said, "but I sure don't want the young blind people going through what I went through in order to make a living."

I wrote an article for the "White Cane Magazine," saying that Ray was the shining example of what a hero looked like. Rain, snow or shine, Ray went out several times a week, after working all day in a machine shop, and talked to anyone who would listen about the needs of our blind young people. While we did not know it, sitting in our midst was the very flesh-and-blood hero we were looking for.

## Remembering the School of Piano Technology for the Blind by Beth Greenberg

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“Music is a language that doesn’t speak in particular words. It speaks in emotions, and if it’s in the bones, it’s in the bones.”

― Keith Richards

Pianos have played a big part in my life. The Piano Hospital, as it was originally known, played a huge part in the blindness community in Vancouver for almost 70 years. Let's take a deeper look at this musical icon from Washington that changed the lives of the graduates forever and provided their families with security and prosperity.

From the web site:

"The School of Piano Technology for the Blind was founded as the Piano Hospital and Training Center in 1949 by Emil B. Fries, who learned to tune pianos as a student of Walter R. Dry at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB).

While studying pre-law at the University of Washington, Mr. Fries realized that his deepest interest lay in teaching. Supporting himself by tuning, he earned his bachelor's degree and did graduate work before returning to Vancouver in 1931 to succeed Walter Dry as head of the WSSB piano tuning department.

Fries taught at WSSB until 1949, when the school phased out vocational courses, including piano tuning. Determined to maintain piano tuning as a career opportunity for blind people, Emil Fries founded the Piano Hospital. In 1966, he formed a nonprofit corporation to ensure that the Piano Hospital would continue to fulfill its purpose in the future.

The Board of Trustees later changed the school's name to the Emil Fries Piano Hospital and Training Center, in honor of the man who, more than any other individual, developed and taught the specialized skills that enable blind tuner-technicians to be successful.

In 1992, the Piano Hospital became licensed by the State of Washington as a technical school. In 1993, the Piano Hospital earned accreditation from the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. … In 2005, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to change their name to The School of Piano Technology for the Blind.

Students came from all over the United States plus Guam and the American Virgin Islands, as well as from Australia, Belize, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Iceland, India, Israel, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Switzerland and Trinidad to study the practical curriculum and uniquely adapted techniques at the School of Piano Technology for the Blind…"

http://www.wcbinfo.org/archive/piano\_tech\_history.html

The piano school and museum closed its doors forever in July 2017 after 68 years. Former staff and students enjoyed their time and making new friends there, and the Piano Hospital will be missed by them and the community of Vancouver.

In an article from The Columbian newspaper that was widely reprinted across the state in 2017, we learn that the school turned out successful students, but they were losing money because they never had enough students to cover the costs of running the school. Counselors apparently felt that blind people had more opportunities in other careers and that piano tuning was too limiting. I disagree. One more door for blind people with mechanical skills who are interested in working with their hands has been lost to us forever. The skills required to compete in this field require specialized training. As blind schools and adult rehabilitation and training centers across the country closed their wood and metal shops in response to changing times and pushed their consumers toward more business and technical careers, many of us who might have found employment but did not have computer skills, were left out in the cold.

Assets from the school were converted into a foundation called the Emil Fries Endowment Fund, which has now been absorbed by the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington. These funds are intended to support disabled people for improving quality of life.

## History Quiz by Carl Jarvis

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Under the skilled direction of Heather Meares and Reg George, Washington Council of the Blind’s Newsline has become one of American Council of the Blind’s finest publications.

**Question:** What year did the WCB Newsline begin publication?

**Answer:** The answer is not as simple as it seems. It's either 30 years old or 49 years old. If you are speaking of the WCB Newsline, the date of its first publication had to be 1990, the year of the merger between the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) and the United Blind of Washington State (UBWS).

But the name Newsline was first used back in 1971. In that year, Washington State Association of the Blind (WSAB) ceased publishing White Cane Magazine. Longtime editor Al Fisher took a position with the Iowa Commission for the Blind and no replacement was found. At some point during 1971, the new newsletter, the WSAB Newsline began life from the Spokane home of then WSAB President Carl Jarvis.

Because of the affiliation with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), WSAB called its new in-house publication the NFBW Newsline. Later, in 1975, WSAB voted to change its name to the National Federation of the Blind of Washington (NFBW).

In 1979, with the expulsion of the NFBW from the NFB, the membership adopted the name United Blind of Washington State, and the publication became the UBWS Newsline. The 1990 merger of WCB and UBWS brought about the adoption of the current name, WCB Newsline.

This coming year, Newsline will celebrate its 50th birthday. And it has never looked better!

**Question:** From 1935 until 1971, Washington state had only one statewide organization of the blind, the Washington State Association of the Blind. While we know that Washington Council of the Blind was organized in 1971, what was the major event that made this possible?

**Answer:** The creation of the American Council of the Blind (ACB): (Source: Wikipedia)

ACB was formed out of the dissolution of the Braille Free Press Association in 1961. Braille Free Press had been set up in 1959 and had probably been the widest-read publication for the blind. It was highly critical of the American Foundation for the Blind, and ACB was formed as an alternative. ACB was also very critical of the National Federation of the Blind, which many of its first members had also originally belonged to. Relations between the two organizations had been strained to the extent that, for years, they scheduled their conventions at the same time to deter people from being active in both organizations.

In 2013, ACB elected Kim Charlson as its first female president, making her the first female president of a major national blindness consumer advocacy organization in the United States.

# THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

## Youth Speak #1 The Impacts of COVID-19 by Lucash Uniack

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Greetings! My name is Lucash Uniack, but everyone calls me Luke. I am 16 years old. This is my introductory column for Newsline. I was honored to be asked to write a column that brings a teen voice to the newsletter. I am a sophomore in high school and live in Seattle.

I am looking forward to writing about my experiences as a teenager with low vision, and to hopefully picking topics that resonate with all readers, teenagers and adults alike. I think it is important for teens to share their experiences and for all of us to support each other, especially at times like these with the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was born with nystagmus, an eye muscle condition that causes me to have low vision. There are two types of nystagmus: the kind you’re born with, and acquired nystagmus, which comes on later in life and is caused by a medical or other condition. Nystagmus makes your eyes shake back and forth involuntarily.

In this first column, I want to write about the effects of COVID-19 on teenagers and to share some of my personal experiences. I believe these experiences are relatable, in some way or another, to everyone as we go through this difficult time together.

This year has been challenging, with many new struggles that I could never have imagined, struggles that had to be overcome. I have been at home with my parents and my twin sisters since March. I really miss hanging out with my friends, going to in-person school, and being involved in extracurricular activities, like theater and band. Doing school completely online has been super challenging, especially with my low vision. Doing school this way takes up so much energy during the day that it has disrupted my sleep patterns, led to eye strain and headaches, and has been pretty stressful overall.

This quarantine has also been very difficult on an emotional level, since social interactions are greatly limited and I don't talk to my friends as much. It has caused an increased sense of loneliness. It feels like all the positives about going to school, like hanging out with my friends at lunch and after school, and doing in-person extracurricular activities, are gone. I love my family and all, but it gets old when it's just the five of us together all the time. My house feels half as big when everyone is home and together all day, every day.

Another thing about me is that I love the performing arts. I am a drummer and an actor. Both of these activities are not nearly as fun virtually as they are in person. Plus, in a normal year, my mom and I would have gone to several Broadway musicals in person, but those were all canceled due to the pandemic, which is another bummer.

As much as this time has been hard, just like most things in life, this year has also had some silver linings. Some of those silver linings for me include being able to just roll out of bed and be at school without a long commute, and eating food whenever I want during the school day, and not just at lunchtime. I also can wear whatever I want to school (even pajama pants!). Another positive from this whole experience is I get to hang out with my family more, including more family dinners, games and movie nights. Spend a moment and try to think about what silver linings you can find in your own pandemic experience. Write to me and tell me what some of those are. I would love to hear from you.

Thank you for reading my first column and I would love your feedback. Please send me your suggestions for future columns. I would love to hear from teen readers and adults alike. I look forward to connecting with you.

# BRAIN FOOD

## Noteworthy Blogs Have You Thought About Being a Blogger? by Beth Greenberg

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Recently, I have spent a lot of time searching out articles and blogs to read. I have always been interested in learning about our different perspectives.

One place I have found where people who are blind and visually impaired have shared their stories is on www.blindnewworld.org/blog.

There are 45 different topics available for entries from anyone who wants to create a blog. Twenty of those topics are about certain eye conditions. For instance, for myself I could find blogs on aniridia and congenital glaucoma, which are pretty rare conditions. There are also the topics that you would assume would be there, such as guide dogs, braille, transportation, parenting, school, and technology.

The Blind New World website is sponsored by Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. There are some other tabs on the www.blindnewworld.org website that are worth a visit:

* Inclusion: This page is about the Blind New World and Perkins school.
* Quiz: This page has an 8-question quiz on how you think you should treat a blind person in various scenarios.
* Stories: This page has examples from other people's experiences, such as the first story titled Resume. The story goes on about how a young lady’s resume almost got overlooked for a job at a call center because she had stated that she graduated from Perkins School for the Bblind. You will have to check out the story to see how that turned ou
* blindnewworld.org/stories/the-resume/
* Tips: This page has tips to be more inclusive in different situations, such as work, school, community, social circle, and at home.
* Share: You can upload a video and share how “change the way you see” can inspire others.

To submit a blog post, submit your story (300-500 words), plus a photo or video and a sentence about yourself. Sighted or blind, they want to know how blindness has impacted your world. MyBlindStory is your voice – your chance to share, compare and challenge readers to change the way they see.

**What does blind mean to you? We’re listening.**

# AGENCY UPDATES

## Washington Talking Book & Braille Library by Danielle Miller

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This past year has been one of challenges, but also one of growth and positive impacts in service. As always, your support makes a big difference in all that we are able to do at WTBBL. Thank you!

We are well underway in our transition to duplication on demand service for our audiobook patrons. This service provides multiple books on one cartridge and makes our entire collection available to readers at all times, as well as completely customizing service. Duplication on demand is a very user-centered service and I think everyone will really enjoy it. Please call the library and talk to a readers’ advisor to make sure we have the best subjects, authors, or series information on file for you so we can be sure we are sending you the best material.

For our braille readers, we are very excited to be participating in the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) Phase 2 braille e-reader pilot program. We will loan refreshable BAP raille displays produced by Zoomax to our interested braille patrons so that they can take advantage of the electronic braille collection. The Zoomax braille e-readers have 20 cells, connect to Wi-Fi, and are USB and SD card compatible and patrons can download BRF files directly from BARD. For patrons without Wi-Fi, or who do not use BARD, we will be able to send books on a cartridge that will connect to the e-reader with a cable.

In an effort to make more titles in languages other than English available, we are also participating in an NLS pilot working with the Global Book Service. In this limited pilot, we will be able to access audio titles in many languages under the Marrakesh treaty. We were also able to expand our Bookshare pilot with an additional 50 memberships and extend it by another year. It is very important to us to do all we can to provide as much access to reading material as possible, and in the formats that work best for you. I hope you will join us in our next quarterly patron book club March 24 at 2 p.m. We will be reading “The Highest Tide” by Jim Lynch. Happy reading!

# WCB HAPPENINGS

## Real or Virtual Challenges? by Sheri Richardson

The Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) annual convention is a special event for many of us. In fact, I look forward to our annual gathering for education, governance, and socializing every year and did so even before I was very active in WCB. I appreciate learning about new products, skills, and issues related to blindness. Most of all, I love feeling included in a group of people who share a common interest: “Opportunity, equality, and independence.”

So along comes 2020, a year of perfect vision, right? OK, maybe that isn’t exactly how this year has gone, but I do believe WCB rose to the occasion with a perfectly envisioned and almost flawlessly executed virtual convention. In fact, if you just looked at the program, you would think it was a normal year after all.

Thanks to our newest best friend, Zoom, as well as the expertise and leadership of our convention committee and tech gurus, we enjoyed the same programming format, filled with educational and informational sessions, like shopping for groceries online, and how to advocate with your legislator on important topics, and a lot more. WCB transacted business almost as usual, including five constitutional amendments and one resolution regarding accessible voting. Speaking of voting, there was even a way for us to vote on board candidates independently and privately.

Guide Dog Users of Washington State also held its annual business meeting, and we even got to sleep in a little this year. Our business included the membership agreeing to open our recently initiated Marlaina Lieberg Memorial Scholarship program to all residents of Washington state. This scholarship was a dream of Marlaina’s, and we are pleased it is now in place. If you reside in Washington and have been accepted by a guide dog program for school or home training, you may qualify for a $100 grant to help offset incidental expenses related to obtaining a guide dog.

We also had our lunch program, at which we were pleased to hear from the newly elected president of Guide Dog Users Inc., Sarah Calhoun.

On the lighter side, there was one thing that was sure to make me smile every time, and that was the prerecorded door prizes. Yes, they may have been prerecorded, but they were done with great ceremony and such perfect sound effects by our own Lisa and Reggie George, and they always seemed so right for the moment.

Maybe the best thing about a virtual convention is that you can hear from people living all over the world. I was so excited that we were able to hear from Clark Rachfal, Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs for the American Council of the Blind (ACB). I also really enjoyed hearing from ACB President Dan Spoon. What an inspirational life story.

So, one might ask, was the virtual convention real? Absolutely, and I hope WCB will include the virtual element in future conventions. While I definitely missed gathering with old and new friends in a physical space, I enjoyed many aspects of this convention – and all for a ridiculously low cost. But if you don’t quite believe me, I want to let one of our best known and most loved members sum it up. Carl Jarvis very kindly gave me permission to quote an email he shared with the WCB discussion list, because I think he expresses my thoughts better than I can.

“What a magnificent production! Our first WCB virtual convention, and it appeared as if we'd been doing it for years.

Even someone as tech challenged as myself was able to listen to all the presentations and vote for every candidate. And if nothing else, I found myself deciding it is well past time to come out of my cave and learn Zoom.

Of course, as well oiled as this virtual convention was, it couldn't rise to meet some of the reasons we all love our face-to-face conferences – like tripping over a guide dog stretched out in the aisle, or walking into the room marked "Women," or reaching the elevator just in time to have the doors close, or hearing that your name was called for a door prize just after you stepped out, or the feel of hot coffee being spilled down the back of your shirt.

But other than those pleasures, I do believe that next to attending in person, this convention was a very successful event.”

## Unconventional Convention by Lynne Koral

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As I waited for the first-timers orientation session on the Zoom platform, I anticipated the Washington Council of the Blind 2020 Virtual Convention with little expectation. I wanted to make sure I had all the information needed to participate in the webinar, hospitality, and my voting pin. The first-timers session had a presentation by Julie Brannon, our state president, and also national President Dan Spoone, who graced us with his presence. I was impressed that there were young people who would choose to attend. “Strength Unveiled” was the theme for this, my first ever Washington state convention.

All the hospitality events were good vehicles to unwind from the day, and they were done to perfection. From trivia the first night, to karaoke the third night, they were all designed to entertain and enlighten. The newlywed game was great, with the Bishops (Jeff and Carrie) taking top honors.

The main convention was filled with practical information. Much of it had also been conveyed on the plethora of American Council of the Blind conference calls.

The session on grocery store apps was informative, but familiar. One caveat is that many places are not served by both Instacart and Shipt, so blind folks are kept from making a choice because one or the other is unavailable.

Presentations on smart homes and cutting the cord were also informative. The options available for controlling one’s home with Apple, Google, or Amazon products are breathtaking. One can start the coffeepot or turn on and off the lights with various remote products that can be operated from one’s bedroom. Cutting the cord introduced the conventioneers to YouTube TV, Apple TV, and other platforms for television viewing and options. Some options such as YouTube are quite expensive, and one size does not fit all.

On the less technical end, one really engaging seminar was about writing one’s memoir. Heather Meares gave some fantastic pointers to trick the mind into memories that one could jot down while keeping to a deadline. Her pointers were excellent and methodical. Reginald George concentrated more on the process of writing.

Another heartwarming session was one from blind parents who were explaining their views on parenting. The parents ranged from having young children to adult children. Their experiences were interesting to me since I am a blind parent of an adult son.

I thought that learning about the scholarship winners and their various courses of study was fascinating. I enjoyed learning about the techniques they used to navigate their schoolwork, and the courses they found that were the most challenging or the most satisfying.

A theater production was also fun, and a break from some of the more lecture-style webinars that usually occur at conventions. The situations that were dramatized by the group were familiar to us, including depicting dog guides, or how sighted people approach us in terms of the lack of effective and appropriate communication.

I felt that the voting rooms worked very well, and I found the voting process easy to navigate. It was very creative and innovative. When the room was open, I was asked my voting number, and who I was voting for in that officer or board position.

The legislative advocacy session was quite fun. It was presented in a creative and educational format. Two scenarios were presented, and I was the one to critique each scenario.

Another session I will mention was about knowing how to take care of one’s credit and protect the credit score. I found that fascinating, even though many people have debit cards.

While I am not mentioning everything, these were the sessions that stood out for me. It was a real thrill to attend and listen to all the presentations. Because it was my first time, I did not miss any sessions since I knew I would have to write about the convention. The moderators did a fantastic job, and so did the presenters.

## WCB: Takin’ Care of Business By Lisa George

Thanks to the outstanding leadership of Washington Council of the Blind, it was business as usual at the 2020 convention. Officers were elected, the 2021 budget was approved, and four amendments and a resolution were adopted. Here’s a brief recap of the board meeting and the annual business meeting.

**Oct. 29 Pre-Convention Board Meeting**

The WCB board accepted the Nominating Committee’s slate of candidates and also recommended that the proposed 2021 budget submitted by the Finance Committee be presented to the membership at Saturday’s business meeting.

Third-quarter financial report through Sept. 30 included total assets of $1,689,791. Four loans through Northwest Access Fund total $2,889 and all are current. Year-to-date income is $16,085 and expenses for the same timeframe are $29,901. This results in a negative position after three quarters of the year in the amount of $13,817.

**Oct. 31 Annual Business Meeting**

Four of the five proposed amendments were passed by the membership.

Summary of changes approved to the constitution by crticle and section:

Article III Membership, Section 1 Members – clarified that a membership begins when dues are received by the WCB treasurer or the treasurer of a local chapter or affiliate.

Article III Membership, Section 3 Expulsion, Suspension, or Other Disciplinary Action – removed discipline and suspension as exclusive powers of the convention, but preserved the convention's exclusive authority to expel a member. After adoption, the WCB board will develop a code of conduct policy.

Article VIII Meetings, Section 4 Virtual Meetings – added this new section to allow virtual meetings to be held and voting to occur.

Summary of changes to the Bylaws:

Bylaw 1 WCB Standing Committees – expanded presidential authority and created two new committees: outreach and fundraising.

Utilizing Zoom “voting stations” as an alternative for paper-and-mail voting, we successfully elected WCB leaders. Andy Arvidson will be second vice president and Alco Canfield will be secretary; Reg George and Heather Meares were re-elected for second terms, Frank Cuta was elected to the board for his first term and Hayley Agers was elected to complete Lori Allison’s term.

The proposed 2021 annual budget was approved by the membership. Total income is expected to be $37,200 with total expenses projected at $123,150, which would result in a net loss for the year of $85,950.

WCB also adopted a resolution regarding our intent to work with other like-minded organizations to pursue legislation to make voting accessible to all Washington voters, ensuring the ability to vote independently and securely in future elections.

## Scholarship Recap by Kim L. Moberg

This year in the world of scholarships, so much has happened. We promoted the scholarship program to more places than I can count, and awarded scholarships to seven amazing individuals.

We tried doing a couple forum calls for potential applicants. Though no applicants came on the calls, committee members felt that they gave us an opportunity to work through issues and make sure that we were all on the same page with our answers to questions that applicants might ask us. We look forward to continuing the calls this year, and we hope that applicants join us. These will be open to all. So, if you are considering going back to school, the calls would be a great place to learn about the scholarship process.

It is always exciting to have returning applicants, but I love it when we attract new students. We contact teachers of the visually impaired, the Department of Services for the Blind, Washington State School for the Blind, state universities, community colleges, and various vocational training centers. We also encourage our committee members to contact their eye physicians. To aid in this work, we create a flyer that features a couple of the scholarship winners from the previous year.

Isaac Heiman is a returning scholarship winner. Low vision has not stood in his way. Rather, he has used it as a jumping off point to motivate him to be the best he can be. He is attending Western Washington University in Bellingham, studying to become a doctor. He is very interested in the brain and how it works.

Isaac has been awarded a $4,000 scholarship. Isaac also received an American Council of the Blind scholarship at our national convention in July 2020.

We had a tie for second place. Angel Dailey and Lane Pearson will each receive a scholarship of $3,500. Angel is a returning scholarship winner. He is one of four children, all of whom have retinitis pigmentosa. Angel is attending the University of Washington Tacoma, and would like to go to medical school and become a child psychologist. Lane is attending Olympic College in Bremerton. He has an older sister and younger brother. All three have Stargardt disease. Lane would like to become a broadcaster and is majoring in communications, with a minor in English.

Ali Steenis is a very outgoing individual. When I read her essay, what came to mind was that this young lady loves life and embracing all challenges that come her way. She is also an advocate for others. Ali is attending City University of New York School of Professional Studies, with an emphasis in disability studies. She has been awarded a $2,500 scholarship.

Christianne Sobieski is a very vibrant individual who has returned to school after 30 years. She is a graduate of the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind's Orientation and Training Center in Seattle, where she gained the skills that helped her make the decision to return to school. Christianne is attending Everett Community College, working to receive her medical assistant certification. She has been awarded a $2,000 scholarship.

Kevin Diaz-Aguilar is an extraordinary young man who loves everything about mathematics. Kevin meets and overcomes challenges every day; he is not only legally blind but also ventilator and G tube dependent due to a muscle disease present at birth. He just graduated from high school, and also did a year of Running Start. Kevin is attending Everett Community College, and his major field of study is accounting. He has been awarded a $1,500 scholarship.

Kaleigh Rainwater is a very energetic young person. She loves advocating for others who have disabilities. Kaleigh is attending Portland State University, studying to be a Special Education teacher. She would like to work with young children. She feels that the key is helping kiddos when they are young so that they will be successful in the future. Kaleigh has been awarded a $1,000 scholarship.

Congratulations to all of these students. You are all fine representatives of the blind community, and of WCB.

## WCB 2020 Awards by Jessamyn Landby

I would like to again thank my committee: Vice Chair Danette Dixon, Linda Wickersham, and Nancy Lind. This year, the Awards Committee gave out seven framed awards. They were:

* Certificate of Outstanding Service to WCB: David Edick
* Chapter That Thinks Outside of the Box in 2020 (a new award this year): United Blind of Spokane, accepted by Cindy Glidden
* Ammeter and Lieberg Outstanding Advocacy: Dorene Cornwell
* Business of the Year: Red Lobster, accepted by Christine Dailey
* One World: Loretta Petersen
* Teacher of the Year: Vivian Huschke
* Newsline Editor’s (selected by the Newsline committee): Julie Harlow’s article “My First AIRA Experience”

This year, five chapters received chapter growth certificates: United Blind of Walla Walla, United Blind of Spokane, Yakima Valley Council of the Blind, South Kitsap Council of the Blind, and Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind. These were sent to the chapter presidents. Congratulations to these chapters for finding ways to grow during these uncertain times.

The awards committee also gave out six WCB official service certificates to those whose terms had ended this year. They are Second Vice President Jeff Bishop; Secretary Frank Cuta; and Directors Hayley Agers, Reginald George, Heather Meares, and Lori Allison. We thank them all for their hard work and time in serving the WCB board.

## Committing to Committees by Julie Brannon

As you all know, the work within Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) is primarily accomplished through the activity of its many committees. We are a very busy organization; thus, we have available a plethora of committee choices, with truly a focus for almost any person’s interest, aptitude and skills. These committees cannot function, however, unless there are WCB members willing to connect and provide service to the organization.

Committee development for 2021 is upon us. Members for each committee need to be established by the end of January. WCB members are very much at different places in regard to committee involvement:

Perhaps you are new to the organization, and have not yet dipped your toe into the waters of committee involvement. This is the time to try one of them to see how it fits you.

Perhaps you already serve on a committee, and would like to stretch and try something else.

Or, perhaps you were involved in committee work in the past, and are ready to come back from your hiatus to serve again.

In talking with people regarding their WCB committee involvement, I’ve heard comments such as:

* It has been a great way for me to get connected with other WCB members. I’ve made friends just by working on a committee with others.
* It is a good feeling for me to stretch a bit, outside myself, and feel like I’m providing something to the organization.
* It has truly widened my horizons by delving into an area I wasn’t previously involved in or familiar with until serving on this committee.

I am listing the committees below, taken from bylaw 1. You will note that two new committees were added at this year’s business meeting: outreach and fundraising.

If you have questions about any of these committees and/or need contact information for a chair or vice chair, let me know. If you would like to serve on a particular committee, please advise me or the committee chair. Occasionally, certain committees are full, so it is recommended that you look at more than one committee option.

1. ADVOCACY

Addresses issues of discrimination and accessibility by investigating concerns raised by blind individuals.

1. AGING AND BLINDNESS

Works to improve the lives of senior citizens experiencing vision loss.   
   
C. AWARDS   
Administers the WCB annual awards program and the first-timers awards to both the ACB and WCB annual conventions.   
  
D. COMMUNICATIONS   
Manages and produces a unified, consistent message across WCB’s website, phone system, and listserv.

E. CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS   
Reviews and considers any and all amendments to the WCB constitution and bylaws, presenting the proposed slate at the annual convention. Unless withdrawn by the author, all proposed amendments must be passed out of committee to the floor with either a do pass, do not pass, or no recommendation. In addition, members also analyze the constitutions of proposed affiliates for consistency with the WCB constitution and bylaws.  
   
F. CONVENTION   
Makes all arrangements for the annual WCB state convention.   
   
G. CRISIS   
Administers WCB’s crisis program.   
  
H. WCB FAMILIES   
Addresses issues specific to families with blind or visually impaired members. Also, oversees any activities associated with students, from pre-K through high school.   
   
I. FINANCE   
Responsible for developing the annual budget, analyzing all grant requests received, monitoring WCB’s financial investments, and recommending changes in investment strategy when appropriate.  
  
J. FUNDRAISING   
Identifies and develops opportunities for WCB to raise funds, which may include grants, online fundraisers, or other initiatives.     
  
K. GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS   
Tracks and reports legislative and policy issues significant to the board and members of WCB. Also, works with legislative bodies to advocate for laws and regulations affecting citizens who are blind or visually impaired.   
  
L. HISTORY   
Preserves the history of WCB and that of the organizations which preceded it.   
  
M. LEADERSHIP   
Plans and conducts leadership programs that identify and foster potential future leaders, including but not limited to the WCB Leadership Seminar and the Leadership Institute.   
   
N. MEMBERSHIP   
Works to increase WCB membership by assisting new affiliates in getting started and providing support and consultation to existing ones.   
   
O. NEWSLINE   
Acts as the editorial body of the WCB newsletter, Newsline. All submitted articles are reviewed, processed, and may be edited if appropriate prior to publication and distribution to readers. With board concurrence, the committee may also establish policy surrounding Newsline.   
  
P. NOMINATING   
Recruits nominees, considers applications, and recommends nominees for election to the membership at the annual convention.

Q. OUTREACH  
Manages all external WCB outreach functions and will likewise assist other committees, local chapters, and special-interest affiliates with regard to such efforts, including: promoting our organization’s activities, programs, and initiatives; educating and sharing blindness information with the public; and using all manner of live events, social media, and public media to increase WCB’s general visibility.  
  
R. RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE   
Drafts new resolutions and reviews resolutions submitted by members.   
   
S. SCHOLARSHIP   
Administers the WCB scholarship program by processing applications, interviewing applicants, selecting the scholarship winners, and presenting these awards at the WCB state convention.   
  
T. WCB CARES   
Lets WCB members know that we, as an organization, are thinking of them, sharing in their joy and sorrow. Through telephone communication, personalized notes, or floral arrangements, we are never alone because WCB cares.  
  
Here’s to a great year of committee work in 2021.

## Hats Off Compiled by Rhonda Nelson

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

* Zandra Brown who, on Nov. 12, received her first guide dog, Odyssey, a female black lab from Guiding Eyes for the Blind.
* Ken Nelson, former WCB member, and my dad, who celebrated his 100th birthday in November.

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 up in 5-year increments (yearly after age 90)
* Marriage or wedding anniversaries 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 by Vivian Conger and Sheri Richardson

GDUWS held its annual business meeting virtually, in conjunction with the Washington Council of the Blind convention.

Andy Arvidson was elected vice president for a second term, Deb Cook Lewis was elected secretary, and J.R. Kinnison was selected to fill the director term vacated by Deb when she became secretary.

The membership approved two constitutional changes: Our monthly board meetings are now open to our membership, and the Marlaina Lieberg Memorial Scholarship has been opened up for any Washington state resident obtaining a guide dog. See below for more information.

The membership voted to amend our bylaws to add official language for the Marlaina Lieberg Memorial Scholarship Fund and to add the Scholarship Committee as a standing committee. That committee is chaired by Sheri Richardson, with members David Egan and Josette Kernaghan.

The Scholarship Committee recommended a change to the original eligibility guidelines, which stated that a scholarship recipient needed to be a GDUWS member. Based on that recommendation, the GDUWS membership voted to change the eligibility requirements by making the scholarship available to any Washington state resident or GDUWS member who is participating in a guide dog training program. The scholarship grant will remain $100 for the purpose of offsetting incidental guide dog training costs. We encourage you to apply for this scholarship. Let’s honor Marlaina Lieberg’s memory as we promote and participate in her dream program.

## Jefferson County Council of the Blind by Carl Jarvis

It's been a long nine months since Jefferson County Council of the

Blind (JCCB) enjoyed a face-to-face gathering. The good news is that we have had no member fall victim to the COVID-19 virus, and no report of any family members being infected.

The other good news is that we are continuing to stay in contact via email and telephone. We are going to establish a Zoom site soon and begin to hold virtual chapter meetings.

The bad news is that our meeting place has also been shuttered. The Road House Restaurant closed down until recently, and they have not reopened their large meeting room. But until a tested vaccine becomes available, JCCB members will need to continue sheltering. Our goal for the remainder of 2020 is to meet (virtually) with Reg George, and set up a JCCB Zoom account. We will see if Reg can accommodate President Nancy Villagran, Secretary Carl Jarvis, and Treasurer Cathy Jarvis, in a Zoom training session.

Meanwhile, we are suggesting to our members that we stay with our current officers until later in 2021.

Like so many organizations, JCCB is feeling its way into new experiences. We feel that it is critical for blind people in Jefferson County to have a source that can provide information, comfort and hope. For this reason, we look upon our present situation as an opportunity. Zoom may help us through these difficult times, but it might also become a part of our regular meetings, once the pandemic is over, connecting those members who are unable to leave their homes.

And so, with our hand on the tiller and our eye on the horizon, and taking a huge deep breath, we head into uncharted waters, full of bravado and just a little shaky in the knees.

## Pierce County Association of the Blind by Julie Harlow

We continued our Zoom meetings and had an average of 18 members attend every month. We had interesting guest speakers, such as a representative from Northwest Association of Blind Athletes. Thanks to David Edick and his great knowledge and perseverance, we did a podcast with a representative from the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center, on Medicare. He provided us a great amount of information to consider when making a choice on whether or not to change our Medicare plan. We are eternally grateful to those that have presented their information to our group, and keeping us apprised on happenings, even during this time.

We held our elections, and we are excited for our new president, David Edick, and our first vice president, Nathan Brannon. There are new members on our board of directors and we welcome them, as well. We thank our past president, Cathy Wilson, and our first vice president, Andy Bacon, for their dedicated service over the past four years. Cathy and Andy have led us through several projects, i.e. a new PCAB logo, brochures, volunteering our time at a local food bank, and many others.

We sadly are ending our year with the passing of a third dedicated member of our family, Arnold Kammeyer. This has been a difficult year to have lost such longtime and dedicated members, and their shoes will be hard to replace. Arnold, you will be missed, but never forgotten.

Two of our members have won awards at the 2020 Washington Council of the Blind conference. David Edick won an Outstanding Service Award, and Julie Harlow won best Newsline article award. Hats off to them.

## Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind by Andy Arvidson

Hello WCB from the SICCB. We are all looking forward to 2021. We hope your holidays were uneventful and enjoyable.

We are like other chapters, still working on updating our constitution, as we in the past eliminated the second vice president position and are now bringing it back. We believe in hope and prosperity. Out of the depths we can revitalize the leadership role in our chapter.

We brought in three new members. However, one is choosing to wait until we are able to meet inperson before joining. We have had a couple of other prospective members call and are reaching out to them. Our chapter is discussing working on outreach by contacting local nursing homes and assisted living centers and asking if they have residents who are in need of receiving friendly calls to overcome loneliness.

We also have a member that is looking at joining the local committee that deals with our transit system. She was interested previously, but the transportation did not work to get her to the meetings and home. As one positive of the pandemic, they will keep the meetings virtual after the restrictions are lifted, so she can attend without having to worry about traveling.

We are not a glum lot. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. Our executive committee met in person recently over lunch and discussed how we wanted to proceed with our meetings. You may be wondering how we managed to hold an executive meeting in person? Well, Colette and I have this 1,200- square-foot studio, and we set up tables to keep us at least six feet apart and held our meeting there.

The chapter had been meeting via conference call, then switching back and forth between that and Zoom. At our last meeting of the year, we made a decision to conduct all of our meetings virtually via Zoom for now.

## South King Council of the Blind by Gaylen Floy

South King Council of the Blind has been flying by the seat of our collective pants the past few months, and we have so much for which to be thankful.

Stephen Alexander Hamilton and Cyndy Godwin moved to Scotland on Nov. 15th. They expected to be in quarantine for two weeks. We miss them and hope to hear from them soon.

Our new interim treasurer is Terry Blankenship, of Tukwiia. We really appreciate his expertise and willingness to step in when Stephen left.

Shannon Curry, Danette Dixon and Jeanne Jacobs have been a huge help in keeping members connected by Zoom and phone.

Margaret Osten just got new hearing aids. Danette got a new computer. Kelsi Watson is back home after having home repairs. Gina and Gail Allen are thankful their home had minimal damage after the neighbor's home burned down. Julie Miller and husband Richard are driving back east to get a new guide dog. All members are full of vim and vinegar.

**South Kitsap Council of the Blind**  
**by Kim L. Moberg**

Since my last report, much has gone on in our chapter.

Members who were interested or involved in some way attended the virtual Washington Council of the Blind conference and convention. I do not know about others, but in some respects, I liked the virtual conference better. There was no driving involved and if you wanted, you could come to the conference in your PJ's. One of the convention highlights was that our chapter received a chapter growth award. Jessamyn Landby chaired the Awards Committee and I chaired the Scholarship Committee.

At our Thanksgiving meeting, we talked about what leftovers we would bring to share with one and all if it were a face-to-face meeting. We discussed favorite Thanksgivings from years past. It was a lot of fun. We also held elections. Carol Brame was elected to continue as our treasurer and Jessamyn Landby was elected as our new vice president. Congratulations to both of you. I want to thank Kevin Jones for his time and service as our vice president for the last two years. Kevin, you rock.

We had planned to have a little Christmas party face to face, but the governor's order put that on hold. When the time is right for us to gather in groups once again, we will have an in-person Christmas party. It is great that we have a way to connect by phone and computer, but I, along with everyone else, long for the day when we can all be together again. Besides, if we go on much longer, I think our chapter hug lady is going to forget her job. You see, Pat Whitlow is the person in charge of HUGS. Once you get a hug from Pat, you are then rewarded with a small bit of wrapped candy.

We continue to work on fundraising and plan to start working on ideas for the coming year, so stay tuned.

## Spokane Council of the Blind by Debby Clark

Here in the Spokane area we are celebrating things past and things to be thankful for. Our Spokane Council of the Blind meetings are what you could still call unique. We can celebrate that, right?

The September meeting was a conference call, and we changed the name of our chapter to Spokane Council of the Blind.

October saw us meeting in person at a restaurant, the Golden Corral. It was very well done, and the food was really quite good. Alco Canfield took on the daunting reading of our new bylaws. We passed all the changes. It was a very good meeting.

Our plan was to have our November meeting there, as well. But sometimes the best laid plans do not occur. We ended up on a conference call again, so that was how we did our elections. We had a pretty good plan for voting but did not need it. Cindy Glidden was elected by acclamation for secretary, and Danielle Maher-Jack by acclamation for vice president. We are pleased to have them both.

Seems like we need something to shake us up out of our ruts. This has definitely been a year for the shaking ups.

I cannot exactly tell you where our next meeting will be or what it will look like. You would be welcome wherever that is. Check in with us on the WCB list if you have any questions. Usually our meeting is on the third Monday of the month.

## United Blind of Tri-Cities in Action by Frank Cuta

With the pandemic still out of control here in the Tri-Cities, we have been sheltering in place but staying busy at home listening to ACB radio, talking books, listening to the radio reading service, and calling out a lot for food delivery.

The virus activity ebbs and flows. And when it ebbs, we get together in small groups for walking or playing cards. However, lately most of our activity has been online where we carry on our monthly chapter meeting, our book group discussion and our local tech group meeting.

In October, we accepted a motion to forgo annual elections this year and just keep the existing officers for another year. In November, our program speaker was Shanna from Vanda Pharmacy talking about non-24. We had a great open discussion about the Washington Council of the Blind convention, and everyone thought that it was great.

## United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares

The air is crisp and chilly, we are hunkered down for the winter, and trying to stay active as a chapter. Instead of our usual holiday gathering, we celebrated virtually, sharing stories and memories with each other. Our elections were held for the 2021 year ahead, and we continue to stay focused on the issues that matter most to us.

We hope the new year will bring new members, more connections in our community, and excitement for the future. We wish you all the same in these times where it is difficult to stay hopeful that someday we will be able to meet in person again. We also would like to challenge you to not only support your local members, but to reach out to other chapters around the state. Wishing you all a warm and Happy New Year.

## Washington Council of the Blind Diabetics by Danette Dixon

It is hard to believe that one year ago I put out an email to the Washington Council of the Blind list to see if it made sense to have a special interest affiliate involving diabetes. Now here we are one year later. It took a bit to get started with all the expectations from WCB, but we did it. I am very excited and encouraged about how far WCBD has come in 2020, and I am looking forward to making plans and goals for what we can and will do in the future.

We have a conference call on the second Monday of each month that anyone may attend, and there is a Facebook page, as well. For more information, please email wcb.wcbd@gmail.com.

I try to have a speaker every other month. In November, we had a diabetic educator talk about diabetes and nutrition. In September, we had Dawn from “Angel Eyes Fitness and Nutrition” talk about diabetes and exercise.

Some of us are also involved with American Council of the Blind Diabetics in Action (ACBDA). They are doing a Tupperware fundraiser now. Some goals I have for next year are to raise our membership, create a fun fundraiser, and name two members to our board of directors. Eventually, I would like WCBD to be a part of the National organization ACBDA.

## Yakima Valley Council of the Blind by Lisa George

YAKITY YAK FROM YAKIMA

New Year’s greetings to everyone across the state from all the members of Yakima Valley Council of the Blind.

After a nail-biting election last October, we are happy to announce our YVCB leadership team for 2021. Tristen Breitenfeldt is our new president, Reg George continues as vice president, Howard Underwood maintains his position as treasurer, and Lisa George remains secretary. Our new board director is Amy Lauri Hildersheim.

We are happy to report that our fundraising activity for 2020 has proven to be a success, even with the obstacles thrown our way by COVID-19. We sold enough Papa Murphy’s Peel-A-Deal cards to recoup the initial investment and make a 200% profit by the end of December, and we still have plenty of cards to continue our fundraising this year. We recommend this activity to any chapter, especially as Papa Murphy’s doesn’t require 501(c)(3) status, just registration as a nonprofit. Ask Tristen or Lisa for more details.

Our wishes for you this year: stay safe, stay warm, and stay positive. Fingers crossed that 2021 will be the year our virtual hugs will morph into reality.

# 2020 WCB In Memoriam

**Lori Allison**, Pierce County Association of the Blind (PCAB), Washington Council of the Blind board director

**Dorothy Carroll**, Spokane Council of the Blind

**Berl Colley**, Capital City Council of the Blind

**Barbara Crowley**, United Blind of Whatcom County (UBWC)

**Shirley Gray**, King County Chapter

**Jim Hollis**, former member of Peninsula Council of the Blind (PCB)

**Joanne Hunter**, PCB

**Juanita Johnson**, PCB

**Mildred Johnson**, PCAB

**Arnold Kammeyer**, PCAB

**Diane Kirscheman**, UBWC

**Beverly Lewis**, PCB

**Vince Locati**, United Blind of Walla Walla

**Joan Lord**, former member of United Blind of Seattle

## 2021 WCB Calendar of Deadlines and Events

For more details on events listed, please subscribe to the wcb-l list or call 800-255-1147. On Saturdays at 10 a.m., join the WCB coffee and conversation Zoom call.

List of Abbreviations:

DSB Department of Services for the Blind

WASILC Washington State Independent Living Council

WCB Washington Council of the Blind

WSSB Washington State School for the Blind

WTBBL Washington Talking Book & Braille Library

**JANUARY**

**11** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**13** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting at 7:30 p.m.

**17** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

**21** – WASILC meeting Zoom call from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**25** – President’s call at 7 p.m.

**27** – WCB Committee leaders call at 7 p.m.

**FEBRUARY**

**1** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**6** – WTBBL Patron Advisory Council call from 9 a.m. to noon

**6** – WCB Board Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m.

**8** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**21** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

**22** – President’s call at 7 p.m.

**28** – Deadline to submit articles for the WCB Newsline Spring 2021 issue

**MARCH**

**8** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**12** – DSB State Rehab Council meeting from 9 a.m. to noon

**12** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting

**21** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

**22** – President’s call at 7 p.m.

**24** – WTBBL Book Club call at 2 p.m.

**24** – WCB Committee leaders call at 7 p.m.

**APRIL**

**5** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**12** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**15-16** – WASILC meeting, Seattle

**18** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

**26** – President’s call at 7 p.m.

**30 through May 2** – WCB Emerging Leaders Summit and WCB Board Meeting, Crowne Plaza SeaTac

**Washington Council of the Blind**

is honored to recognize donors who have made a difference

THANK YOU!

**2020 Convention**

**Main Level:** The Aistear Group at Morgan Stanley

**Titanium Level:** Andy Arvidson and Sheri Richardson

**Steel Level:** Anonymous, Julie Brannon, Gaylen Floy, JR Kinnison and Kat Woofter in honor of PCB, Rhonda Nelson, Northwest Access Fund, and Darryl Roberts

**Iron Level:** Michael Alvarez, Maria Buczynska, Rita Dilek, Danette Dixon, Michael Edwards, Cindy Hollis, Byron Kaczmarski, Holly Kaczmarski, Beth Marsau, John Ross, and Stuart Russell

**Copper Level:** Anonymous (3), Colette Arvidson, William Belina, Dorene Cornwell, Michelle Denzer, Darlene Hilling, Zack Hurtz, and Yvonne Thomas-Miller

# Live Auction Items & Door Prizes

8Greens, Hayley Agers, Anacortes Soo Bahk Do, Big Foot Music, Keri Bishop, Anne Hardy Biswell, Julie Brannon, Brighton, Alco Canfield, Doubletree Hotel SeaTac, Hayley Edick, Fred Meyer, Lisa and Reg George, Cindy Glidden, Guide Dog Users of Washington State, Irie-AT Inc., Josette Kernaghan, Dan Lovell, Heather Meares, Peninsula Council of the Blind, Pierce County Association of the Blind, Marilee Richards, Pam Schwindt, Seattle Mariners, Snohomish County Council of the Blind, South King Council of the Blind, Leslie Spoone, Swinomish Casino & Lodge, Trader Joe’s, United Blind of Tri-Cities, United Blind of Walla Walla, United Blind of Whatcom County, Valdemar Estates, Vision for Independence Center, WCB Diabetics, members of WCB Families Committee, and Yakima Valley Council of the Blind

**Additional Contributions**

Day Out for the Blind of Spokane

South Kitsap Council of the Blind (designated for scholarships)

Everett Central Lions Club (designated for WCB Families Committee)

**Anonymous contributions through various programs**

ACB Monthly Monetary Support Program, AmazonSmiles, Benevity Fund, Network for Good, United Way of King County, and PayPal Giving Fund

# 2021 WCB OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

**Julie Brannon**, Puyallup

First Vice President

**Meka White**, Federal Way

Second Vice President

**Andy Arvidson**, Anacortes

Secretary

**Alco Canfield**, Spokane

Treasurer

**Lisa George**, Yakima

Immediate Past President

**Denise Colley**, Olympia

Board Directors

**Hayley Agers**, Marysville

**Nathan Brannon**, Puyallup

**Frank Cuta**, Benton City

**Reg George**, Yakima

**Heather Meares**, Walla Walla

**Sheri Richardson**, Seattle