



**WASHINGTON
COUNCIL
OF THE BLIND**

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Founded 1935

WCB NEWSLINE

Summer 2022 Edition

“Whiskers & Wags, Tails & Scales, Feathers & Fins”

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Checks made payable to **Washington Council of the Blind** may be mailed to the attention of our treasurer, Lisa George, at PO Box 675, Yakima, WA 98907-0675. Call us toll-free at 800-255-1147 or visit our website for more information at <http://www.WCBinfo.org>.

***** Calling All Members**

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

Please send all submissions by August 31. Digital cartridges should also be returned by this date.

***** 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 content or 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:**

theWCBNewsline@gmail.com

The WCB Newsline is available in large print, digital audio cartridge, and email versions, and may also be accessed through the WCB website.

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President's Message

by Julie Brannon

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It feels a bit like déjà vu from last April when I contracted COVID. At that time, I had many Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) persons to thank for their assistance, and now I'm coming to you again to thank profusely the work of our WCB officers, board members and members for not only fulfilling, along with their own duties, obligations of mine.

As most of you know, I broke my shoulder in mid-January with subsequent joint replacement and a fairly long rehabilitative process. Thank you!

Below are some accomplishments that have taken place since the writing of my last article for the Winter Newsline edition.

Membership Data Base Completed: Lisa George finished compiling the database membership information and submitted it to the American Council of the Blind (ACB) in a timely manner. We have 394 certified members, down from 434 last year. The Membership Committee has been tasked with contacting people who didn't rejoin to find out why.

Give Big has been completed: It was an unprecedented fundraising opportunity for WCB participating chapters. Due to the generosity of Rodman and Williams foundations, matching funds were available dollar for dollar over \$50. By midnight of May 4, total donations were just shy of \$17,000. Thirteen chapters participated.

The ACB Leadership Conference: Held March 11-15, this included meetings for affiliate presidents, and informational and legislative meetings for everyone. Representatives and senators were contacted and made aware of our legislative priorities. Commendations go to the Governmental Affairs Committee and everyone with and without leadership experience who participated and made it another successful year.

Upcoming 2022 ACB Hybrid Convention: Washington is back on the map this year, in that out of five national winners of the ACB JP Morgan Chase Leadership Fellows, two of our very own, Judy Brown and Danette Dixon, were chosen as winners for their leadership skills and potential. Two first-

timers from WCB will also be attending this year's hybrid ACB convention in person. They are Jeanne Jacobs, (from her selection in 2020,) and Marilee Richards, (selected this year). As of this writing, it looks like we have 18 WCB members attending the convention in person; I don't yet have a count for virtual attendees. Frank Cuta, Denise Colley, and I again served as an ACB convention posse, sharing with the seven chapters who requested convention information. We plan to do the same before our WCB convention.

A big thanks and a new appointment: Joleen Ferguson deserves a huge WCB appreciation for her years of service as the appointed member serving for WCB on the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) board. Her first round was from January 1999 through June 2001. She was re-appointed to serve as WCB's representative from March 2015 to present. Below is a short bio Joleen sent to the school with her re-appointment:

“Joleen Ferguson (a life-long Washington resident) made first acquaintance with WSSB as a kindergarten prospective student August 1951. She graduated from WSSB on June 4, 1964, and went to college the following September. After three years at Bellingham, she transferred to the University of Washington to pursue her goal of becoming a physical therapist. Upon completion of her college experience, she began a career as a PT at what is now Providence St. Mary Medical Center and worked there until her retirement after 35 years. Since 2004, she has been active with volunteer work in the community and at her church. This will be the second time she has represented WCB as an ex-officio member of the WSSB board. The first was about 15 years ago.”

As president, I am charged with appointing a new WCB representative to the WSSB board. I have appointed board member Kim Moberg. Kim attended a residential school as a student and has a degree in teaching. She will begin her service at the September board meeting. I have no doubt she will represent us well.

Thank you, Joleen, and all the best in this role, Kim. As always, busy and active times for WCB!

Letter From the Editors

Greetings and Salutations,

The Newslite Committee is excited and pleased to announce our new partnership with the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL), which will now be producing our audio format of the WCB Newslite. As you may have noticed, our spring issue was produced by WTBBL on a trial basis to determine whether it would be feasible for both parties. The answer is an enthusiastic yes! This is the beginning of a new era for us, and we are honored to be able to offer our readers the highest quality, professional audio recordings from the award-winning WTBBL, and we are eager to broaden our distribution even more in the near future. If you are an audio subscriber, you will still return your cartridges with the label provided. We are looking forward to working with Danielle Miller and her incredible staff, and to hearing your feedback and any questions you may have.

Now it's time to curl up with your favorite furry friend, and hear the tales of wagging tails, flapping feathers, and the feel of tickling whiskers as they casually stroll by, hoping for a little attention. Warning: There may be talking animals, so be sure to keep your translators close and your treats ready. If you are lucky, you may even find one wearing a tuxedo. Did you know that a group of wild rabbits is called a fluffle? There aren't actually any in this issue, but it's just too great of a word to leave out.

We are happy to introduce a new series by Marilee Richards, "It's a Dog's Life," which follows her journey to her first guide dog and beyond. Be sure to check it out.

If this is all a bit too much for you, and you're just not into animals, no worries. We have some great articles for you, too, including a brand new column from Beth Greenberg called, "Sporting Spotlight," some great tech articles, an Eagle Scout ceremony, wild facts about Washington, and so much more. So hop on down this crazy rabbit hole and enjoy.

Your faithful editors,

Lady H. Featherington and Sir Squawks-a-lot

It's Your Newsline ... Just Say It! **by Reginald George**

This is the place to express your thoughts, voice your valued opinions of our articles, inspire us with your grandest ideas, and share your honest concerns as we continue to evolve our publication into the Newsline you can't wait to read.

Thanks to all who take the time to read this issue and vote in our Readers' Choice contest. The top four articles at the end of the year will compete for our annual Readers' Choice Award. Participation has been down a little, so if you want us to keep Readers' Choice alive, just read and vote.

Your favorite article, by a nose, from the spring issue is Hayley Ager's "I Choose Joy."

The deadline to cast your vote for the best article of the summer is Aug. 31. Send all votes and submissions to TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com.

This time, we have one of the most extensive Hats Off ever. Don't miss it. As we continue to celebrate our Newsline 50th anniversary year, we wish to recognize and thank our authors. We do this work through the gift of your writing and ongoing support. Please share it with a friend.

There is new engaging content on our podcast, "WCB Newsline Unleashed." You can find it at the following link, or ask your phone or smart speaker to play it: <https://tinyurl.com/et6en8md>. The latest episode is, "Sentero: An Interview with the Inventor, Livu Babitz," by Zack Hurtz.

Reader Feedback

Janice Squires: "My nomination for the best Newsline article is, 'I Choose Joy,' by Hayley Agers. It brought joy to my heart and a tear to my eye. As a blind mother of two beautiful daughters, I could totally relate to Hayley's thoughts and how she reacted to her situation. So many times I had those very same feelings and sentiments."

Frank Cuta: "My choice for best article in the spring issue is 'Do Everything, Authentically, With Passion, and Without Fear,' by Heather Meares.

However, as a person who is a bit OCD, you have me tearing out my hair. Am I to choose the most thoughtful piece, the most heartfelt contribution, the one that gives me the most useful information, or the one that is just the most creative? There is just too much excellent material in each issue, and I do not feel that picking out just one for recognition is authentic or meaningful.”

The Editor Responds: “You might be making it too complicated. We have our Editors’ Choice Award to recognize the best writing of the year. Your vote alone may not affect the overall result, but when it is combined with others, it gives us an idea about what direction we should be moving. We continue to strive in all areas, but particularly to bring in more youth content, and current issues affecting our community.”

Carl Jarvis: “WCB is a true gem, but too often we keep it hidden like a pearl tucked inside an oyster. I remember back in 1965, when I was attending the Rehab Center at 3411 S. Alaska St., an older man joined in the discussion among the students.

“‘What’s that pin you’re wearing?’ said one of the partially sighted students. ‘Oh that,’ he said, looking down at his lapel, ‘that’s a white cane pin. It’s an organization I belong to.’ It was almost a year later before I learned about the WSAB, and joined the King County White Cane Association. And there at my first meeting, sat the same man. He never thought to talk to us about the value of belonging to the WSAB. We don’t need to be pushy about it, but we should be proud enough, as members, that we would be willing to offer the opportunity of belonging to others.”

Note: Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not reflect those of Newslite staff or Washington Council of the Blind.

FEATURES

Cheshire Cat Interviews #16

Who Gives a Hoot?

by Heather Meares

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Sometimes, on a hot summer evening, I quite enjoy sitting on my back porch. The air is heavy and quiet, and I can hear all the gentle sounds of the night in my very own backyard. It was on one such night that I heard a Great Horned Owl not that far from me. All was still and silent, except for his call, “Hoo hoo, hoo, hoo, hoot.” I felt his eyes upon me, watching me with intrigue, as he assessed whether I was up for a conversation. Indeed, I was.

He said, “I see you have some new ducks.”

“Well, yes I do, Sparkles, Luna, and Star. How did you know they are new?”

“I’ve been watching you for quite some time now. I know everything that happens in this neighborhood, but your yard is particularly fascinating to me. You have provided such an interesting habitat here. I can honestly say there aren’t many like it. I wondered if you might tell me a bit more about it. Most people have such manicured lawns and use lots of chemicals to kill the weeds and what they consider pests. There seems to be an abundance of both here, which by the way, I appreciate greatly.”

I replied, “I’m glad you do, but I honestly can’t say I feel the same way about the weeds, ants, spiders, and occasional mice.”

“Oh, those are my favorites! I help you out with those, don’t you worry about that.”

I thought for a moment, and then said, “I really do love all the wildlife that visits me here. I may not be able to see them, but I am very aware of their presence. I, too, have been observing you for a while now, and all the creatures who have felt safe and welcome in my yard. I frequently hear the hummingbirds clicking to each other in the trees. I was astonished one night

when one buzzed right next to my face as I sat on my patio. He didn't even seem to mind that I was merely a foot away from him, as he drank from the feeder hanging in one of my giant pots."

The owl hopped a little with glee and said, "Hoo hoo! That was Jerry, he's a hoot. His buddies dared him to do that and, of course, he's always up for anything."

This made me smile as I remembered how beautiful that moment was to me. I recalled asking myself if it was really happening, and being amazed that yes, it definitely was.

Then the owl said, "I'm Oliver, and I hear you are the Night Pixie."

I answered, "Not many know that, but yes, I am. That's a story for another day. Most just know me as Heather."

"Ah yes, named after the wild Heather of the moors I presume? Anyhoo, I know you, no matter what your name is. I've been watching you care for your chickens and am impressed by some of the methods you've come up with. Those girls are a handful, and I know they will never forget the way you saved their lives last year in the extreme heat. Many others in your neighborhood did not survive."

I said, "That was a pretty traumatic experience for us all. I almost lost Ruby, and had to hold her in front of an air conditioner for almost an hour to bring her back. It was about 115 degrees that day, and after bringing them bags of ice multiple times a day, using an air conditioner, and shade cloths, all to no avail, I finally just brought them into my guest bathroom. Yes, you heard me right. They stayed there four days, until it was safe to get them back outside and create a cooler coop environment for them. I have raised those girls since they were one day old and was not about to lose them."

Oliver said, "I love that little Ruby. She makes me sing Ruby-dooie-doo! She is such a firecracker. I remember seeing her run around with half an eggshell on her head like a bonnet when she was young. Punk Rock Chicken told me you have an agreement with them. Something about eggs and friendship?"

Heather: “That’s correct, I promised them the day they came to my home that my chickens would always be for eggs and friendship only. What I didn’t realize at the time was how many friends I would make because of the eggs.”

Oliver: “Each of them has a role in the flock. I’ve noticed Phoebe is a protector and could probably be a linebacker if she wanted a football career. Penelopeep is definitely the guardian of all things egg related, Clarabelle and Cleopatra are inseparable besties and fashionistas and, of course, Punker runs the whole crew with a quiet yet firm lady-in-charge manner. Ruby is her secondhand-hen and sunshine committee, always making sure everyone is happy. She is quite the diplomat.”

I replied, “They help me out, as well. One day, as winter was ending, I went to check on them and do my normal routine of feeding and cleaning, and I found a large pile of eggs right in front of the door as I opened it. They don’t lay eggs in the winter, and the nesting areas are in a loft. Somehow they knew I was unaware they had started laying again, so they moved every single egg down to the door where they knew I would find them. This amazed me and filled me with joy and pride. Can you believe that?”

Oliver said, “Of course I can. Birds are extremely intelligent, even if I do say so myself! And I also have to say that dog of yours is quite the Barky-barkerton, but he is good at herding the chickens and defending his territory from potential predators. He takes his job very seriously.”

One of the girls chimed in, Penelopeep, “We call him the Chicken Sheriff! Sometimes after a long, hard day he is our bartender, as well. We love Arturo. He cheers us on when we lay our eggs, and sings with the sirens, even in his sleep.”

Oliver said, “Good evening, Lady Peep. Shouldn’t you be sleeping right now? Always a pleasure to be graced with your company.”

Peep winks and says, “Hello Ollie. The pleasure is all mine. You know I’m a bit of a rule-breaker. I enjoy the night life around here, and it’s good to get some time to myself while the others are sleeping their little fluffy butts away. Have you seen the dragonflies lately? They are exquisite. They’re so fun to watch, and they really like the clawfoot tubs full of water. That new

duck, Sparkles, thinks it's her own private bathing pond, but I know for a fact that many others use it, day and night.”

Oliver is amused and says, “Hoo, Hoo, Hooee, lady! Do I detect a bit of jealousy? Don't get your feathers ruffled. You know there is room for us all, and you will always be the most beautiful redhead I've ever seen. Those ducks are already helping fertilize and mow this yard, and you also know there are worms enough for all here. Don't forget the words of our favorite praying mantis, Philippe Verde, ‘Stay gentle, be kind to all, and help each other out.’ I only see him every once in a while, but that dude is so wise.”

I reflected on these words of wisdom and said, “I have one last question for you, Oliver. Do we have bats?”

Oliver flapped his wings, and as he flew off into the night, I heard him echoing back to me, “Abso loo hoo hoot lee! Say hello to the cat with the bowtie in the window. Good night all.”

York: Guide First; Dog Always!

by Ron Brooks

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Ron Brooks is a long-time member of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), a former member and chairperson of the ACB Board of Publications, and a resident of Phoenix, AZ. In this article, Ron introduces his new guide York and shares some of his perspectives on living and traveling with a highly energetic young guide dog who is clearly destined for greatness – and lots of baths.



Left: Ron with York in Times Square

When I was a little boy, I told some big stories – almost none of them true. Now that I’m more than a half century in, I’ve got a whole treasure trove of stories I can share, and aside from a little embellishment that is as much a part of good storytelling as the characters and the plot, my tales are largely true -- at least mostly. Add in a 26-year-and-counting marriage, three kids almost all grown, a 30-year career in public transit, having lived in eight or nine states (I’m losing count), a fair amount of travel and doing all that as a blind guy, and you can only imagine the variety of little vignettes I could cook up to

suit just about any occasion and purpose. And here’s a pro tip. If you’re reading this right now, you’ve got your own set of stories to tell, and your collection is just as expansive and engaging as mine is. But this is my story, so here goes.

I’ve been living and working with guide dogs for 34 years, and guide dogs represent an unparalleled opportunity for anyone who can work a harness while spinning yarns. My current guide dog, a freshly minted Seeing Eye Dog named York, has already gifted me with more stories than I can reasonably shove into my Facebook feed without running off my friends, so I decided to share a few here, just for fun.

Quintessentially Lab

When she was about seven, my elder daughter, who is now an adult and on her own, created a lovely picture that hung on our refrigerator for years. We named it “Labs Eat; Shepherds Dine,” which is an old adage referring to the stereotypical behaviors of Labrador Retrievers and German Shepherds at mealtime. The picture presents two images side-by-side. One side shows a German Shepherd sitting at a well-set table with napkin, silverware in its place, a crystal goblet of red wine and a plate of fine food. The other side depicts a banquet of chaos. Two Labs (one black and the other yellow) are gobbling pizza from an overturned table with the tablecloth down, dishes

smashed, furniture overturned and askew. The dogs portrayed in my daughter's picture were active or retired guides living in our home at the time, and while the images were exaggerated, the way each dog approached mealtime was not.

And York got the memo. As a 3-year-old, 75-lb. Yellow Labrador with an active lifestyle, York gets two large meals per day – two cups of food at each setting, and he has never taken more than 30 seconds to gobble, slurp, and swallow his way to the bottom of his bowl. I know; I've timed him.

Not only that, but we have a pet dog, a little 57-lb. stray our younger daughter rescued from the alley, named Daisy. Daisy is picky and will often forego a meal or nosh a little before walking away from her bowl. But there are no second chances at our house. If we forget to pick up her food before York rolls in, it's gone in 10 or 15 seconds, depending on how much she left untouched. In fact, even if the bowl is completely empty, York will do a quick quality-control check to make sure no kibbles have been left by accident. He'll even check his own handiwork – two or three times is not unusual.

Brimming with Exuberance

York's zest for life is not limited to his joyous and short-lived reunions with his bowl. He loves absolutely everything there is to love about every minute of every day on planet Earth.

Each morning, York is up early, banging his tail on anything not fast enough to get out of the way, occasionally leaping on unsuspecting people, me included, and charging through our house like Sherman through Georgia. When we work, York does so with zeal and often a wagging tail. And when the day is done and York is relieved of his harness, he will often leap on me, roll around on the floor, chase a toy or just run in circles for a few minutes. Even a stressful day is not enough to dampen York's general happiness. He simply rolls around and chomps on a toy for however long it takes to relax after a hard day's work.

Age of Aquarius

York's birthday is Feb. 8, which makes him an Aquarius, and although Aquarius is actually an air sign, York is all about the wet stuff. I understood this upon reading notes from York's puppy raisers; now I'm living it.

My first inkling of just how much York loves water came earlier this spring. When not on the road, I work from home. On this particular day, the kids were in school, and my wife and I were enjoying a quiet lunch break at our dining room table. I had just let York outside into our walled backyard to take a nature break. Things were quiet and calm until I heard some strange noises. At first, I heard loud sharp splashes, and then I heard what sounded like waves rolling ashore. But we live in Phoenix. It's a hot late spring day, and none of these noises make any sense at all. And then it hit me. About twice per month during the warm season, our local water management district turns on spigots and allows residents to temporarily flood their yards. This is an efficient way to deliver water to the thirsty yards and trees in Phoenix, but the schedule varies a bit from month to month, and I never remember exactly which days are irrigation days. But York knows, and on this day, I found him leaping into the six-inch-deep puddles (aka the splashing noises) and wallowing across the entirety of the yard (aka the sound of rolling waves). After laughing for a minute, I realized that the worst was yet to come. Phoenix is in the middle of a desert, which means sandy soil and lots of dust, and when you combine sandy soil, dust, water, and a joyous Lab, you get the need for an immediate bath. And although York may love water in general, baths are not high on his list of priorities. Meanwhile, I learned a valuable lesson: enter the schedule for flood irrigation into my calendar and walk the dog on those days.

York's love of water goes beyond backyard wallows. As the summer began heating up, York began looking for opportunities to cool off. At home, this might be lying on the cool tile under a whirring ceiling fan or drinking an extra pan of water. When we're out taking a walk, this means diving sideways into any yard where sprinklers are in operation. I was surprised the first time York pulled this trick. It was a hot Saturday morning and we were on our way to do some grocery shopping. York was wearing boots to protect his paws from the hot pavement. I was carrying his bowl and water and giving him breaks to take drinks along the way, but this was not enough. Toward the end of the trip, York suddenly veered into a grassy lawn next to a bank. It's an area I had used for relieving previous guides just prior to entering a shopping complex with limited options for nature breaks, so I figured he must be smelling the past sins of others. But his actions were bizarre. Instead of getting situated to relieve himself, York dropped onto the ground, harness and all, and began rolling around and snorting.

Then I heard it: a hissing rattling noise. I froze. This is the desert, and even in Phoenix, rattlesnakes are a remote but real possibility. So here I stand, with my dog convulsing on the ground and a hissing filling my ears, and I'm thinking, "OMG it's coming for me next!"

And then it hits me – I mean the water, it hits me. The hissing rattling noise is an aggressive sprinkler, and York is not convulsing so much as rolling around in very wet grass, cooling off and enjoying himself immensely. I was so relieved that I started laughing, and I just let him wallow for a minute. I'm sure he was the only soaking wet dog in the Biltmore Plaza Safeway on a 95-degree morning in June, but that's York, ever the character.

Since that first time, York has continued seeking sprinklers, but I am on to him, which means he is getting fewer soakings while working, and I am much less nervous about hissing rattlesnakes crossing our path.

New Timetables and Changing Perceptions

Before coming home with York in October 2021, I had been traveling with a cane for about three years. I was (and remain) a pretty good cane traveler, quick and confident, and comfortable going to most places, and over my time swinging cane, I got used to how long it took to walk to various places in my neighborhood. Once I got home with York, my mental timetables had to be recalibrated. The 18-minute walk to Walgreens became 12 minutes. The 20-minute walk to Starbucks was now about 13. Not only that, but things began sounding different, as well. When approaching a major street with a cane, I would hear the cross traffic sounding far away. Then, after 30 seconds or a minute of walking, I would notice that it sounded a little louder. A little more walking, and a little more volume, until we reached the intersection. But with York, my perceptions are completely different. Traffic that is next to me and going my way seems to be going a bit slower, and traffic heading in the opposite direction is flying by. Meanwhile when we are approaching a crossing street, the distant traffic noises get continuously louder and louder as we approach; there are no gaps in my perception. It's weird, but it almost feels like I can visualize us moving on a map showing the surface of the city, the state, or the world, and as a lover of maps, I find this to be a really cool thing to imagine.

But What About the Work?

I have a joyous, food-gobbling, fun-loving Lab who loves to go really, really fast, and I'm really happy with everything about this dog. However, the best part of York is his training and the quality of his work. In the nine months that we have been matched, York has learned an incredible amount of information about how to guide in every imaginable environment – from quiet residential streets with no sidewalks, to busy downtown streets congested with people, to complex indoor spaces like airports and shopping malls. He has been cross country several times, attended blindness organization conferences, transit industry trade shows and too many meetings to count. He has learned how to curl up under airline seats and on buses and trains, and he has accompanied me as a secret rider on at least two different paratransit services that operate in communities where we do not live. He has learned to follow people in stores and restaurants on command, and even though he loves food in all its forms, he is well-mannered in restaurants.

York is still learning, and he is far from perfect. Nevertheless, he has gained a level of professionalism that is hard to imagine when he's rolling around in the backyard or leaping onto my chest and waving his long tongue around trying to lick my hands before I have time to move them. And this is my favorite aspect of York's character. He is 110% dog, and he is 110%



working dog, and he is in love with all of it and gives all of himself to whatever is happening. And at the end of each day, he drops into his bed and sleeps the sleep of the innocent, because he has earned it. And when my alarm goes off, he's ready to do it all again, with as much joy and acceptance as ever.

Over the years, many people have asked me questions about my relationships with my guide dogs, presumably so they could better understand a bond that is hard to explain. I routinely got questions like: "Is he your best friend?" "Does your dog ever get to just be a dog?" And the

one that is almost uncomfortable: “How long have the two of you been together?”, as though we’re married.

Here’s the thing. For me, the bond between my guides and me is almost impossible to explain to anyone who has not worked with a guide dog or some other type of service animal. I think the best words I can come up with are “teamwork” and “interdependence.” York’s skills as a guide and my orientation and mobility skills allow us to travel almost anywhere with speed and safety. That’s the teamwork. The interdependence comes from the unique contributions we make to each other. Put simply, York gives me his work, his loyalty and his love, and I give him care and purpose, and a way to constructively use all that energy and enthusiasm he brings to every minute of his life. It’s a beautiful exchange, and I believe we are both better for having made it.

The Tail of York’s Introduction

I’ll close with one final thought. Our society is curtailing some of the ease with which people can travel with service animals. Airlines now require extra paperwork, and anyone who has left home with a guide dog has probably experienced a denial of service from a taxi, Uber or Lyft driver. And some people are thinking about giving up on the use of guide dogs as a result. I think this is understandable and very tragic. For me, guide dogs like York increase independence, simplify travel and make life a lot more interesting and fun. With that in mind, I have two pieces of advice.

First, organizations like WCB and ACB need to be more aggressive in advocating for the preservation of the rights of guide dog handlers. The issues right now are too important to leave guide dog user groups fighting their own fights.

Second, if you like dogs and believe that a guide dog would enhance your life, then don’t lose heart. Find a guide dog training program that meets your needs and go meet that dog who will transform your life, keep you safe, and make you smile and laugh and carry a towel for drying off from encounters with the lawn sprinklers in your neighborhood.

Washington State's Most Haunting Bird

by Loretta Pedersen

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From 2015 to 2017, I spent several weeks each growing season doing graduate research fieldwork at a magical place. That place is the unusual prairie at Glacial Heritage Preserve, which is located southwest of Littlerock, WA. Littlerock is a small farming town south of Olympia. Its main street features the tiniest post office I have ever encountered. The town also has a gas station, a drive-through espresso booth, a saloon, and an old-school diner where you can order cinnamon rolls the size of a human head.

Beyond this little town center, you will find patches of forest and farm fields. Keep driving past the outskirts until you reach a big Weyerhaeuser sapling farm on the right and the entrance to Glacial Heritage Preserve on the left. The dirt roads into Glacial Heritage will take you past a few more farmhouses, one of which proudly displays a Confederate flag in a window. Keep following the dirt roads, which, like a NASCAR track, seem to make endless left turns, and you will eventually arrive at a heavy iron gate and a sign informing you that the gently undulating grassland on the other side is the property of Thurston County.

If you happen to be an approved researcher or a Center for Natural Lands Management employee, then you will have a key to the gate and can let yourself in. Should you happen to forget your key, do not leave your car outside the gate while you go work at your research site for the day, lest the bored teenagers of Littlerock smash your car windows and steal all items from your vehicle, including your dirty fieldwork clothes and your used lip balm. I once learned this the hard way.

Most people are surprised to discover that prairies exist west of the Cascades, where dense forests are the most common habitat type. Even I-5 corridor residents rarely stumble upon these grasslands because Puget Sound prairies are an endangered ecosystem. Land managers have estimated that less than 3% of the original Puget Sound prairieland remains.

These prairies, which were originally created by the geological forces of glacial outwash and then maintained by indigenous peoples' burning, have been overtaken since the 19th century by agriculture, development, and encroaching forests. Indigenous people once burned the prairies because they relied on several prairie plant species for food, such as the camas plant, which has an edible, potato-like bulb. Occasional burning prevented Douglas fir seedlings from converting the prairie to forest.

The Glacial Heritage prairie has unusual terrain. Its expanse is dotted with a geological feature called Mima mounds, which I would estimate are between 10 and 20 feet wide on average, and perhaps three to five feet tall. Although the occasional Garry oak tree grows among the mounds, the prairie is mostly treeless, and is home to many rare plant and animal species. At intervals across the prairie, the Center for Natural Lands Management employees have erected poles with bird and bat houses, or with platforms for osprey nests. These employees also use prescribed burning to mimic the land-management techniques once used by indigenous people.

As a researcher, I was there to study the chemical ecology of the golden paintbrush wildflower. Other researchers focused on endangered insects and animals. One of my lab mates studied the endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, while other scientists studied a bird called the streaked horned lark, which nests in open grasslands. Still other researchers were the champions of the simultaneously cute and ugly pocket gophers. On Prairie Appreciation Day, the one day of the year that Glacial Heritage is open to the public, each of these special organisms gets its own informational booth, and the public is invited to walk around the prairie and learn about the rare plants and critters.

I sometimes spent up to 12 hours a day collecting leaf samples at Glacial Heritage. Usually, I was the only person there, which gave me an almost unnerving amount of time with the sounds of the prairie and the thoughts in my own head. The only human sounds I occasionally heard would be a Weyerhaeuser truck in the distance or a small airplane flying overhead. Sometimes I also heard shots from the gun club that is northeast of Glacial Heritage Preserve. Otherwise, it was just the sound of the wind, the cry of an osprey, or the popping of lupine seeds bursting from their mature seed pods. In the mornings, I found solace in these gentle natural sounds, but by afternoon, I would start getting the heebie-jeebies and would have to listen

to a podcast on headphones to keep myself from feeling too eerily alone.

On days when I finished my work early, I spent some time walking the unpaved roads that meander through the prairie. These roads are littered with fist-sized glacial outwash stones, so a pair of thick-soled boots is a must. It was on these walks that I discovered Washington's most haunting bird, which can sometimes be heard in the Douglas fir forest at the prairie's edge.

This bird actually spends part of its time each year in forests all across North America, but for me it is a Washington bird, for I have only encountered it in Washington. It is the Swainson's thrush, and it sends its beautiful, trilling call through the trees in the sweetest, most melancholy way. Sometimes others of its kind echo it from deeper within the forest. At Glacial Heritage Preserve, it seems to be luring those who walk the prairie's edge into the forests with its siren song, which you can hear for yourself on **[The Cornell Lab's All About Birds website](#)**.

The Swainson's thrush can also be heard sometimes in the larger forested parks of King and Snohomish counties. I am no ornithologist, but I am convinced it is Washington's most haunting bird.

Mr. Tuxedo
by **Dorene Cornwell**
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Mr. Tuxedo is not the cat's real name, but in the age of internet verification questions, even one's childhood cat has to have an internet name. Plus, the name sort of fits the tumultuous life of a feline artiste.

Possibly Unusual Origins

Mr. Tuxedo was a typical tuxedo cat, all black except for a white bib and four white paws. Mr. Tuxedo's mother belonged to our neighbors, Bill and Marty. Bill and Marty had two upstairs bedrooms, but I am pretty sure they only slept in one. The layout of their house paralleled ours, two of three

houses built on South Main Street in what, at the time, was the small town of Gunnison, CO.

The Seduction

Bill and Marty had a fenced yard. My parents had turned one of three attics in our house into a playroom that looked down into Bill and Marty's yard. Bill and Marty's cat had kittens. My younger sister especially fell in love with the kittens. I was already a sophisticated first-grader and did not have nearly as much time for falling in love with kittens as my sister did.

The Conquest

It was not going to be a slam dunk that a kitten would come live with us. My mother grew up on a farm, and except for one white cat at a time, cats did not live indoors. Mom was afraid of spraying and "messes." She was afraid of the work a cat would require. She probably was not ready to rely on three young kids to handle cat care. My sister pleaded and pleaded, and finally, Mr. Tuxedo came to live with us.

Very Modest Circumstances

Mr. Tuxedo was assigned a sleeping space with old, slightly ragged terrycloth towels on the floor of the kitchen pantry, under the lowest shelf. I do not remember too many kitten adventures, but there must have been some. I definitely remember that only paper ornaments and other unbreakable decorations ever got hung on the lowest branches of our Christmas trees.

Even More Ostentatious Attire and Toddler Ballroom Dancing

Mr. Tuxedo and my sister bonded deeply. Mr. Tuxedo looked perfectly fabulous in his natural attire, but he tolerated being dressed in doll clothes and hauled around in my sister's doll buggy. He let my sister dance around holding his front paws and expecting him to work his back legs. He granted me no such intimacies. In case I wasn't old enough to figure out on my own not to try anything so intrusive, he had no qualms about making opinions known with a few scratches.

The Lure of Nature

Mr. Tuxedo was always an indoor/outdoor cat, even though we lived on S. Main Street, which was less fraught with dangers than it would be today. One summer, someone in the city thought it would be lovely to have trout in the irrigation ditches that ran along the curbs. There was a lumberyard a couple of blocks south of us. I am pretty sure Mr. Tuxedo roamed at least as far as the lumberyard. One cold winter night, he even brought home a baby skunk, one of those awkward interspecies communications moments where the cat wants the human joyously to receive a gift, or maybe to learn to hunt it, and the human, um, really doesn't.

The Lord of the House

Mr. Tuxedo was never allowed upstairs where our bedrooms were, but he was definitely allowed on the living room couch. He was not shy about wanting to exercise this privilege. One time, the director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir came to town to do a workshop at the college where my dad taught music. This distinguished musician came to our house for some kind of a reception and happened to sit in what Mr. Tuxedo considered his spot on the couch. At one point, Mr. Tuxedo strode into the room with all the self-possession that great conductors display on their way to the podium. The great conductor was gracious enough that he probably would have moved over, but for his insolence, Mr. Tuxedo got summarily banished to the pantry for the rest of the evening.

The Lunch Menu

Our neighbors on the other side were a somewhat older couple. A daughter with some kind of disability, and a grandson somewhat older than me, lived with them. Neighborly relations did okay when there were flowers to talk about, but the household always seemed stressed. One of their great pleasures was a hummingbird feeder. Even in the coldest winter days, the red liquid drew birds, or as Mr. Tuxedo viewed things, lunch.

A Tragic and Agonizing Death

Mr. Tuxedo's appetite and hunting prowess did not exactly help neighborly relations, and probably contributed to Mr. Tuxedo's shortened lifespan and agonizing death of suspected poisoning. Sometimes, though, a life has to be celebrated for what was, rather than what wasn't. Mr. Tuxedo probably would have had to go live somewhere else anyway, because he left this world the summer my family moved to Montana.

Never Ducks His Duty

by Marilee Richards

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As a young teen, I was never able to have pets due to my mother's allergies. That left my siblings and me without pets. In 1965, we got a pet duck named Donald. He was so well known in our part of the city that he made the Everett Herald.

When we first brought Donald home, he stayed in the backyard. Ducks are good at getting rid of slugs, and he did a great job. Our yard was slug-free. He soon moved into the front yard and introduced himself to others. His first new friend was the milkman from Waltz's Milk House who came to the neighborhood several days a week. The article states that Donald escorted the milkman from home to home in the neighborhood, delivering milk.

He made friends with all the neighborhood, as he continued his slug-eating ventures at each home. Soon, Donald discovered he could stop traffic by just squatting in front of cars. He was now the neighborhood "cop."

His patrol work began in earnest. Then, he started escorting the youngsters up to the elementary school playground. He waddled between the children's legs, untying their shoelaces, so they had to stop at each intersection. Forget problems with pesky dogs. If they were a problem, he would nip at the dog's tail and off they would run.

All the neighbors enjoyed Donald. My father explained that, as strange as it sounded, this was indeed true. But he found it most ridiculous when my mom would lean out the car window and exclaim in a pathetic voice, "Donald, please come home." And he did.

We also had a duck named George, but he was not as well-known as Donald. Though most of you have dogs, cats, farm animals, and many other such pets, I doubt many of them made the local paper. I have kept this article because it gives me great joy and many memories whenever I find a need to travel down memory lane.

Love and Lessons from Penny

by Debby Phillips

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Our house was always full of neighbor kids, kids my mom was babysitting, and animals. We mostly had dogs, and I would pet them but I did not have to care for them. I also had a bunny that someone gave me, but my little brother let it out of its cage one too many times and he hopped away. I had a parakeet named Tweedy, but again my brother let it out of its cage and it flew away. The dogs mostly paid attention to my brothers because they would run and play with them. So, it was a shock to my whole family when, at the end of my sophomore year in high school, I said I was bringing home a pet. It was really a shock when they saw what I was bringing home.

Penny was a black and white lab rat. At the end of the school year, they were looking for someone to take Penny. I said I'd take her. My brothers and I found a small cage in the garage from some long-ago pet, and I got it ready as best I knew how. I spread newspapers on the bottom of the cage, and then on the inside of the cage where Penny would live. The first night, I had no rat food so I gave her lettuce, until the next day when my mom and I could go shopping to get rat food. We also got a bowl to put her food in and a water bowl. By the time the bowls were placed inside, there wasn't much room for Penny to run around in, but she didn't seem to care. She was just terrified.

Penny huddled in the corner of her cage, shaking. I stood there, hands on hips, thinking about how I was going to take care of a rat that was terrified of me. Then I remembered a book I had read a few years before called "Silver Chief." It was about a half-Husky half-wolf that was befriended by a Mountie in Canada. I thought about how he had held food out to the dog. Patiently day by day the policeman and the dog began to trust each other. So I put

some rat food in my hand. At first, Penny stayed huddled in her corner. I spoke softly to her, telling her that I wanted to be friends, that I loved her, and that I would not hurt her. When she did not respond, I put the food in her bowl and left her in my bedroom. The next day I tried again. Eventually, she sniffed my fingers. My heart was beating wildly and I was so excited but dared not show it for fear of making her afraid of me. Finally, I was able to actually pet Penny. Then one day I picked her up. She urinated on my hand, but I knew it was only because she was afraid. I did not scold her because I did not want her to be afraid of me again. She was so small and she had the usual long slick tail that rats were known to have.

My mother hated Penny. Mom said that her slick tail gave her the creeps. She didn't really want me to keep Penny, but my dad befriended her, and he would walk around the house with Penny on his shoulder. Penny would also cuddle inside my shirt when I let her out of her cage.

June flowed into July, and I got a job picking corn for my friend's dad. One morning, my brother brought me a cage that he had found at a nearby garage sale. He brought it to the cornfield to show me. It was a much bigger cage, so he helped me get it ready. It was then that Penny really began to "show her stuff." She would run around the cage and tear the newspaper and move it until it was just the way she wanted it. She actually made a tunnel so that she could run through it. Rats are nocturnal, so while I was drifting off to sleep at night she would be playing on her wheel and running in and out, or making a new tunnel. When I would walk into the room, even if it was in the middle of the day and she was sleeping, she would respond. She would be at the door ready for my pets, and ready for me to pick her up. I would lay on my back on my bed and let her run around inside my shirt. Her little feet tickled and I'd burst out laughing. The first time, my mom threw open my door thinking maybe I had lost my mind or something. She turned away in disgust. But my dad was amused.

It was my responsibility to clean her cage, which wasn't a great job, but it had to be done. I know now that they do not recommend using newspapers for rat cages, but back then that is what was used.

Rats don't have a long life, and gradually I noticed that Penny was getting older. She didn't hear me as well when I called her name, and she spent a lot more time sleeping. I was busier, too, as it was my senior year in high

school, and I was involved in plenty of other activities. I still found time to pet her and hold her and, of course, made sure she had food and water and that her cage was clean.

Thanksgiving came, and we went to visit relatives in California. I made sure Penny had plenty of food and water before we left and told her goodbye, promising that I'd be back, but that I had to go away for a few days. We had a nice visit with relatives and were making our way back to our home in Medford, OR. As we were leaving the California/Oregon border we were talking about our dogs and our plans for the upcoming week.

My youngest brother, deciding that I hadn't had my share of torment for the day said, "Yup, I bet Penny will be dead when we get home, deader than a doornail." In typical older sister fashion, I punched him, but he only laughed and repeated his prophecy.

We got to the house and carried things inside. When I was free to begin doing what I wanted to do, I went into my bedroom and called Penny's name. No response. My heart froze. I did not want this to be true. I called her name again, only this time very loudly. Still no response. I rushed to her cage and opened the door. She lay there, cold and stiff. I had never touched a dead body of any sort before. Her cold, stiff body just laid there. No little squeak of greeting, no jumping to my shoulder.

I let out a shriek, "Penny's dead!" My parents and brothers and some younger cousins came running. I stood there, tears pouring out of my eyes. I will never forget that cold, stiff, dead being. Penny, whose friendship and trust I had earned, whose funny little personality had amused me, but who had chewed one of my dresses to pieces because it was on my dresser too close to her cage. My Penny was gone.

My dad told my brothers that they needed to help me bury her. I think Patrick felt badly that he had made such remarks about my Penny, so he and my brother Johnny went out into the backyard and dug a hole. My mom found a shoebox, I wrapped her in an old towel, and put her little body into the box. I told my brothers and younger cousins that we were going to have a funeral. It surprises me even now when I think about it. They didn't argue, they just acquiesced. So I said a little prayer and sang "How Great Thou Art" and said goodbye to my Penny, my best friend. Whoever would have

thought that a little black and white rat could be such a big part of a teenaged girl's life? As I wrote this, I cried a little inside, and told God how grateful I had been for the experience of loving and being loved by a small animal.

What did I learn? That I could take care of another living being, that my brothers actually really felt badly when Penny died, and that my parents supported my fledgling effort to learn about caring. As I get ready to go feed Nova, my beautiful Lab Seeing Eye® dog, I realize that I learned to love animals because of my Penny, and I'll give Nova an extra hug tonight.

A Blossom to Remember

by Alco Canfield

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Blossom came into my life on June 8, 2022. Her original name when I adopted her was Posey, but I changed it. Blossom was the perfect name for her because when she lived with me, she changed from this timid, cowering creature into a perfect, lovable cat.

She was a Flame Point Siamese but didn't have that unpleasant meow so characteristic of that breed.

It took her about two weeks to come out of her hiding place. We started snuggling on the carpet. Gradually, she would sit on my lap.

After a few couch scratches, she became the perfect cat, always using the scratching post. I never had to worry about her knocking things off the counters. She always used the litter box.

She was quite territorial, however, hissing and growling when she heard a cat outside.

Blossom loved going outdoors, but usually she just sat under my neighbor's porch or in the front or back yard of my house.

At night, she would hop on the treadmill on her way to my bed, and then she would snuggle close after her usual grooming. This started happening about six months ago. Before, she was too timid to do that.

When Blossom was really happy, she drooled. I never had a cat do that before. Her purr was barely audible.

On Thursday, May 19, she went out for her usual trip but never returned. This had happened a year ago so I didn't worry at first. However, she appears to be permanently gone. Not knowing what happened is worse than knowing. Did a coyote get her or did she find a better place to live?

I gave all her information to the local animal shelter and placed a notice on our neighborhood website.

So, Blossom, I wish you the best wherever you may be. I really miss you. You so blessed my life. Farewell.

Things I Choose to Remember

by Steve Pierce

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It has been more than a year since our precious Ruby left us after a tender, wonderful relationship of 15½ years. My wife and I adopted Ruby when she was one, after she endured her first year in a home for troubled youth. For the rest of her life, this tan and brown, shorthaired miniature Dachshund endured no troubles or mistreatment – from youth or anyone else. We made sure of that.



Left: Ruby, at her post by the window.

The pain of remembering Ruby, especially her final day from kidney failure, is heartbreaking and sometimes more than we can bear. We want to honor and remember her but, when we do, we break into tears as our minds go to our final, painful goodbye.

A friend recently shared some helpful wisdom. In a nutshell, he said: You can choose what you remember. I want to remember the best times, the fun times, the loving times, the humorous times – not Ruby’s final moments of life.

So, I CHOOSE to remember the day we went to a home with many Dachshunds and saw Ruby break free from the pack, stand on her hind legs at my wife’s feet and, with her front legs pawing at the air, say in dog language: “Get me out of here. Take me home. I choose you!”

I CHOOSE to remember how our precious Ruby would wag her tail so joyously at our arrival, even if we’d been gone only 10 minutes, that her rear end looked like it could become disjointed from her body.

I CHOOSE to remember how Ruby was such a homebody that, come walk time, she would plant her feet and refuse to leave the porch, causing me to carry her the first block to where she no longer could see our house and want to go back.

I CHOOSE to remember how Ruby gave us unexpected and profound respect for any living thing – so much so that now, instead of mindlessly swatting spiders, flies or ants in our house, we attempt to catch and release them outside.

I CHOOSE to remember how our Dachshund, an instinctive burrower, would climb under the bed covers at night, wedge her 12-pound body into the curvature at my waist, and make her little “snort” of satisfaction.

I CHOOSE to remember how we would talk – mostly in questions – to a dog who couldn’t answer. “Ruby, do you want some food?” “Ruby, do you want to go outside and go potty?” “Ruby, do you want to go with us?” Not surprisingly, Ruby answered in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

I CHOOSE to remember how our little barker would park herself on a chair by our windows and yap at anything outside that moved, and how we accepted the noise as her way of expressing herself.

And, finally, I CHOOSE to remember how Ruby, with her tiny legs, long nose, and beautiful eyes, captured our hearts from the moment she propped

on her hind legs and begged us to take her home. There is no doubt Ruby chose us, and we now choose to remember the best of our 15½ years together.



P.S. – With the recent death of my wife’s father, we became cat parents by adopting his sweet cat, Crystal, who provides the animal presence we need in our home and our lives.

Left: Crystal, our beautiful Calico cat.

Wise Woofs from a Senior Dog Guide by Impala, with Sheri Richardson, Contributor sherir938@gmail.com

I’m sure you all know that we canines have not yet learned to type, so my human partner, Sheri, has agreed to type this story for me. I hope all you human readers learn a thing or two and be sure to share it with your canine partners so they can woof along with you.



For those of you who don’t know me, I am Impala from the Seeing Eye. I am almost 10 years old, and I have spent most of my adult life with my human partner, Sheri. She says I’m her sixth Seeing Eye partner, and I guess that must be true because she also tells me I’m the best dog in the world, and I know that’s true.

Above: Sheri and Impala at Gibbs Garden

But it hasn’t always been easy being the best, or even being a Seeing Eye dog, for that matter. I struggled hard in my puppy days to be perfect because I sometimes had a hard time figuring out what perfect meant. There were too many humans telling me how to behave and, just as I would get it right for someone, that person would go away and I’d have a new teacher. The humans didn’t seem to understand that I needed time to know and trust them to become the perfect dog I always knew I could be. Those

were really tough days. I was very sad sometimes, even though I'm usually a very happy and loving dog.

One day, not long after my second birthday, everything changed. I didn't know what to expect, but I could tell everybody was super excited that morning. Can you imagine how disappointed I was when I discovered I was getting a bath? I hate getting baths. My fur is long and silky, and humans just can't imagine how uncomfortable a bath is for me. Nevertheless, I could still tell everybody was more excited than usual, so I couldn't help but feel some excitement myself. After my bath, and brushing, and all that stuff, I was walked up to the main school where all the humans stayed and taken to one of the rooms. When my teacher opened the door, I saw a very happy-looking woman sitting inside. Somehow, I just knew this was going to be the human I would spend the rest of my life with. Even though I'm usually a very quiet and self-controlled dog, I let out a happy yelp, jumped in the woman's lap, and gave her a kiss. From that moment on, I have focused all my energy and will on our partnership.

In the beginning, it wasn't always easy, though. Sometimes I saw my recent teacher and kind of had a momentary lapse, because I thought I should pay more attention to her than to my new partner. Other times, those silly squirrels and birds were just more than I could stand, and I just had to try to chase them. Then there was my first airplane ride. That was so scary for me, but Sheri didn't seem too worried, so I did my best to hide my own fear. I still hate those airplane rides, by the way, but I have to admit I love getting on planes because there are always a multitude of tasty crumbs to keep me busy. I just pretend I'm in a tasty restaurant until the darn thing starts vibrating and making so much noise. I've been on so many planes with Sheri, though, that I've learned to tolerate them, and I do a great job of hiding my fear (I really hope she doesn't know I'm trembling).

When our time was done at the school, we both went to Sheri's house, a long way from the school. That's when I met a nice guy and Max. Turns out Max was Sheri's partner before me, and I guess she loved him, too. I guess he was all right, but I thought he was pretty spoiled, and he sometimes made me feel unsure about which of us was really Sheri's partner. In fact, I think Sheri sometimes felt confused, too. After all, Max already knew all about her routine and routes and what she expected, and I didn't really know any of that. At first, I was so overly eager to please her and prove my

guiding abilities that I walked too fast, and pulled too hard, and didn't always listen to her commands, and I think the first few months were hard for both of us. The one thing we both knew was that our partnership had to work, so we finally started listening to each other and learning to communicate better. At least that's what I let Sheri think. In reality, she finally started listening to me and learning how to communicate better with me. For example, I finally taught her that gentle requests or reprimands worked a lot better with me than harsher ones. Maybe Max and her other dogs were just more difficult, but my number one desire has always been to be the perfect partner with Sheri. Once she finally got that figured out, and I finally relaxed a little, we started being an amazing team.

Now it has been almost eight years, so I think I now qualify as a senior Seeing Eye dog. In fact, I think I'll be eligible for my retirement benefits pretty soon. I think Sheri thought I already was, but we finally got to travel again this spring, and boy did I prove her wrong. I was just bored before. I get tired of the same old route every day, even if it is a nice one down by Lake Washington. (Of course, if I could chase those ducks ...) Well, anyway, I need variety and challenge because I'm really smart and I like to prove it. I like to see people smile at me and my partner as we stroll through an airport, or down a sidewalk. Most of all, I like knowing I'm doing my job perfectly. But maybe I'll learn to like retired life someday. Maybe they'll finally let me chase one of those silly squirrels.

The Queen of Siam

by Holly Turri

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Yes, you geography gurus, today the country in my title is called Thailand, and that is a great thing. Siam just looks so much better, especially if we are discussing cats.

When I was six years old, I received a gorgeous, part-Siamese kitten from my Aunt Virginia. She had short, coal-black fur and green eyes. Some folks said she was gorgeous. Others felt she was creepy.

How Fluff got her name is quite a story. A short-haired, sleek kitty shouldn't be called that, but I was a recently graduated kindergartner. What can I say? At the time, I made mom constantly read a book to me called "Poor Fluff the Lost Kitten." I might not be correct about the name. It was shaped like a cat and had fake fur on its front. One day, it got lost. This may not have been accidental, as I think the poor reader may have had her last nerve stretched.

When I was in first grade, my darling had three kittens who went to friends. This experience inspired my first writing attempt. The drama of kitty birth was featured in the Oriole, which was the school magazine from the Maryland School for the Blind.

After that, Fluff had the alteration operation. Many folks thought this was cruel. We were taking her reproductive rights away from her. Our philosophy was that it was cruel for unwanted strays to be running around and starving to death.

For 16 years, Fluff was queen of the block. After dark, she'd sashay down the middle of the street with at least eight boy cats following behind her. No one ever dared to fight with her. They just lusted from afar.

When I was a college senior, Fluff's kidneys failed. She had the shot from which there is no return. After making that decision, I was devastated. Unfortunately, I had a paper due the next day, and I wasn't finished. Why is it that others can successfully procrastinate? With my heart in my throat, I went to the sociology class. After the lecture, Dr. Edelstein asked me to remain behind. In his deep voice and thick Brooklyn accent he growled, "Why don't I see your paper? This isn't like you." Now, this gentleman was one tough cookie. Before attending college, he was part of the gang culture in his neighborhood. That's another story for some different time. Scared as a deer in the headlights, I told him the truth. Suddenly, this scary guy began crying hard. He hugged me and told me that during the past weekend, his dog, which he'd loved for some large number of years, had been struck by a car. "Nobody understands this," he choked out. Well, I started booing and hooing, too.

Finally, he said, "You were honest. Take your time and get it to me in the next week."

Well, believing that work is the best healer, I finished the darned thing and at the next class, handed it in.

By the way, I have no idea what grade I received. For sure, it wasn't an "A." He didn't give those out very frequently. Besides, I was late.

Thanks, Fluff. From the eternal kitty playground, your magic saved my bacon. Whoops, that's another animal...

Whiskers or Wags, My Guide Cat?

by Andy Arvidson

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Kenzie, my current guide dog from Guide Dogs for the Blind, thinks she is a cat. She wiggles around my legs and slides under my leg when I am sitting on a chair and my knee is away from the edge of the chair. She is quite the lover.

When I am trying to get ready for a shower, she starts wiggling and does figure eights around my knees until she has enough. It seems to make her day. When I am sitting where she cannot get under my thigh, she rubs back and forth against my knees. While recovering from my surgery for a total knee replacement, she took it easy on me. She must have known that I had an injury and was careful. While I was walking to and from physical therapy, she walked slower than she did prior to my surgery. But, now that my visits to the physical therapist are almost over, she seems to be getting busier and more active.

Now in the morning when waking up, she likes to rub her face against the back of my knee. If she rubbed any harder, it could cause a buckle in the knee and make me stumble, but it is a nice feeling to know that she is doing it out of love and passion.

Kenzie is a small, 48-lb. Black Labrador female, and very cute. I asked for an ugly dog, but they didn't have one. The reason I asked for an ugly one

was in hopes that people would be less apt to want to pet her. She is so adorable that I get compliments constantly. People ask me all the time questions like, “Is she in training? Are you training her? Is she a puppy?”

I always have to explain that she was trained at Guide Dogs for the Blind in Oregon, and that they do not train guide dogs in Anacortes. We have summit dogs, but they do not train dogs that work as guides; they are assistance dogs – more outreach and advocacy.

When I reach out and put her on tie-down, she gives me a simple little kiss on the cheek and makes me melt. Kenzie likes to go on short walks, like a mile or six, which we have done. Our walks are normally a mile or two. After we get home from our walk, she wiggles all over with excitement and glee.

When asked if Kenzie is a puppy, I always smile because she will be 4 years old July 27, but she still moves like a puppy, or should I say a kitten with a new piece of yarn to play with.

Do Possum Hearts Glow in the Dark?

by Frank Cuta

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The North American possum is a semi-arboreal nocturnal Marsupial. He is something of a nomad and a furry recluse that will eat just about anything. However, our subject today is Awesome Possum, who is definitely not the standard model.

It is true that Awesome likes to play in the trees, regularly stays up until the wee hours, travels great distances just for a little fun, and consumes food and drink to excess. However, his eating habits are a little more refined than the average possum, and his social behavior is definitely not reclusive.

Certainly, you might catch him early in the morning sitting alone on his porch swing, deeply focused on his iPhone and a cup of java. But that very same evening, Awesome will be dancing and screaming, swinging and sparkling, as he pounds the keys of the piano with his rocking animal band. Our possum likes to live life to the fullest. His welcoming cheerful presence

encourages others to feel more alert, alive, and excited. Easygoing and fun to be around, he knows instinctively how to put people at ease and make it all work out.

At work, Awesome throws himself into the job – probing, puzzling, testing, and training – providing technical assistance to all of the friends and clients who depend on his awesome wealth of technical knowledge and sheer animal energy. With his years of computer experience, an observant and curious nature, and skilled paws, the possum continues to compete at the top level of his profession.

Although normally docile around humans, Awesome's primitive animal drives sometimes surface momentarily when he is tearing out the guts of an uncooperative machine, and you might hear a few low menacing growls. We have never caught him hanging from his tail, but we do suspect that he sometimes “plays possum” when asked to take out the garbage.

Awesome's mouth is filled with a large number of very sharp teeth, which are not normally visible – until he smells discrimination or injustice. Then, this mild-mannered Marsupial is transformed into a mighty rodent of steel. Although he is a fearless, uncompromising advocate and a natural leader, Awesome has always eschewed power. A true servant-leader, the possum always seems to manage to put service above status. He is basically a “people possum.”

Our possum is a talented musician, and just as with his advocacy and technical skills, he generously shares his music with anyone and everyone. He sings of a joy to discover, of a curiosity to understand, and of a hunger to reach out. We love his engagement and spirit. What he feels is what he is and does.

Do possum hearts glow in the dark? We think this one probably does.

To hear more about a real arboreal adventure with our possum, click on the following link: “WCB Newsline Unleashed: Learning to Fly”

<https://tinyurl.com/AwesomeLearnsToFly>

LIFESTYLE

Book Chat, Summer 2022 **Animals and books, a great combination** by Alan Bentson, Readers' Advisor, a.bentson@comcast.net

I've always enjoyed books about animals and have read quite a few. When I was a kid, I didn't have much choice. I think in children's literature, there are as many books with animals as main characters as books with kids as the protagonist. One purpose of children's literature is to teach life lessons, and the conventional wisdom seems to be that kids will find the lessons easier to digest if they are learned by animals. Thus, there are many stories about mice who are worried about the first day of school, and bunnies who are being bullied, etc. And, of course, many of the great children's classics such as "Wind in the Willows," "Bambi," and "Winnie-the-Pooh," involve animals.

I remember when the exciting change to books on 16 RPM records came. One of the first ones I received was "Friends to Man: The Wonderful World of Animals," edited by Frances Cavana (no longer available in special media). This was a wide-ranging anthology of fiction and non-fiction about animals drawn from children's and adult books. I really got the idea of how much literature about animals there really is, but also got ideas for lots of other books to read.

My favorite book about a dog is "Rover's Tales," (db48015) by Michael Z. Lewin. Lewin is a tough guy detective story writer, and Rover is like Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, an independent dog without any human connections who encounters the world in a number of short stories. His wisecracking observations on human and canine behavior may be a bit cynical for some, but the writing in this book is concise and very to the point, and Ray Hagen's narration is spot on.

My favorite cat book is "Tailchaser's Song," (db47092) by Tad Williams, narrated by Gary Tipton. Williams is a fantasy author, and this is a young adult fantasy novel about a young cat, Fritti Tailchaser, on an epic heroic quest to find his love, who has fallen into the hands of an arch fiend. As is usual in this kind of book, our hero comes of age, finds out a lot about

himself, gains many trustworthy allies, and does rescue the lady cat. The ending is unexpected, as Tailchaser decides not to pursue the life of a human-owned pet.

Another great book about a cat is “Thomasina, the Cat Who Thought She was God,” (db61582) by Paul Gallico. This is an adult book published in 1957, featuring a little girl, her embittered veterinarian father, and a cat who was a goddess in an Egyptian temple in a previous life. Great characters, a dramatic plot, lovely descriptions of Scottish scenery, and Corrie James, the narrator, does the accents just right. Also a well-known Disney movie.

My favorite book about a horse is “Smoky the Cow Horse,” (db23452) by Will James. James was a cowboy who became a writer, who published many nonfiction and fiction books about the cowboy life. This title won the Newbery Award in 1927, and I think it holds up really well. It tells the story of the long and varied career of Smoky and the use and abuse he was subject to by humankind. Told in cowboy vernacular, the story is especially good about his early training and the great skill and intelligence it took to be a cowboy’s horse on a ranch, and the great tenderness and patience it takes to train a horse properly. James knew all about “the horse whisperer” before the concept was trendy. This is a sentimental favorite of mine, as I read it in third grade. Alas, the BARD edition is read by Phil Regensdorf, who does not do this book justice compared to the original recording by the great Milton Metz. New readers might want to try this book on bookshare for a less intrusive narration.

Animal books have long been a staple of the NLS collection. Those wishing to find more can simply go to BARD and type in “animals” or “animal stories” to find a wealth of fiction and nonfiction on all reading levels about the animals we share the world with. Keep on reading!

It’s A Dog’s Life Chapter one: The Beginning
by Marilee Richards
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How often have you heard people say, “It’s a dog’s life?” We each have our own vision of what that means to us. I, on the other hand, have not been an

animal owner, so I have none. I made sure the kids had food for their animals, but they were responsible for their care.

I have always been visually impaired and thought everyone saw the same as I do. I was in my mid-thirties when I returned to school to obtain my BA degree. My vision has become much worse over the past couple of years. I am now legally blind and have been using a white cane for about five years.

But to get back to “It’s a dog’s life” again. I am now in the process of applying for a guide dog, and they do not live a “dog’s life.” The life of a guide dog is in constant motion and demand to serve their owner. They are at work when they are harnessed. They should not be spoken to, played with or otherwise interrupted unless they are off the harness. I have been told by puppy raisers that at least I won’t have to change old habits due to owning a dog earlier in life.

The process of receiving a guide dog begins with filling out an application. After a few weeks, you will get an email setting up an appointment to begin the first steps. I connected next with Karen Clay, who filled out even more information. Contact with my personal care provider, eye specialist, and my counselor was the subsequent process. Following that step came an interview with Charles. An appointment was arranged to do a walk about in my neighborhood to measure my walking speed and gait.

This last adventure, walking with a dog harness (minus the dog), was an eye-opening venture for me. Here I learned how much was involved to motivate Jerico to lead me. They need praise all the time and direction from you to move forward with them. However, on the other hand, you must trust them implicitly. I always marveled at the trust a baby has with his parent, but this level between owner and dog is equal in courage and trust. I am excited about this next chapter in my life and pleased to have a companion soon.

Let’s see what kind of dog’s life my new friend will lead with me by his/her at my side.

This will be an ongoing series. I will submit articles as my journey to my first dog moves forward. Depending on the outcome, I will share about my on-site training experience, and the subsequent follow-up. Stand by as I share all with you.

Lots of Reasons to be Wild about Washington State

by Tom Uniack
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Washington state may be only the 42nd state admitted into the United States of America on Nov. 11, 1889, but that does not tell the story of what a special place it is. Not by a long shot.

Overall, many people will claim their state is the best, from New York to California to Texas. However, according to U.S. News and World Report, Washington state ranked No. 1 in the nation in 2021 as the best place to live based on 70 different metrics, including health care, education, economy, and natural environment. Even more remarkable is the fact that it is the first state to claim the top spot two years in a row.

Washington's low-carbon, hydropower-based energy system and secondary education system continue to rank among the nation's best, and the state's economy was the fastest growing in the nation in 2021. The University of Washington boasts a computer science program ranked sixth in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, fueling the highest concentration of jobs in science, technology, engineering and math at companies like Boeing, Microsoft, and Amazon. The Federal Communications Commission records show 100% of the state is served by broadband internet – the best in the nation.

Washington ranks No. 1 in a number of categories, especially in agriculture. The evergreen state ranks first in the nation in the production of Rainier cherries, Concord and Niagara grapes, and spearmint oil. Washington singlehandedly provides more than 90% of all raspberries, about 70% of all apples, and 50% of all pears in the United States. For beer lovers, 75% of all hops in the country come from the fertile soils of the Yakima Valley alone. Drink to that.

Our state boasts the largest ferry system, with 22 vessels and 20 ports of call, from Tacoma to Port Townsend to the San Juan Islands. In 2022, a

Yelp survey ranked the Space Needle as the second most photographed location in the country.

However, perhaps what Washington is best known and loved for is its access to wild outdoor places for residents and visitors alike. The Quinault Valley, part of the temperate rainforest on the remote Olympic Peninsula, is home to some of the largest trees in the world, some more than 1,000 years old. This unique valley is home to the world's largest Sitka Spruce, which is 191 ft. tall and boasts a 17 ft. diameter trunk, and the world's largest red cedar, which is 78 ft. tall and has a 20 ft. diameter base.

Our state is home to three premiere national parks – Rainier, North Cascades and Olympic. Olympic ranked 8th of all national parks in visitation in 2019. Mount Rainier is the fifth-highest peak in the U.S. outside of Alaska, measuring 14,417 feet in elevation. Our mountains, forests and waters also provide significant recreation and economic value. The Outdoor Industry Association reports that there are 114,000 direct jobs generating \$10.3 billion from outdoor recreation.

So many wild places contribute to the quality of life we all enjoy here in Washington state. That is why groups like Washington Wild have been working hard for more than 40 years to make sure we protect our wild lands and waters so we can pass on a natural legacy to future generations. Perhaps the most impressive statistic about the evergreen state relates to how many acres have been protected as wilderness – the highest level of protection for national parks, forest and other federal lands.

Consider this: Of the 25 most populous cities in the U.S., Seattle ranks No. 1 with the most federally protected wilderness acres within a 100-mile radius. A total of 3.6 million acres of protected wilderness in the North Cascades and Olympic Peninsula surrounds Seattle. What is even more impressive is that the second- and third-ranked cities – Denver, CO, and Phoenix, AZ (1.4 million acres and 1.3 million acres) – were less than half that total. Overall, Washington ranks 5th of all states with the most designated wilderness acres (4,484), just 30,000 acres less than Arizona.

Gordon Hempton, an acoustic ecologist, sought out to find the quietest spot in the country. The result was a spot deep in the Hoh Rainforest in Olympic National Park that is protected as part of the Daniel J. Evans Wilderness

Area. Solitude is an important value for wildlife and all of us who live most of our lives in loud and noisy cities.

Protected wild areas are why Washington is still home to wolves, wolverines, bald eagles, woodland caribou, lynx, orca whales, several species of salmon and steelhead, and even a handful of grizzly bears.

Washington state is as wild as they come and thank goodness for that.

(Tom Uniack is executive director for Washington Wild, a statewide conservation nonprofit organization that has been dedicated to protecting Washington's wild lands and waters through advocacy, education, and civic engagement since 1979.)

Seeing the Humor in What I Can't See

by Alan Biné

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I happen to like a challenge, and now I've got one. My left eye is pretty useless, and my so-called good right one seems to be dimming fast. My double whammy is myopic degeneration plus glaucoma.

Still, I seem to be sort of lucky. I can still read my computer and phone screens and see my big TV. Venturing outside when it's dark can be kind of a nightmare.

The challenge for me is to do the best I can to cope, never ever to whine, "oh poor me." Accentuating the positive seems to make sense. I may not be able to do this forever, but there's something else that's working at least for now. And that is to see some humor in what I can no longer see.

Even though I was never the tall, dark, or handsome type, in the past I always tried to look my best. When I look in the mirror now, I can still see a foggy me. Barely. So, my appearance is no longer all that important. Neither is the appearance of others. Since I can't see details, I'm hopefully becoming a less superficial person. You know that old saying, "It's what's inside you that really counts?"

When I try to do something now and fail, my wife just laughs. Like when I tried to refill the salt shaker, missed, and poured a bunch of salt all over the table. It wasn't as funny the time I knocked a can of Coke off the table. My wife didn't laugh then. Talking with your hands, as I've always done, can be dangerous. After the big Coke spill, I had to get down on my hands and knees and try to sop up the sticky mess on the floor. I have to confess, I didn't do the best of jobs. Oh well.

I have this new mostly blind friend who told me about a frustrating experience she had just trying to open a can of chicken noodle soup. She struggled with both a manual and then electric opener before her daughter told her, "Mom, the can has one of those pull-it-off pop tops."

I've had some other pesky things, too, of course. Never being able to find my glasses seems to be an almost daily problem, as well as frequently trying to read with my distance glasses. That freaks me out because I think I've gone totally blind. And it often takes way too long to find that damn black TV remote. You'd think some genius could make it neon or something bright.

I've spent a small fortune putting bright track lighting in my bedroom, and special desk lamps on both sides of my iMac. I've stashed small flashlights everywhere and never leave home without one. Duracell and Energizer get rich off me.

There's more on the bright side. I'm possibly spending a little less at the grocery store or teriyaki place because it has become harder to use those credit card thingies to pay for stuff. Except when I accidentally hit the cash-back button.

I can't tell you how much toothpaste I've wasted by missing the brush, or how many pills I've dropped to never find again. When I visited my son in California and he came to pick me up at the airport, I had to ask, "Is that you, Kirk?"

Yeah, I think it's a very good thing I can welcome my various vision challenges and see some light in all of this.

How to Guide Your Mom Through Life, and Coincidentally, to the Bulk Treats

by Junior, translated by Kim Moberg
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Hi there, my name is Junior, and I am a male brindle, pure-bred English boxer. I have tiger stripes on my back, and my underbelly and chest have spots kind of like a Dalmatian. I am small and fit into lots of places, like in front of my mom on the airplane.

I work hard because I have a job, you know. I am a guide dog and am happy to guide my mom through her day, wherever she needs to go. I know my way around most grocery stores and other places that she likes to go, including the doctor's office.

I had to go to school to learn to do this most important work. Thank goodness I learned these lessons well. One thing that I had to learn was to know my left from my right. My mom does not do well with this one. I know what she means when she says, "Left, Junior" but really means right. Crossing streets is kind of tricky when you cannot see very well, so that is where I come in. I make sure we safely get to the other side of the street.

I went to school in Columbus, OH, at Pilot Dogs. My mom came there for three weeks, too. That is where we learned to work together and become a team. While we were both at school, we had to go on those moving stairs. I think mom calls them escalators. Whatever they are called, I do not like them. She does not take me on them very often and that makes me happy.

I have dog friends that do the same kind of work that I do. They come to my house and stay for a few days every so often. We play and just get to be dogs. It is a vacation for all of us.

The grocery store I like to go to is Fred Meyer. I know exactly where the treat aisles are, and where the dog toys are, too. Mom is very picky about the kind of toys that I get to play with. At WinCo, there is a bulk foods section and they have dog treats there, too, along with human treats. Sometimes, my friend, Julie, is there and she gives me treats. Occasionally,

I might take the lead and show mom where I need to go, which is the bulk foods section.

I like to go to fast-food places that have ice machines. I like ice, and when mom thinks that I am sitting nicely, she gives me a piece. As soon as we get to the ice machine, I sit right down so I can get some ice.

I have a big, blue ball that I love to play with. My dad will throw it for me, and I will run and run after it forever. I also love to snuggle with my mom and watch TV with my dad. They are both good to me.

Mom works hard for Washington Council of the Blind, and I am glad that she told me the convention is in person this year. I like going and seeing all of our friends. See you all in October.

Foods That Are Bad for Cats and Dogs

by Leonore H. Dvorkin

Website: <https://www.leonoredvorkin.com>

Note: This article originally appeared in the online “Consumer Vision Magazine,” edited by Bob Branco, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.

Many of us have cats or dogs or both, and most of us do all we can to keep them safe and well. Thus, we might be surprised and dismayed to learn that many common foods, even some that are very good for us humans, such as grapes, onions, and certain nuts, are very bad or even potentially deadly for our feline and canine friends. So, if your veterinarian has not yet given you a list of dangerous foods, I hope you will find the following lists of use.

Here is what inspired me to write this article.

An animal welfare organization to which I contribute every year is North Shore Animal League America, which is not far from New Rochelle, NY. They bill themselves as the world’s largest no-kill animal rescue organization, and all gifts are tax deductible. Not long ago, I received from them a very handy little card that lists 15 foods and other things that are

perilous for cats and dogs. I found some of the things quite surprising, and so I thought I should share the information with you.

For your convenience, I have put names of specific foods and other substances in the following lists in alphabetical order. The names are from the North Shore Animal League card, and from more detailed information I found online.

Foods that are bad for cats: Alcohol, canned tuna (if eaten regularly, this can lead to malnutrition), chocolate, dog food (this can result in malnutrition, as cats need more protein than dogs), grapes and raisins, liver, milk and other dairy products, onions, garlic, chives, raw and undercooked meat, eggs, fish, uncooked potatoes, and tomatoes (green potatoes are particularly dangerous), yeast dough.

A site called hillspet.com gives these tips on how to keep your cat from eating harmful foods: Store foods out of your cat's reach. Installing cat-proof locks on cabinets may be necessary for a curious kitty. Do not let your cat on the counter while you're cooking or eating. Do not feed the cat table scraps. It is especially important to be more mindful during the holidays. There is likely to be more enticing people food around then, much of which can upset your cat's stomach or cause harm.

Foods and other things that are bad for dogs: Alcohol, avocado, caffeine, chocolate, common medications such as Tylenol and Advil, cooked bones such as chicken bones, dairy foods, fatty foods such as fatty meats like bacon, grapes, mushrooms, onions, garlic, raisins, currants, walnuts, macadamia nuts, Xylitol, which is found in some gums and candies. (Note: Xylitol is extremely dangerous for dogs.)

A site called betterpet.com lists some additional things that are bad for dogs. They include salt and garlic (which other sites also mention), as well as cocoa powder, hops (as in beer), nutmeg, paprika, pepper, tea tree oil, and yucca.

An article from the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals about foods that are bad for your pets also mentioned citrus fruits, coconut and coconut oil, salt, and salty snack foods.

Apple cores were also mentioned on the little North Shore Animal League card. The card did not specify whether any particular food was worse for either dogs or cats, but no doubt it's best to keep all of the above foods away from your animals. Why risk malnutrition, illness, pain, or even death for them, as well as large vet bills for yourself?

My Furry Best Friend by My Left Side Always

by Danette Dixon

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I would like to share a story about my guide dog, Mr. Mayor. He is my best friend and will be eight in July. I have had a guide dog for 27 years, and Mr. Mayor is the best of the five. He brings so much joy to my life because he is all about happiness. Mr. Mayor's tail goes faster and faster when I work him.

But the part that I want to share about him is that he alerts me when my sugar gets too low. For those who have had a guide dog, you know this is not part of their training. There is a school in California called Dogs for Diabetes that does train dogs to alert for low blood sugar. But Mr. Mayor is from Guide Dogs for the Blind and alerting for low blood sugar is not part of his training. This story sometimes brings me to tears because of how in-tune and sensitive Mr. Mayor is. I can be in bed asleep, and before my low-blood-sugar alarm goes off, Mr. Mayor is totally on me, all 60 pounds of him. So, he wakes me up, now my alarm goes off, and my friend starts calling me. Mr. Mayor is still on me. I will say to him, "Thanks, buddy, for waking me up, but you do need to get off so that I can take care of this low blood sugar."

As I said, Mr. Mayor will be eight in July. This makes me incredibly sad because I like to start the retirement process when they turn nine. When Mr. Mayor retires, he will go back to his puppy raiser in Boulder, CO. I had to promise this because it broke her heart to let him go when he graduated. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, you are my best friend, by my left side always and forever.

Life with my Animals
by Viola Bentson with Alan Bentson
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“The animals can bring us closer to God.” This has always been one of my personal mottoes, something I truly believe. Pets came and went at a great rate in my house when I was growing up, and I always enjoyed seeing animals at the houses of family and friends. Well, except for spiders, slugs and bugs; I still haven’t warmed up to them.

At the Washington School for the Blind in Vancouver, I got connected with a 4H group and learned to ride horses and be in horseshows. I got my first guide dog just as soon as I reached the minimum age at which Guide Dogs for the Blind in California would accept me. My first dog, Cochise, and I went everywhere. We were inseparable. I think most guide dog users would agree that there is nothing like the close bond one has with their very first dog. My second dog, Yeller, and I had behavioral conflicts. He was pretty cantankerous, and eventually I had to find a different home for him. My third dog, Alberta, who I had in my 40s, was very talented and obedient, but I lost my friend pretty early to cancer. My most recent dog, Parnell, was calm, well-mannered, and eager to please. We went on several journeys on planes and trains, and once on a cruise ship. As I grew more sedentary, we didn’t go out very much, but we had a long congenial retirement together. I hope to have more dogs in my life but they probably won’t be guide dogs.

In the past 20 years or so, I have become very attached to cats. After losing a couple of cats early in their lives, I had my first real forever cat named Honeybee. I won her in the pet-of-the-week contest on Star 105 FM in Seattle. I had many evenings by myself at that time, and the Bee and I got to be great friends. She was a very talkative cat with many opinions about things she didn’t like and about objects that got put in places where she wanted to sleep.

At the same time, a shy girl kitten came into our yard, and I started feeding her. Before I knew it, she had moved in. Misty lived with me for 17 years and was a total joy. She spent the last few years of her life on my pillow, eating nothing but wet food as per the vet’s directions. I think she thought the last part of her life was really wonderful.

In 2008, I decided I wanted a boy cat, so I visited an animal shelter in Olympia. They showed me several kittens.

I said, "Is that all of them?"

They said, "There's a black kitten named Midnight, who has been here for a while, but nobody wants a black cat, and he's awfully hard to catch once he's out of his cage."

I said, "I'd like to see him." So they got him out and he cuddled right into my shoulder as if to say, "Okay, I'll go home with this nice person," and who was I to argue? We renamed him Patch and he's been our faithful loyal cat ever since, and very well-behaved except when there's chicken on hand and he thinks he should jump up on the kitchen counter and have a bite.

Then, I really wanted a big Maine Coon boy cat. So, I contacted a breeder in British Columbia who had some kittens. She brought us a big red Coonie kitten in a big carrier bag. Since he was red, we named him Rufus.

Rufus was a great cat with a big personality, but he couldn't be bothered to wash himself. I had never run into this in a cat before, but he was as loveable as he was messy. He was barely 18 months old when he died of FIP, a well-known cat autoimmune disease that, unfortunately, has no cure. We'll never know what kind of cat he would have been, and we still miss the Rufe.

In addition to Patch I now have another boy cat named Chulo, who we call the Muffer. He's a rag-doll cat, and his job is to greet everyone who comes to the house, which is a good thing since the rest of us are pretty shy and reserved. He is well-behaved, too, except when he wants to sleep on a table or desk. He thinks people have left stuff in his way and he has to clear it off.

Our latest cat is a girl Maine Coon named Murphy's Law who we got from a breeder in Minnesota. She is a large cat, but she gets along well with the boys and is generally good, except when electric cords or plastic bags come her way as she thinks these things ought to be hers to play with. She tries to wash herself once in a while, but her long silky fur just gets tied into wet knots, which we try to remove, much to her annoyance.

When I pet my cats and listen to the things they say, I feel very close to the beauty of creation. When I think of all the comfort and unconditional affection I have had from my cats, I realize God must love us, even though our lives are so short, and we are sometimes pretty hard to communicate with. Being with animals is one of the great blessings of my life.

A Trip I'll Never Forget
by Alco Canfield
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As you read this, I ask you to suspend your biases and proceed with an open mind.

I went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France, sponsored by the Knights of Malta, an organization formed 900 years ago to protect pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Today, the Knights also provide medical care to those without insurance and participate in a number of other charitable activities.

The site at Lourdes has existed since 1858. Bernadette Soubirous was asked by the Virgin Mary to visit the grotto (then a garbage dump) for 17 days. At one point, Mary asked her to dig in the mud with her mouth. The bystanders laughed and ridiculed her. However, a spring began to bubble up there and has been the source of 70 medically verified healings, the last occurring in 2018.

The Office of Medical Investigations examines these cures. It is comprised of believers and nonbelievers so there can be no question about the veracity of these healings.

I was asked by a friend of mine with cancer to go with her to Lourdes as her caregiver. I was the only one she wanted to accompany her. Lourdes was certainly not on my bucket list. If I went to France at all, Paris was the first city that came to mind. Although she does not have cancer now, my friend suffers excruciating pain from the radiation she received and was unable to travel. I thought of waiting in hope of accompanying her next year. However, I felt called to go, and so, on April 26, I boarded a Tahitian airliner with other pilgrims for the long flight to Lourdes.

People come from all over the world to this holy site. I thought I would encounter scads of sick, sad people. However, I was surprised by the joy of these individuals, open to whatever the Lord had to offer them. They are called Malades and are served by others with complete attention and devotion. That as much as anything is very healing to many who often feel abandoned and depressed. Many are accompanied by relatives or friends who are their caregivers. They sit in carts, which are pulled and pushed by Knights, Dames, and volunteers. It is an old tradition. Sitting in these carts is an act of humility and trust. In a culture which values rugged individualism and sometimes strident independence, this is an utterly new and frequently transformative experience. How often in our society do we get to bask in the unconditional love and total attention of others?

Though physical healing may not result, spiritual healing is often very evident. The echo of prayers and the singing of thousands of people is a moving experience I will long remember. Meeting so many people who love God, even though their needs may not be met in the way they may have expected, has been most inspirational. There is a peace about the place which is palpable and powerful.

I was privileged to read at the mass in the grotto, the place where the spring first appeared. The acoustics in the church are amazing. I was blessed to be a conduit of The Word, and the echo of the grotto made the experience most profound.

On May 4, we once again boarded Air Tahiti Nui to return to the United States. It is a 12-hour flight, made a bit longer because a pilot was sick and unable to take us. We landed in Paris for an hour but were unable to deplane. So much for my bucket list.

At this writing, I have been awake for 29 hours. So, I am grateful that I have a few days to recover and further process this adventure. Will I go again? It remains to be seen. If my friend wants me to go with her, I will. I will fill up on the fountain of grace so evident in this holy place.

I hope I have been able to give you a glimpse into this experience. It is hard to articulate and best understood by being present there.

The Song of Bernadette was originally a screenplay written by Franz Werfel. Fleeing from the Nazis, he spent five weeks in Lourdes and was so moved by St. Bernadette's story that he vowed to write a screenplay about her, which he did in Hollywood in 1941. The Song of Bernadette was made into a movie starring Jennifer Jones in 1943. It can be found on YouTube. At the end of the film, someone remarks, "To one who believes, no explanation is necessary. To one who does not believe, no explanation will suffice."

BRAIN FOOD

Technically Speaking Your Mouth, Your Hands, and Your Smart Phone by Frank Cuta frank@cuta.net

How do you get information like your passwords and text messages out of your head and into your smartphone? By my rough count, there are no less than 16 different methods of entering words into your phone. I believe you will find that the more alternatives you explore, the more you will enjoy using your phone. The methods below apply to the iPhone, but I am sure there are equivalent options for Android phones.

Most of us like to use our voice to communicate with our phones. There are three different dictation choices.

When you tell Siri to “send a text message to mom,” she will take your message verbally and send it at your command without you even touching the screen. With this method, you can use the post-entry commands “add” or “change” to make gross revisions, but you cannot actually edit the text. When you use Siri to dictate, you have to speak quickly, without pauses between words or phrases, because if you hesitate too long, she will cut you off.

Alternatively, if you create a message using the messaging app, you have more flexibility. These instructions assume you have Voiceover (the built-in screen reader) running. As in most text entry fields on your phone, you first open editing with a single-finger double-tap, and then can start and stop dictation with a two-finger double-tap. If you are not satisfied with the result, you can use the keyboard to make corrections before you double-tap on “send.” You can also initiate dictation by double-tapping on the “dictate” button on the on-screen keyboard that appears to the left of the space bar. I prefer both of these latter methods because they do not rush me the way Siri does; I like the extra time to think about what I am saying. For both of these methods, if you want to fix content errors before you send, you can

switch to a manual typing method and make as many corrections or revisions as you want.

As you get more familiar with your phone, you will find that entering and editing text manually via the on-screen keyboard is a more accurate and powerful method than dictation. At first, you may find this process somewhat cumbersome, but experienced users eventually find that manual typing on the screen is very functional, and the result is more professional. Once you have opened an edit field, your iPhone displays a qwerty keyboard on the screen. Apple provides several accessible ways of typing on this keyboard.

To experiment with them, you may first need to open the “voiceover” settings and add “typing mode” to your rotor. You now have three methods to choose from: “standard typing,” “touch-typing,” and “direct touch-typing.” The option called “standard typing” is the default method. It requires you to find each letter on the virtual keyboard and double-tap on it.

The “touch-typing” option is often preferred by more advanced users. It depends on you. Touch-typing requires that you hold your finger down on the keyboard to select the letter you want, and the letter is typed when you lift your finger.

The “direct touch typing” choice is often preferred by low-vision users, usually in conjunction with “zoom magnification,” and is just like typing on an external keyboard.

One last typing method is a separate rotor choice called “slide to type.” To use this method, you put your finger down on the screen, and keep it down while sliding it to the next letter, then lift to select the letter.

Caution! When you have finished experimenting with these four typing choices, it is best to remove them all from your rotor. Otherwise, it is possible for an accidental gesture to change the typing mode on you, and if you do not realize what has happened, you will quickly be locked out of your phone.

Dictation and typing are not the only touch screen input methods built into the iPhone. You can also add “Braille screen input” and “handwriting input” to your rotor. When “Braille screen input” is selected, the touch screen

becomes a virtual Braille writer. This process can be a little tricky, but it does work. Since you need to get all six fingers down on the screen, it works better on a larger phone. You can also turn your phone sideways to put it in landscape mode and give yourself more room for both hands.

The “handwriting input” choice can be very effective if you have good finger-spelling skills. I like it particularly well for entering long complicated passwords.

All of the above eight methods of data input have the advantage of convenience since they do not require the use of external equipment. But if you do a tremendous amount of writing on your phone, or if you are deaf-blind, connecting an external device may be your method of choice.

First, if you have a wireless headset for your smartphone and you have not yet used it for dictation, give it a try. The second external device that you should consider interfacing with your phone is your Braille notetaker. These are very expensive, so not everyone has one, but most such devices can be wirelessly connected to your smartphone. If you cannot afford a full-sized notetaker, you may wish to consider a simpler and much less expensive external Braille display device, such as those from Orbit Research, Freedom Scientific, or Humanware. Even less expensive are the pocket-sized external Braille keyboards without displays, from Orbit and Hable, which are in the \$100 to \$400 price range.

There are also many external qwerty keyboard choices. A nice pocket-sized Bluetooth folding keyboard, such as the one from AT Guys, is also about \$100. I have also found, on Amazon, small external wired keyboards that plug directly into the Lightning connector on your phone.

So, we have now listed about 14 forms of data entry. But you might still ask, why can't you just plug the qwerty keyboard from your computer directly into your phone? I have actually purchased the adapter necessary to make this connection, but have had mixed results. It works on my iPhone 8 with IOS 14 and a Macintosh keyboard, but I have seen it fail on other models and other versions of the operating system. The better choice, if you want the power and feel of a full-sized qwerty keyboard, is probably the wireless one offered by AT Guys.

Last, there are unique devices like the O6. This is a wireless rotary knob. It can do many things, even enter characters, but its real power lies in its ability to scroll through long lists effortlessly. It's great for browsing lists of recordings.

This article has concentrated on data-entry alternatives, but I would be seriously remiss if I did not point out that there are navigational advantages that become available through the use of external devices. Anything that you can do with swiping and tapping on your touch screen can also be accomplished with an external keyboard, using screen-reader-based hot key combinations, like you use on your computer.

My experience taking the Free Covid-19 Home Accessible Test by Scott Davert, July 14, 2020

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Editor's Note: Scott wants you to know that this is one person's report, though I have heard others similar stories. Improvements are planned, and the ordering process is quite accessible. By the time you read this the test may have been updated to make the procedure easier, but we feel this is important information to get out.

We want everyone to know how and where they can order these accessible Covid 19 tests while they are still free and widely available. You can create up to 2 orders with 12 tests each.

“How to get the tests:

Order online

<https://special.usps.com/testkits/accessible>

or by calling 1-800-232-0233.

- Each order now includes 12 rapid-antigen tests that are more accessible for people who are blind or have low vision. These will ship in six separate packages, each with two tests. Each package will have a separate tracking number.
- Orders will ship free, while supplies last.

Need more assistance?

The trained staff at the Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) can provide additional assistance with:

- Ordering tests.
- Understanding instructions for test administration and test results.
- Providing alternative instructions for traditional at-home tests for people who are unable to access, read, or understand the manufacturer's version.
- For those who cannot use an at-home test, DIAL operators can:
- Assist with ordering "swab and send" kits to collect a sample and mail it back for results.
- Connect callers to local organizations for assistance locating other testing options in their community, including in-home testing programs or transportation or companion support to visit a community-based testing site. Call 888-677-1199 Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) or email DIAL@usaginganddisability.org.

Posted in MD Technology Assistance Program."

I had to take a Covid test over the weekend and thought I would share my experience. Since I do not have any vision, I'm not able to provide feedback from that perspective.

First, the box that arrived contained 2 tests. However, to perform this test, you must download an app and pair the test analyzer to your phone through the app.

The problems start if you can't read the small print instructions that come with the kit through optical character recognition, or by using your own vision. There is no easy way to know what app you are looking for. The name of the app was not stated on the website from where the kit was ordered.

Furthermore, searching the IOS App Store with the term "accessible Covid-19 tests" will pull up the wrong application. The one needed for this process is called "Ellume COVID-19 Home Test." It can be downloaded for the iPhone on the IOS App Store, or if you are an Android user, from the Google Play Store.

After downloading the app, upon first launch, you will need to agree to let the app access Bluetooth and several other things. You must then register

before you can go through the process of taking the test. They demand your first, middle and last name, date of birth, city and ZIP code. As someone without a disability I could pick up or order a Covid test and not have to provide any personally identifiable information. Why should someone with a disability not have the same right? Since I do have that choice, I give them fake information other than the state and ZIP code. There are other things that they would like to know, such as your email address and phone number, but these details aren't necessary. When on the registration page, there are several mislabeled buttons, and the dropdown menu, or Picker Item as Voiceover calls it, is treated as a text field.

After filling out all the information, you must then agree with their Terms of Service. On this screen, the button or checkbox to do so is simply labeled "x". The element on the app that says, "I agree...." is a link to these Terms of Service and will open them in your web browser. It's not a showstopper, but it can be a bit confusing.

Next you will be required to watch a video which outlines the procedure, even if you have done so the first time. For Braille users, especially those without the ability to hear speech, be prepared for your Braille display to go completely blank during the video. Though it may not happen to you, it is something I had happen both times when completing the process.

Once the video ends, which should be roughly 5 minutes after it is started, you will be moved to the next screen which will be useable with Braille. Though the video is not accessible via Braille, the instructions give you the same information as the video, so you won't actually miss anything.

The first step they cover is turning on the analyzer. They describe pressing and holding a button for a few seconds until a light starts flashing slowly.

After trying to connect through the app, it will inform you that you need to press and hold the button again until the light flashes quickly and then turns a solid green color. However, if you place the device close to your phone (they recommend 3 inches/7.5 CM), the app will indicate whether or not it was able to connect. I had to do this process 3 times before the connection was successful, though your mileage may vary.

Since the instructions do not describe the items in the kit, this could cause a person to have to pause and figure it out. I examined the package closely before beginning the test and was able to determine what the various items were based on touch.

One of the perplexing things about the instructions is that there is something called a "child adapter" on the swab. I was able to figure that out, but since there was no description of the adapter itself, I again had to use guess work. I did manage to get my test result accessibly, but it was much more complicated than it needed to be. That said, this is a step forward from where we were in the pandemic up to this point.

It's All About the Birds – Or is it? **by Colette Arvidson**

Siobhan Kotal, acting as program coordinator for the Skagit and Island Counties Council of the Blind (SICCB), had been working for the last year to plan an outing for our chapter with Maribeth Crandall, author of “Hiking Close to Home” and the Island Transit mobility specialist. As plans developed for an accessible trail walk, we also talked about the possibility of including a birding experience, like one we had shared at Breazeale Padilla Bay Interpretive Center several years ago with Libby Mills of the Audubon Society. The opportunity to walk with birding experts, as they take the time to describe for us the birds we hear and clarify their songs and calls, is a beautiful one, sometimes referred to as “birding by ear.”



Everything finally came together for us on Saturday, June 4. Maribeth met us and entertained and educated us with transit trivia on the 30-minute drive to the trail's beginning at Flintstone Park.

We met up with three members from the United Blind of Whatcom County chapter who had arranged to join us. They were Jim and Holly Turri, driven there by Beth Marsau. Along with them were two of our Island County members, Phillip and Billie Bleyhl.

Above: Maribeth stands inside at the front of the bus, masked and carrying a bag of prizes for winners of Trivia questions, as we travel from March's Point to Oak Harbor.

Our group was joined by two Audubon Society members who assisted Maribeth in identifying the variety of bird calls and songs as we strolled on the trail and boardwalk, with the beach on our left and the waterfront condos and park on our right.

A leisurely walk brought us to the picnic tables for a delightful lunch and conversation, and at this point we were joined by two more friends from Anacortes, member Wendy Walp and her husband Harry.

By 1:30, we were on our way to the Freund Marsh area filled with a variety of birds, flora and fauna, carefully identified and described by our guides. Beth reminded me of the many birds we heard, from the seagulls and raspy sounding Kaspian terns on the beach, to the red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens, cedar waxwings, chickadees and Virginia rail.

Our trip was focused on a nature walk and birding experience. And as is often the case for our multi-county chapter, it is always about transportation, and collaboration with our members, our WCB family and our community.

We're looking forward to the possibility of making our way to Whatcom County for another joint venture with UBWC. We had reached out to students through WCB Families Committee, but for this event, those closest geographically were unable to join us. However, WCB Families is always open to advising the nearly 100 families on our distribution list of activities like this that your individual chapters are arranging.

We never know when we will be able to connect these families, especially those with young blind or visually impaired children with active blind adults out and about in our community.

Please let WCB Families know when you have an activity scheduled that could not only bring joy and enrichment to these families but perhaps also bring these families into your local chapters to share their experiences.

And so, again, I ask, is it all about the birds?

In love and service, Colette Arvidson, Chair Washington Council of the Blind Families Committee

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The Magical Meater
by Alco Canfield
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This is the best talking meat thermometer I have ever used. It connects either by Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. There are three types: the Meater, which I have, the Meater Plus, and the Meater Block. They all give various distances you can be from your meat. I suppose with the Block, you can go and visit your next-door neighbor and still watch your cooking time.

I leave it in the battery charger so it's ready to use when I'm ready to cook. After you take it out of its battery box, it says, "connected." Then you have to choose what you want to cook: beef, lamb, poultry, or fish. Then it gives you choices concerning doneness. You pick that, insert the thermometer into the meat and double tap on "start cooking." After a minute or so, it tells you how much time has passed and how much time is left to complete cooking. It will say, "Remove from heat."

When your meat is done, you leave it in the meat, and then Meater will say, "resting done," and you remove the thermometer. You need to use an oven mitt, or a thick paper towel to remove the thermometer, as the right end of the thermometer is very hot.

You can use the Meater in an air fryer, an oven, a barbecue, and a smoker, but not in a microwave.

Meater takes the guess work out of doneness. I used to be able to tell by placing my finger on the top of a burger or whatever I was cooking to determine doneness. A chef once detailed degrees of doneness that way, and I was happy to learn that I had figured this out long before. But the Meater is a foolproof way to ensure that what you are cooking is done to your specifications.

Go to [Meater.com](https://meater.com) to learn more. Enjoy.

Sporting Spotlight
Auto Racing and Blindness
by **Beth Greenberg**
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I am excited to share my new column that will bring you articles about sports. I am mostly a mainstream sports fan, which would include baseball, football, basketball, hockey, soccer/futbol. There are many sports out there to explore. We will learn about other sports and how they might relate to those of us with disabilities.

I am not a big NASCAR or auto-racing fan. I don't see the excitement in driving a car around in a circle 500 times, but I am willing to learn about other sports. Then again, some might not understand the need to drag a ball up and down a 100-yard field for 60 minutes either (American football).

I did some research about auto racing and found out the first race was in England in 1867. Auto racing, like NASCAR, started in the U.S. because of prohibition and running illegal booze. After prohibition ended the need for that, the drivers wanted to continue racing.

The main goal is to have the fastest time in a set number of laps. The track is in an oval shape (rounded ends and straight in the middle, similar to a safety pin). There are several types of auto racing such as open wheel, stock car, sports car, drag, kart, and rally. NASCAR is stock car racing.

A pit stop is where the car may get tires changed, and any maintenance work done during the race. On average, there are 4-12 times a car comes into the pit stop. Usually this is because of the yellow caution flag. Each car has a pit stop with their pit crew in the pit lane, which runs parallel to the racetrack. There are 14 different flags that the driver has to watch for.

Wow, these drivers have a lot to look out for as they drive around the track (the flags, their position, speed, and where the other cars are, especially in the turns).

I have known about the Blind Driver Challenge that National Federation of the Blind (NFB) sponsored in Daytona in 2004 when current President Mark Riccobono drove around the track in an accessible car (adapted with sensors and the Talx screen reader).

NFB recently had a new Blind Driver Challenge, with Dan Parker setting a new world record for the fastest blind driver, driving over 200 miles per hour. Dan Parker has been racing in some manner since he was eight years old. He was in an accident at 42 and lost his sight in 2012. Dan was determined to continue life as usual. Dan is also a machinist. You can learn more about the Blind Driver Challenge here: <https://tinyurl.com/ymk2ffv8>

Reading about Dan's story of being a race-car driver and losing his sight made me wonder about other blind and or disabled drivers or staff in auto racing. I found an article from 2018 about Jack Olsen, who was a long snapper (center of the line in football) for USC. He got to drive a car on the Charlotte Speedway for 1.5 miles. Jake has been blind since he was 12.

An article from 2011 was about Ronnie Presnell, a retired county sheriff's deputy who lost his sight in a car accident. Ronnie got to also drive around the Charlotte Speedway with a NASCAR driver. Ronnie, like Dan Parker, has also built a car from the ground up for a project. He drove that car around the track.

There is an Apple podcast called "Blind Spotting," which talks about racing. It is done by three friends in North Carolina. In the description, it does not say anything about them being blind. But their logo shows the I in Blind as a figure with a white cane.

I found an article about Jay Blake, who is the owner and Crew Chief for the "Follow a Dream" crew. Jay lost his sight at 31 from a tire explosion. He has been in the auto-racing industry for years. After his accident, he chose to follow his dream and be an owner, as well as crew chief, for an auto-racing team. A crew chief is in charge of the crew for tuning the car, changing tires, etc., during pit stops; he helps out with the tuning, not just telling the crew what to do. Jay is also a motivational speaker. You can find videos of him on YouTube. In the videos, you can see Jay getting down and dirty working on the engine.

It is great to see some positive role models in the auto racing world. After reading about auto racing and NASCAR, I have a new respect for this sport. I don't know that I would want to race; I have never been into cars.

If this article has sparked your interest in auto racing, here are some raceways that may be close to you to check out. In Seattle, there is Nifty Auto Sport; in the Portland area, there is Portland International Speedway; Spokane has Qlispe Raceway Park; Olympia has South Sound Speedway; there is Yakima Renegade Raceway; Tri-Cities Raceway; Skagit Speedway; and Snohomish has Evergreen Speedway. Wow, I did not know there were so many racing tracks across the state.

Podtastic Casts

Where Animals, Science, Technology and Philosophy Meet

by Reginald George, Zack Hurtz, & Chris Coulter

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The jukebox that always plays in my head is urging me to share with you that the Lennon McCartney song "A Little Help from My Friends" is ringing so true for me tonight. This column would not have happened without the inspired support of our terrific team of podcast producers. We did not intend to collaborate – it just worked out this way. Chris Coulter brings us a wonderful remembrance of "Bird Notes" from NPR, and Zack has a new episode of WCB Newsline unleashed with the inventor of a truly 21st century device that constantly orients you to the magnetic field of the earth while connecting you to the place and person you love most, right down to their heartbeat.

But first, I'll highlight the June 25 episode of NPR's Fresh Air weekend called "Fresh Air Weekend: The sensory world of animals..."

If you have ever listened to this award-winning show that has been around since 1985, way before the word podcast was invented, then you already know they interview people who change and rearrange our world. From heads of state to movie stars, kings and criminals, astronauts to Maya Angelou, they are all here, in candid discussions that demonstrate what they

believe and feel. Many are no longer living, but their words haunt us, and serve as their legacy to us.

From the web page for this episode: “A dolphin's sense of echolocation allows it to coordinate efforts to hunt prey, see ‘through’ other creatures and form three-dimensional shapes using sound... The human sensory experience is limited. Journey into the world that animals know: In his new book, ‘An Immense World,’ science writer Ed Yong explores the diversity of perception in the animal world — including echolocation, magnetic fields and ultraviolet vision.” You can listen to the original interview here:

<https://tinyurl.com/sensorystuff>

So many people with sight have no vision. They assume that if we have never seen the world, we would have little interest in learning about colors or visual beauty. This could not be further from the truth. With that in mind, read this extended excerpt from the transcript of the show, but it is just a taste.

On what are we missing in human vision compared to insects:

“So flowers absolutely are extraordinarily beautiful, but if you had the ultraviolet vision that a bee has, you'll be able to see patterns on those flowers that we can't see. A sunflower, for example, far from looking just a matte uniform yellow, would have a stark ultraviolet bullseye at its center. A lot of flowers have these ultraviolet shapes like arrows and bullseyes to guide insects toward the pollen at their center. Some predators that eat pollinating insects, like crab spiders, blend in against the flowers to our eyes, but really stand out when viewed in ultraviolet, and that acts as a lure to insects. It draws them in toward the waiting spider.

One of my favorite things about the relationship between insect vision and flowers is that if you took all the colors in all the flowers that were out there, and you asked ... what kind of color vision is best at discriminating between these colors? What you get is an eye that's basically almost what a bee has, an eye that is maximally sensitive to blue, green and ultraviolet. And you might think then that the bee eye has evolved to see the colors of flowers really well. That's exactly the opposite of what happened, because the bee eye came first, the flowers evolved later. So the colors of flowers have evolved to ideally tickle the eyes of bees, and I think that's a truly wondrous

result. It means that beauty, as we know it, is not only in the eye of the beholder, it arises because of that eye.”

“On how the light sculpture commemorating Sept. 11 and the attack on the World Trade Center disrupts bird migration: The light sculpture commemorating the attacks of Sept. 11 has been shown to disrupt bird migration. The light shines vertically into the heavens. It is beautiful. ... The light draws them in, causes them to circle for a long time, depletes their energy, often distracts them and sends them hurtling into nearby buildings. Thousands of birds might be caught in these beams at any one time. If you're a migrating bird, you can't afford to get distracted. Migration is already an arduous process, and the birds need all the energy they can get. So for this reason, and because scientists have studied it, those lights are turned off for stretches of time if enough birds get caught in them.

Birds on the Radio
by Chris Coulter
forestelf2@icloud.com

When I was little, and my family had a big backyard, complete with a patio and a swing set, along with lots of trees, I became acquainted with the lovely sound of birdsongs on spring and summer days. We also had a succession of pets. I never really related to the dogs and cats, but the birds fascinated me. I loved the cheerful song of the White Crown Sparrow, and the reflective notes of the American Robin. I even felt a slight attraction to the screeching of our resident Steller's Jays. The only problem was that, at that time, I didn't know the names of any of those wonderful birds. I wanted them to land on my shoulders like the tame canaries and parakeets I was familiar with, but, in my little-girl heart, I thought they didn't love me like our tame birds.

As I grew up, I learned to simply listen to the songs and to the whir of wings as they flew past me, busily taking care of their birdie business. When I came into my adulthood, one of the things I began to enjoy was what was then known as National Public Radio. Now, it is simply referred to as NPR. There were many offerings to listen to on NPR, and I was amazed when I heard a cheerful little tune that made me smile. As the tune faded out, I heard the voice of Michael Stein, one of the hosts of the station, announce

with a smile in his voice, “This is Bird Note.” For two minutes or so, I was enthralled by the descriptions and names of the birds I was hearing. At that time, the birds and their various features and flight patterns were familiar to me because the first several programs were about our own local birds.

I told Jon, my husband and best friend, that I had been thinking about learning more details of our birds. On a tour of the Ballard Locks, we found a little shop with lots of interesting souvenirs. Jon found something that caught his eye. It was a CD, compiled from many local bird recordists. The man who sold us the CD told us that each bird call or song was accompanied by a recorded male voice that gave us the name of the bird after the song and the area in which the recording was made. Between the delightful descriptions of Bird Notes on the radio and my CD, with its more scientific approach, I was in ornithology heaven.

As time went on, and I found myself in lower to upper middle age, I found that Bird Notes had spread its own wings. Many different people were involved in those two-minute interludes, and I began hearing a lot of interesting birds from Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, and even the tundra of Alaska and other very cold places.

You may be wondering how you can find Bird Notes. Well, that’s easy. Bird Notes is on KNKX, in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The program comes on every day at 6:30 in the morning, and again at 9 a.m.

If you’re not an early riser, but you still want to listen, there’s a podcast for that. You can listen at the following link by choosing download.

<https://tinyurl.com/yeer67xf>

Bird Notes can be found on Apple Podcasts, or by asking your Google or Amazon smart speaker to play it. Let me know what you think of the show.

Welcome to Sentero
by Zackery Hurtz
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Sentero is a new piece of wearable tech that gives you the ability to always know where north is. No longer will you need to pull out a compass or load up an app on your phone. Just grab your Sentero and head off on your adventures with the confidence of knowing your orientation.

This small device is worn on your arm, or as a necklace, and uses haptic (vibrational) feedback to get you a new sense of Earth. The company, Cyborg Nest®, created Sentero as a new way to connect with Earth and the people you care about. It takes only a few weeks to train your brain to track where north is without thinking about it. Sentero goes beyond sensing north, though, and offers you some pretty cool features.

Sentero aims to connect people together in the modern age of digital society. The device allows you to select a loved one who has their own Sentero, and it will alert you when you're facing towards them, no matter where you are on Earth. Use this feature when thinking about them or talking to them on the phone or social media.

Have you ever wanted to feel your partner's heartbeat to feel closer to them? Sentero gives you this capability. You could fall asleep with your partner's heartbeat or keep track of them when they're happy or sad. You can feel your partner's heartbeat from across the living room or the globe. These two features help you feel closer to those you care about.

This small device offers one more feature that I personally use every single day. I've told you that Sentero can let you know when you're facing a loved one, but it also allows you to know when you're facing a particular location on Earth. Want to know which way your hometown is? How about your child's school? Sentero allows you to track the locations that you care about. As you face the location, you'll get a vibration on your arm letting you know you're facing the right way.

I've been using Sentero for several months now, and I can't live without it. It has increased my awareness of my surroundings, helped me be a better

navigator, and just the ability to always know where north is has improved my traveling ability.

Sentero wasn't created for the blind, but it offers several features that make it a perfect fit for the blind community. The founder of Cyborg Nest, Liviu Babitz, has realized how useful Sentero is for the community and is working closely with us to improve the features offered by Sentero.

If you'd like to learn more about Sentero, tune into the WCB Newsline Unleashed podcast, where I sit down with Liviu Babitz.

<https://wcb-newsline-unleashed.pinecast.co>. Our conversation discusses Sentero's journey and usability. We hope you enjoy the episode. Liviu and I are always available for questions.

HISTORY

Voices: Our Untold Story A Look Back at Our Illustrious Past by Chris Coulter forestelf2@icloud.com

Lately, I have been wandering through the archives of WCB's convention audio files. Those files have given me a wealth of information about our organization's history, as well as the individual stories of the people who have worked to create and preserve it. I will focus on two different presentations that are in somewhat different periods of our WCB story.

First, let's visit a history breakout session that happened in 2007. Second, we'll look at a presentation from 2012, just five years after the first one.

The session from 2007 was conducted by three very knowledgeable people who have spent a great deal of time going through the minutia of our history. Beryl Colley, Alan Bentson, and Carl Jarvis talked to us about the history of each of our state agencies. Beryl gave us the story of the Washington State School for the Blind. Alan told us about the evolution of the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL), and Carl Jarvis gave us his point

of view on the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB).

Beryl was the first speaker. He took us all the way back to the 19th century, giving us the story of the birth, growth, and maturity of a school that now has a very fine reputation. As Beryl talked about the many changes that the school underwent through the years, his well-deserved pride in helping us to understand the school's development was apparent in his voice and through his ability to reach out toward his audience to give us an understanding of the school that he so obviously loves.

Alan, a reader adviser at WTBBL, was the next person to speak. He told us about many of the people who had the job of overseeing the library and its operations. WTBBL has had its own storied history, and Alan talked about it in very human terms. His sense of humor and love for the library was a joy to hear.

Carl gave us a calm and reflective account of the history of DSB. Like Beryl and Alan before him, Carl's love for his work with the students and the vending trainees came through loud and clear. He eventually, with his wife Cathy, began working with seniors who were losing (or had lost) their vision. He seemed to find different ways of working with the people he served as he and they became older.

Now it's time to fast forward from 2007 to 2012. I was chair of the history committee at that time and put together another "big three" with a presentation about the education of blind children during the 1950s and 1960s. The three speakers were Beryl Colley, Maria McCully and me. I can't be very objective about my own ability to communicate my story, but the main point that I brought forward was the fact of my hard-won sense of freedom during my school years and beyond. Maria gave us a very clear presentation of her school days as a partially sighted student. Her speech was short, but she made it clear that she found her own way and has succeeded very well.

Beryl told us about his struggles with low vision during his education and how he finally found his way to the school for the blind. I could hear the relief in his voice as he talked about his own ability to find freedom when he became a student at the school.

I have enjoyed giving you, the readers of Newsline, some interesting snapshots of the history and the humanity of our education and our unique voices and points of view.

ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

Chronicles of a Happy Warrior #16 I have a Right to Wag Where I Want!

by Mark Adreon
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I live in a condominium, do not have a fenced yard, and do have 23 other owners in the building to consider. I was working for the Department of Services for the Blind, (DSB), and needed to travel both statewide and nationally.

Once I finally applied for and received approval for a guide dog, I had about two months to consider the changes required to my daily routines, as well as “making room” for a dog in my life. Trek was my first guide, and so I knew I had so much to learn.

I spent much of the two months trying to imagine having a guide dog with me everywhere I went. Getting a haircut, going to the grocery store, traveling on the bus, using Uber, traveling on a plane, going to meetings with an imaginary dog by my side.

I met Trek at the Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) Boring, OR, campus. It took about two days for Trek to go straight to my heart. This I was not prepared for, and it was an amazing surprise. The schools use families as puppy raisers before they are paired to a person. He was my first guide, and he was Elijah’s first puppy to train.

Elijah was 15 years old, from the eastside of the state, one of 10 home-schooled kids. They had lots of animals and made creative costumes for them. Trek was destined for me.

After my two weeks at GDB, I had a couple of weeks with my guide Trek, and we were off to Austin, TX, for a business leadership meeting. I was very nervous as Trek and I went to the airport, boarded a plane and prepared for a 4-hour-plus plane ride.

Trek was great and made friends at the airport and on the plane. This would be an experience I would see repeatedly with Trek. However, I continued to be a nervous wreck, even though we had practiced working with a guide to get under a plane seat. After a couple of hours, this situation seemed impossible.

After about two hours of flight, Trek sat up and blinked his brown puppy eyes. Suddenly, a flight attendant appeared and took him for some walks in the aisle. Thus, I began my learning journey on how to pick out a dog lover from those who were not.

As I went to more places for work and in my personal life, it became quite clear that not every place was onboard with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and my rights to have a guide dog with me.

One of my first encounters with people who did not know the difference between a service animal and a “pet” was going to brunch with my nephew and his wife in my neighborhood. We went to a restaurant down the street, entered the door, and let them know we needed a table for five.

The hostess said great – and that my pet needed to be tied outside.

I had spent months preparing for this refusal, and I was ready and let her know that Trek was a service animal and we both had a right to be together as we had breakfast. I was calm, but firm and indicated we were ready to be seated.

She needed to check with someone with authority, and then we were reluctantly seated. We also received indignant customer service during our meal.

Later that week, I wrote a Yelp review and shared my experience with the public. Within two days I received a message from the owner of the restaurant asking what more he could do to ensure equal access and

appropriate ADA inclusion. We shared several messages as he revised his business model to be more inclusive. Yelp, Facebook, Twitter and other social-media platforms are great for advocacy follow-up to create public engagement on the issue (or at least, the perception of public pressure).

The story above, I suspect, represents an experience that most guide dog users can relate to. I am sure that all stood their ground and expressed their right to have a guide dog at their side. Many businesses and entities that do not want pet dogs in their establishments are not aware of how to distinguish a service animal from a “pet,” especially when people claim their dog is a service companion, or emotional support animal. To educate the business owners and other entities, the following can be shared.

These entities have the right to refuse a “pet” by asking the two following questions: 1) Is your dog (animal) related to a disability (they cannot ask about the disability)? 2) What has your dog/animal been trained to do (as it relates to your disability)?

One of the services I provided with DSB was awareness trainings to businesses, organizations, and state and federal agencies. The presentations were centered on blindness and a crosswalk principle that could be applied to the broader disability community. A couple of months after Trek and I had been working with each other, I got a call from a state agency that wanted a training for their staff in Seattle and Olympia offices.

As we were discussing the details of the trainings, I shared my excitement of bringing my new guide Trek. The person I was talking with let me know that their agency had a “no pet” policy.

Yes, you can guess that I shared with them my rights under the ADA and added additional information on the “Law Against Discrimination” and its references to service animals. He said he would need to get back with me as he needed to check with Olympia before there could be a commitment to the training.

To make this story shorter, there were several phone calls between me and their agency human resources to discuss how the training would proceed, and that I would be bringing my guide dog.

One of their first attempts to circumvent my guide dog was to let me know that one of the attendees was allergic to dogs – aside from the fact that there were over 150 attendees and a room that would accommodate that number, and the fact that a person sitting at the back of the room would have an extraordinarily negligible impact. I did not spend time on that argument and shared with their HR that the agency was obligated to provide an accommodation for their employee under the ADA.

The second attempt was even more interesting. They indicated that I could bring my guide dog and wondered if I could leave Trek at the front door reception. My first thoughts were to explain that a guide dog is used to navigate independently both outside and in. Leaving Trek at reception and having a sighted escort to the training room would defeat half of my message. So, you guessed it, I was not going to leave Trek at the front desk, and we both entered the training room together to share disability inclusion, including our service animal rights.

My last story relates to a smaller hotel/motel in a more rural part of the state. When I was checking in, they wanted me to complete a “pet agreement” and to add a cleaning charge related to my “pet.” We discussed the difference between a “pet” and a service animal, and how I couldn’t be charged over and above the rate for any other guest at the hotel/motel. Once we agreed upon the reality that what they were asking would be considered discrimination under the law, they let me know how displeased they were, and they did not charge me for the “pet” cleaning.

I learned that knowing my rights as a guide partner was important for avoiding discrimination. More importantly, it allowed Trek and me to be treated like any other customer, attendee or participant. The only difference was that I had a handsome, yellow field Lab at my side.

If you or your friends use a guide dog, then it is important to know your rights. It is also important that your guide needs to represent the years of training they have received. Their status alone does not give them the right, (or you the right) to be in a public space acting up by barking, jumping, and other distracting behavior. This also applies to the guide dog. (Ha!)

Behavioral issues are the owner's responsibility to keep trained guide dogs in line. Not doing so gives others the right to ask you to leave their establishments.

I know that if you are a guide dog person, you know or have experienced similar situations to the ones I have shared. Your friends and family do not have as much information as you do, and some of this can be shared with others. The more people who know the rights of guide dogs, the more support we can all expect from our sight-dependent friends. Most people know that guide dogs are impressive, and it would be equally impressive if they were aware of these impressive creatures' rights.

One-stop reference app: To assist you and others in knowing their rights, the following app will provide all the guide dog rights, a legal reference for every state, the ADA, Canadian law and general rights. The National Association of Guide Dog Users (NAGDU) is a division of the NFB, and they have provided the go-to app for any guide dog user who wants to know their rights. Just search for the free NAGDU Guide & Service Dog Info on your app store of choice.

Meeting Congressman Kilmer

by Kim L. Moberg

mobergproductions@me.com

As I sit here tonight checking my email, I see that the newsletter is here that I signed up for from Congressman Kilmer. I signed up as a way to better get to know him when we, as members of the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB), were encouraged to speak to our congressman at the end of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) leadership conference. I am taken back to that time and the events leading up to my district's meeting with Congressman Kilmer's staffer. Let's look back to why this day and event left such an impression on my life.

I received an email from Frank Cuta asking if I would be the one to get a group together to speak on the imperatives that ACB is focusing on in Congress. I was honored to do this. Frank gave me several names of people to contact. I put together my team. We each took one of the

imperatives to present when we were to speak to Kilmer's staffer. On my team were Cassandra Eden, Jessamyn Landby, and Carl Jarvis.

I went through the suggested route to get an appointment with Rep. Kilmer or his staffer. I got no response from my email. I have a tendency of being impatient, and so I moved to plan B. I went online to locate the number to call for an appointment. I was told it would be a recording, and I would have to leave a message. So, I called and was prepared to leave my message.

To my surprise, I got a real person. He was awesome. He explained that if I really wanted an appointment during the time I indicated, I should email Kilmer's scheduler in Washington D.C. So, I sent off my email to the address he provided. Before I knew it, I was getting a response with a date and time. The big day was set for March 17 at noon.

I wrote my speech and others on my team did the same. We were prepared and ready to go. Of course, I was the Zoom host/facilitator. At that time, I had only done this Zoom thing a couple of times.

The day and time finally arrived. We all got on Zoom early so when the staffer came on, we were ready. As I sat there watching my screen, my heart skipped a beat or maybe two. I recognized the face that was looking at me. I had Googled enough information on Congressman Kilmer and seen pictures of him to know that this was not the staffer. This was the real deal. After I introduced myself, he explained that he would stay and talk with us as long as he could. He explained that it was voting day, and that if we were not finished when the call came for the vote, he would leave and go vote and come right back and finish up with us. He did indeed leave at one point to go vote. He was true to his word. He came right back and finished with us. He did not hurry us. He was kind and very gracious. Most importantly, he was very knowledgeable of the four imperatives that we presented. One more thing...Kilmer was very knowledgeable of the needs with regards to accessibility that blind and visually impaired folks require to be independent. He shared with us that while in college he did some recorded readings for a blind student on campus.

By the way, Kilmer's staffer, Mia, also joined the Zoom call. For me, it was a fantastic opportunity. One of those red-letter days that stand out in my life. Kind of like the day I got to see one of those big, beautiful submarines

sliding just beneath the water as I stood watching on the Hood Canal Bridge. But that is a story for another time.

Thank you, Frank, for asking me to do this. It was a wonderful experience. I am looking forward to next year.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Youth Speak #5 A Day to Remember by Lucash Uniack lucashuniack@gmail.com

In a person's life, there are certain moments that you know you will remember forever. You'll remember the people you were with, the things people said, and the feelings you had during the experience. For me, one of those life moments was my Eagle Scout Court of Honor, which took place in May of this year at the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library.

I have been a patron of Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) since I was 6, and it's not an overstatement to say that the library changed my life. Having access to audio books revolutionized my life and made me a voracious reader with a vocabulary to match. I love to be immersed and lost in a book to this day, and I thank WTBBL for that.

I have been involved in scouting since I was in 1st grade and knew that I wanted to work toward Eagle Scout since I was in 5th grade. On one of my many trips to WTBBL, I decided that when it came time to do my Eagle Scout project, I wanted it to be done at WTBBL. I wanted to give back and thank the library and staff for all they have done for me. My Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony was the culmination of that dream.

A bit about Eagle Scout: it is the highest rank in scouting. Only about 4-6% of all scouts ever attain this rank. To become an Eagle Scout, you must earn 21 merit badges, serve several times as a leader in your troop, advance through all seven ranks of scouting, complete a project, and go through a board of review. The journey takes many years to achieve.

Danielle Miller and Erin Groth at the library were both instrumental in making my Eagle project become a reality, especially because I had to pivot due to the pandemic.

I had always intended for my Eagle project to be an art installation. I decided on a name for the project, "Lend A Hand So That All May Read,"

which is a riff off of WTBBL's motto, "So That All May Read." My original idea was to have a workshop where youth patrons at the library would come in and have molds of their hands taken, and to then mount those on the wall. I was in the process of picking a date for this workshop in 2020 when the pandemic hit. An in-person workshop would no longer be possible.

I had to reimagine the project, and with the help of Danielle, Erin, and my parents, we were able to come up with the idea of tactile handprint kits instead, using cardstock, glue, sand, and other items such as feathers and stickers that would allow each youth patron artist to make their own unique handprint. I experimented with the glue and sand, and we came up with an approach that would work. With Erin's help, more than 300 kits were assembled and mailed to every youth patron in the fall of 2020. We asked youth patrons to make a handprint and mail it back to us.

In the end, we received 37 handprints from youth all over the state of Washington, and they were awesome. We received tiny handprints from toddlers and big handprints from high schoolers. Some kids got really creative – one person even turned their handprint upside down and made it into an elephant! My goal was to receive 20 handprints, and it was so exciting to see so many more come in.

I framed each of the 37 handprints, removing the glass so anyone who wanted to touch them could do so. We had a canvas sign made with the project name, and then I delivered everything to the library. What a fun day that was. Later, the library staff got the handprints hung on the wall, and I was able to come by when the project was installed. You should check it out if you ever have the opportunity to visit WTBBL in person.

With my project done, I went through my board of review, and then it was official – I was an Eagle Scout. I officially received the rank on 7-28-2021.

Due to the pandemic, I had to wait to have my Court of Honor ceremony until May of this year. I will never forget that day. I got to receive my Eagle Scout rank at WTBBL, a place near and dear to my heart, and in front of so many people I care about. It was an incredible feeling to have so many of my close friends and relatives there to celebrate with me. There were lots of kind words and hugs to go around. My grandparents flew up from California for my big day. My two scoutmasters and mentors, as well as my parents,

gave speeches about their memories of me and my scouting journey. I got to show the attendees my project. My dad's cellphone rang at the most inopportune time during the ceremony, making everyone laugh. But most of all, I just felt proud to have accomplished what so few achieve and to know that I did it with the support of so many. It was a day never to be forgotten, and one I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Dexter the Lhasa Apso Dog **by Jessamyn Landby**

When I was a kid, my family owned several different animals. One was a Lhasa Apso dog named Dexter. He was pretty much all white and had big, fluffy ears. When he laid on my mom's bed, he looked like a stuffed animal. He was a nice dog, but also kind of a handful. Dexter loved stuffed animals. He stole and hid them before you could rescue them from being wrecked by him. So if I left my door open, he would go in and steal stuffed animals from me. I had some called Pound Puppies. One day, Dexter got into my room and stole one of them. By the time we discovered he'd stolen it, it was too late. Dexter had chewed one of the eyes off, so I let him keep it instead of just throwing it out, but I was bummed about this.

The other thing I remember about Dexter is that he liked the Lite Brite pegs that went in the different designs. So, when I would play with my Lite Brite on the living room floor, I had to make sure Dexter was not in the room or was outside, because he would eat the pegs.

Dexter was one of my favorite animals. We did not have him very long, but when I think about Dexter, it puts a smile on my face, and I always wonder where he ended up.

An Egg-stra Ordinary Experience **by Hayley Agers**

Finding it hard to believe that it had been three years since the WCB Families Committee hosted the last beeping egg hunt, the anticipation and excitement surrounding it all was finally about to come to fruition.

It's not until you are told no more events, no hugging or touching, no being a part of activities you look forward to every year, that you realize how much loss we have all experienced and how much these events meant to you and those attending.

This year's event was a coming together of several integral players from our local area. The Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA), Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), the Everett Lion's Club, and our very own WCB Families Committee all did their part. The relationships we have nurtured through the years with these wonderful agencies and non-profit organizations are one of the things we are most proud of. At the end of the day, the whole reason any of us show up to do this and other events is to put all of our focus on the children and their amazing family members who show up over and over again, so that both they and their children can connect with other families impacted by vision loss.

The event was held at the Everett Boys and Girls Club, and because this wasn't our first time at this venue, many wrinkles had already been ironed out. Some challenges to overcome included the echo of listening to beeping eggs in a large gymnasium, the beeping being a bit of a sensory overload for some children, and being sure that all who are there – volunteers and youth attendees – feel included.

We did things a little differently this year, and it seemed to work wonderfully. Buckets were filled with candy packets. At each bucket, there was a volunteer. Each of those volunteers was transformed into various animals, including roaring lions, barking dogs, and more. Instead of children trying to pinpoint a difficult-to-locate beeping egg, they simply used their orientation and mobility skills and good listening to head in the direction of the animal. For many of the children, this made it that much more fun. You could hear them laughing, making the same sounds, and smiles filled the building.

Other activities included games provided by NWABA, a scented Playdough-making station with Hayley and family, a chance to meet a retired guide dog and ask questions, a photo opportunity with the Easter Bunny, snacks, and even a duet singing performance by two of our teen girl participants who met for the first time at this event.

I continue to be so proud and honored to be part of all of the events WCB Families puts on around the state. We provide opportunities for myself and all who attend as a blind adult or the loved one of a blind person to share our experiences, hold and encourage those who may not be as far along on this journey, be inspired by those who do things others may have thought weren't possible, and to connect and support and dream big with these families because their child is only limited by their own beliefs about themselves and what blind people are capable of. My cup flows over, my heart is full of joy, and my spirit is uplifted by the laughter and words of gratitude from the children and their parents. A fun time was had by all, children and adults alike. We are so happy to be back together. Thank you to all who gave of your time and participated in this fantastic event.

Here is the recipe for the DIY scented Playdough:

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 5 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1¼ cups table salt
- 2½ cups water
- 2½ tbsp. olive oil

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, cream of tartar, and salt, whisk to thoroughly blend. Meanwhile, on the stove, in a medium saucepan, add the water and olive oil and bring to a boil. Turn heat down to a simmer.

Add half of the flour mixture and stir with a wooden spoon until everything comes together. The most important thing is to keep the heat on, but do not let the mixture burn. Add the remaining flour mixture and continue to stir to bring the mixture together. You want it to be lump free and smooth, resembling Playdough. Turn off the heat and remove the pan.

Tip the dough mixture out onto a heat-proof surface and allow it to cool 5-8 minutes. When it is cool enough to handle, knead the dough as if kneading bread dough. You will see that it is now really looking like Playdough. If you want several different colored or scented doughs, you can now divide into several smaller batches.

It is time to add your pigmented powdered colorant, and just a pinch will do. Once you have that added, you will need to knead again to incorporate the

color. You may need to add additional colorants if you want a brighter, more intense color.

Now do the same for your scent. I would start with 3 to 4 drops of the essential oil of your choice and add more if needed. You can always add, but you can't take out if it's too much.

Note: All of the ingredients, minus the colorant, are not going to hurt anyone who may put it in their mouth. That being said, it is so important that the essential oils you use are pure Therapeutic grade (CPTG) quality. Not only will this get onto the skin, but it could possibly be ingested. So, be sure the oil you choose is also safe for internal use. A few suggested oils are lemon, wild orange, peppermint, and lavender.

For questions or concerns, please reach out to me at [**blindessentials@gmail.com**](mailto:blindessentials@gmail.com).

AGENCY UPDATES

Updates from the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library by Danielle Miller, Director and Regional Librarian

Greetings, Washington Council of the Blind friends. I want to thank you all for the amazing support you provide to Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) and for being such an integral part of our library community. You help us grow, try new things, and strive to do our best work. I'm excited to let you know that on May 18, in a virtual ceremony at the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled annual conference, WTBBL was recognized as the 2022 Regional Library of the Year. This is a great honor and is a reflection of the hard work, dedication, creativity, and passion of the WTBBL staff, volunteers, and you, our patrons. The award recognizes mission support, or the extent to which the library provides core services, creativity and innovation, and the extent to which the library meets the needs of its patrons during the year.

Over the past two years, WTBBL has had our highest circulation through our transition to duplication on demand with our customized audiobook service, registered more patrons for BARD, began loaning Zoomax Braille eReaders through a pilot with NLS, piloted a remote narration and editing program for our Audiobook Production Department, partnered with the Independent Living Program to loan CCTVs, created and started loaning memory kits, moved our multisensory story times to virtual delivery with sensory kits sent to participating patrons, launched a virtual patron book club, created a series of promotional videos for WTBBL, and more.

This summer, through a program with the Washington State Library and the Washington State Parks called Check Out Washington, we will have two Discover Passes available that patrons can borrow. These passes will allow you access to state parks and other public lands. This is a great opportunity to take a hike or explore.

WTBBL does have some great local audio and Braille books about local hikes, including DBC16889 "Hiking Washington's History" and DBC16770 "Best Hikes with Dogs: Inland Northwest."

We will also start offering the iBill Currency Reader directly from WTBBL. If you need an iBill, you can contact the library and work with us to complete an application and then we will have one sent to you.

Finally, if you haven't seen them, you should check out the videos about WTBBL and three of our departments, Audiobook Production, Braille, and Shipping. You can find the videos on our homepage at www.wtbbl.org
Enjoy the summer.

An Introduction to Legacy Independent Living Services by Sheila Turner

Hi, my name is Sheila Turner. I am a lifelong resident of Eastern Washington. I am a native of Spokane and have lived in the Tri-Cities for almost a half century (LOL) 46 years. I am legally blind and have been this way all my life as a result of a birth defect in my family affecting the past three generations. I was educated in public schools in this area and graduated from Washington State University.

For the past 20 years, I have worked for a nonprofit serving blind and visually-impaired individuals. My goal has always been to help people remain in their homes or wherever they are happiest for as long as possible during and after a vision loss. I have counseled families and taught living skills.

I have now gone into business for myself as a sole proprietor contracting with Washington State Department of Services for the Blind. Their independent living program serves people primarily aged 55 and older, or those who have no vocational goals. I hope to continue to carry on the work I've been doing for the past 20 years and to serve Southeastern Washington to the best of my ability through my new venture, Legacy Independent Living Services. Please feel free to contact me: legacyilservices@gmail.com or by phone at 509-521-9060.

Washington State School for the Blind is Back in the running...

by Scott McCallum, Superintendent, WSSB

On Thursday, May 19, WSSB hosted our annual track meet for the first time, at least in the traditional sense, since 2019. Last year, WSSB offered a modified track meet that didn't include the typical mass of students, families, and volunteers on campus due to COVID safety restrictions. This year, WSSB was back in perfect form.

Our campus was filled with spring blooms and blossoms, neatly trimmed green grass, clean buildings and perfect sidewalks. Best of all were the smiling blind and low-vision children, their family members, volunteers from Fort Vancouver Lions, and resources including Washington Council of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind of Washington, Department of Services for the Blind, Northwest Association for Blind Athletes, Clark College Disability Services, Vancouver Police Department, Pacific Foundation for Blind Children and several vendors for specialized technology.

Smiling and laughing children were the highlight of the day. They ran, jumped, threw turbo javelin and shot put, swam, did art projects, met friends new and old, explored the Sensory Safari, and so much more. It was an incredible day, even if the weather was a mixed bag of showers and sunshine. This year, a record number of children, about 130, registered for the event. We even welcomed back a duo that consisted of a therapy llama and alpaca to engage with anyone wanting a furry and friendly hug.

Participating youth traveled from nearly all parts of Washington, as well as parts of Oregon. Based on the miles of smiles around campus that day, everyone had an amazing time. The local newspaper, The Columbian, sent a couple of reporters to write a story about the event, which resulted in a front-page story the very next day.

It takes an incredible amount of work to plan, prepare, and offer this event each year. Jennifer Butcher, our physical education teacher at WSSB, takes a lead role in making sure every detail is covered, but the day would not be possible without the efforts of all staff. Every department gets in on the fun,

from the facilities and grounds crew, the staff of the Ogden Resource Center, the on-campus education staff, food services, outreach, business office, human resources, and the superintendent's office. Everyone helps out to make sure our guests have a special day to remember.

It felt especially awesome, given what we have all been through over the past couple of years, to be back in the running. We are already looking forward to doing it again next year.

WCB HAPPENINGS

Make Plans Now to Break Through the Storm by Cathy Wilson, Beth Greenberg, and Lisa George

You've survived the last two years, and now it's time to plan your comeback to the 2022 WCB convention. Visualize the rainbow, because WCB is Breaking Through the Storm.

We can't wait to greet you in person at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport hotel. Of course, we'll be streaming on ACB Media, and we'll also have Zoom connections available for those who choose to attend virtually. This first-ever hybrid convention will have many familiar sessions and activities, but we might have a few surprises in store.

First, let's talk about convention registration. The plan is for online registration to begin Aug. 15. For WCB members, registration is only \$35, which gets your name in the drawings for door prizes. This rate is for either in person or virtual. Registration and all five meals (breakfast and lunch on Friday and Saturday, as well as the banquet) will be \$150. Registration and the banquet only will be \$75.

Early birds who register on or before Sept. 19 will be entered to win a \$100 VISA gift card. Registration rates listed above will be in effect until online registration ends Oct. 10. On-site registration will begin Oct. 27, and the only guaranteed rate will be \$50 for registration with no meals.

Next, let's take a look at hotel accommodations. We're back at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport hotel, which is where we were way back in 2019. The room rate per night for single/double occupancy is \$112, with taxes and fees adding approximately \$16 per night. Triple/quadruple occupancy is available for an additional \$10 per person. That rate is available to convention attendees Oct. 26-30, allowing for flexibility in travel arrangements. The guaranteed deadline for room reservations is Oct. 10. You can book your room online or via telephone.

- Personalized online reservation link:
<https://book.passkey.com/go/WCB22>

- Telephone reservations: call the toll-free reservation number at (800) 222-TREE, or (800) 222-8733 and reference the group code WCB or the group name, Washington Council of the Blind.

For all those chapters and individuals who so generously contribute toward door prizes and the silent auction, please take note, because there will be some big changes this year. For the first time, WCB will be having two separate fundraising events. We'll have two in-person raffles, as well as a virtual live auction via Zoom. This means that deadlines to participate will be different than in the past.

The live Zoom auction will be Saturday, Oct. 22. Help us kick off this pre-convention party with lots of great items in all price ranges. Donations to the live auction must be received by Oct. 1 so we can get descriptions and photos (if possible) on the WCB website and distribute them to the listserv in advance of the auction.

Donations for door prizes must be received by 5 p.m. Oct. 27. Contact Lisa George at [**lmwgeorge10@gmail.com**](mailto:lmwgeorge10@gmail.com) if you have questions about donations.

One final note: we're still looking for a host chapter for our convention. If you're not sure what this entails, here's the scoop. Duties include contacting and securing volunteers, providing goody bags for registration, furnishing snacks and soda for the hospitality room, identifying volunteers for the door prize team, and coordinating the opening ceremony participants (a city official to welcome everyone, provide people to give the invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, and National Anthem). Contact Cathy Wilson at [**cl.wilson@comcast.net**](mailto:cl.wilson@comcast.net) or Beth Greenberg at [**merribethgreenberg@gmail.com**](mailto:merribethgreenberg@gmail.com) if your chapter is willing to take on this important role.

Make plans now to be a part of the WCB 2022 convention.

Calling for All Nominations from the Awards Committee by Jessamyn Landby

It is time once again to send your nomination letters for the seven awards we give out each year at convention. Here are the seven award categories that we are looking for this year.

- The Certificate of Outstanding Service to WCB Award
- The Chapter of the Year Award
- Ammeter and Lieberg Outstanding Advocacy Award
- The Employer of the Year Award
- The Business of the Year Award
- The One World Award
- The Teacher of the Year Award

Here is what needs to be in your nomination letters to be qualified for each award:

- Your first and last name, email address and phone number
- The person or entity you are nominating, their first and last name, mailing address, email address and phone number
- Why the person or entity should receive the award that you are nominating them for, and what the person or entity has done to be nominated for the award

All nomination letters must be in by 11:59 p.m. July 31 to Jessamyn Landby at [**landjess@icloud.com**](mailto:landjess@icloud.com). If anyone has any questions or concerns or needs a detailed description of the seven different awards, please feel free to contact me.

Everett Central Lions Club Family Fishing Day by Colette Arvidson

Saturday, August 27, 2022 – 9 a.m. Sharp!
Gold Creek Trout Farm, 15844 148th Ave NE, Woodinville, WA 98072

RSVP required by August 21st - to ensure space for you and your family:
If interested, Contact colette.arvidson@gmail.com or 360-391-5880

Gold Creek Trout Farm details:

- The venue will open at 9 a.m. for our group. Be there at this time for directions and before it opens to the public. The event will run 9 - 11 a.m.
- Blind anglers should be accompanied by a sighted guide or family member for safety.
- There is no charge to fish, you are only charged for the fish you catch. Fish caught at the small fish end of the pond are 10 – 14 inches, \$8.00 each. Lions Club will pay for two of these fish for each blind angler, including cleaning.
- Anyone else fishing for more fish or larger fish in the adjoining tank for fish 15 – 24 inches or more at a price based on length (details available, but a 24 inch fish costs \$27.25).
- The Lions will provide snacks for everyone.
- Parking: there are 36 parking places.

Rules: if you catch the fish you buy the fish. No catch and release!!

- The venue provides a pole, bucket, net and bait. (You may not use your own gear.)
- The venue will clean the fish at the end at \$.50 per fish.
- There is also an area further along the pond where you can buy handfuls of fish food to feed the fish.
- For the more sure-footed or adventurous in our group, if you want to extend your visit after enjoying your time fishing, the next driveway is the entrance to Gold Creek County Park at 16020 148th Ave. (NE), with some moderately challenging but lovely trails and surroundings.

Please Join Members At Large by Linda Wilder

Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) is hoping to encourage more involvement from Members At Large (MAL). If you cannot attend chapter meetings, this group provides you an opportunity to participate and to have a voice in WCB.

There is always room for more, and we welcome your participation. We meet on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 p.m. via Zoom or phone.

Would you be interested in joining us? If you would like meeting notifications, contact Linda Wilder at lindasuewilder@msn.com.

Tips and Tricks to Make Life Easier Riding on a Natural High!

**by Carl Jarvis
Carjar82@gmail.com**

When we're talking about the basic tools, the building blocks that enable blind people to live independent, meaningful lives, there is one tool which, if ignored or not developed, we might just as well crawl back into bed and pull the covers over our head. "Curiosity!" shouted my students.

That was back in the days before I retired, when I still had students. A keen sense of curiosity certainly is important, but there is an even more basic tool that we need to develop in order to keep a healthy sense of curiosity from becoming a morbid sense of curiosity.

Other students said things like, mobility, Braille, listening skills, a purpose.

"All good answers," I nodded. "But since I am the teacher, my answer is the right answer!"

I continued, "Seriously though, what good is mobility if you have no place to go? Why bother to learn Braille when you feel you have nothing worth writing? Why bother to learn to listen when it will do you no good? And why have a purpose when it's pointless?"

But there is one tool that is so basic that it gives value and purpose to all others. Some people have it naturally, while some of us must apply great energy to accomplish it. But once mastered, it works equally well for us all.

Give up? Then I'll tell you. The answer is attitude!"

“But,” complained my students, “everyone has an attitude. How's an attitude going to help in our quest for an independent, self-sufficient life?”

“Exactly the point,” I beamed. “We all have attitudes. We have good ones, bad ones, and old ones. We talk about how attitudes are like an invisible shield, sometimes protecting us, and at other times getting in our way. My point is that we all have basic attitudes, and we have the ability to change our attitudes. Even as we speak, some attitudes are being affected, and are changing.”

We continued discussing how our attitudes change without our ever being aware of the change.

When I was first totally blind, I hated having to use the long, white travel cane. But as time and training went along, I came to view the cane as part of my independence.

I told my students, “All of us are affected by the world around us and by what we see, hear, and personally experience. Now imagine that you can change an attitude. In fact, you can. So, let's do it. Take any old attitude and tell yourself that you can change it. Tell your attitude that you are going to change it. Decide on the outcome of the change and repeat it over and over.

“I get fat eating dark chocolate. And besides, I don't care for the taste. Okay, so that's a pretty weak example, but repetition is what set that attitude in place, and repetition is what will change it.”

Our senses are under constant attack by all sorts of attitude-changing propaganda. So why not put it to work for us.

Hats Off

Compiled by Linda Wilder

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

- Mary Ketchersid on the occasion of her 96th birthday.

- Marvel Kendal, (right) charter member of the United Blind of Tri-cities, celebrated her 90th birthday on June 4.
- Nancy Lindf celebrated her 80th birthday on May 4. (See Snowhamish report.)
- Carol and Chris Brame on their 30 years of marriage on May 8.
- Mark and Linda Wilder on the birth of their third great grandchild, a boy named October “Tober” Luca Starkey, born May 19, weighing 6 lbs. 13 oz., and 20” long.
- Kenny Hillestad on his retirement from The Lighthouse for the Blind after 49 years.
- Howard Underwood Jr. of Yakima Valley Council of the Blind on the self-publication of his first book, “The Dam.”
- Ginny Kohl for attaining and celebrating her 90th birthday.
- Kim Moberg on her appointment by Washington Council of the Blind to be an ex officio board member of the Washington State School for the Blind.
- Alexann Tourman on starting grad school, and being hired by Washington State School for the Blind.
- Lucash Uniack for attaining the highest rank of Eagle Scout.
- Judy Brown, and Danette Dixon as JP Morgan Chase Fellows in American Foundation for the Blind’s Blind Leaders Development Program.
- Vanessa Pruitt and Dorene Cornwell on their acceptance to the AFB Blind Leaders Development Program as youth mentors.
- Jeanne Jacobs (from her selection in 2020), and Marilee Richards, selected this year as first-timers from WCB, will also be attending this year’s hybrid ACB convention in person.



Also, we commend and congratulate the 2022 graduates from Washington State School for the Blind on their accomplishments. May all of your dreams come true.

The graduates are:

- Chantsaa Udrakhbayar
- Jaylee Feignbaum
- Garrett Hawk

- Tylor Owens

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 guide dog
- Appointment to a city, county, statewide or national board or commission
- Exceptional recognition or award

AROUND THE STATE

Clark County Council of the Blind by Bob Cavanaugh

I can't believe we've been in existence for a year already. I am told that the board meeting in August will be hybrid, and I'm hoping to be there in person.

While that will mark one year since we officially became a part of WCB, I consider our founding date to be in March, as that's when we elected officers. Since then, we're on our third treasurer, and second secretary. Hopefully, Abby will last longer than the two previous treasurers combined, but her term is up at the end of the year, so things may change.

In other chapter news, we've had several guest speakers at our meeting as of late, and they have been well received, especially Jerry Lynn Rogge from Christian Record Services.

We've also been working to get our name out in the community, having been at the WSSB track meet a couple weeks ago. This summer, we're going to have some kind of social outing, though what that is going to be hasn't been decided yet. I have no idea what business is going to look like over the summer, but if all goes as planned in my personal life, it's going to be a summer of adventure.

Guide Dog Users of Washington State by Vivian Conger

Earlier in the year, the Guide Dog Users of Washington State affiliate held two focus calls. One was with Addie Yates of GDF and the other with Greg Steinmetz of GDA.

On June 9, we will have another focus call with Lucas Franck from the Seeing Eye Dogs group. Everyone is welcome to attend these focus calls.

Earlier this year, we lost Josette Kernaghan and, due to the support of several folks, Josette will be on the ACB Angel Wall. Thanks to all who supported this effort.

Sometime after the ACB/GDUI national conventions, we will hold another focus call. Happy tails and trails this spring and summer.

Pierce County Association of the Blind **by Julie Harlow**

Striving to keep our chapter together through the pandemic, we were excited to host our first in-person meeting in May. We used our hybrid platform with members present in person, as well as Zoom. It went well, and we enjoyed seeing members again.

We had to find a new meeting location, since the Tacoma Area Coalition for Individuals with Disabilities has still not opened its doors. The Asian Pacific Cultural Center has gladly accepted us to hold our meetings for the rest of the year. Come and join us on the third Saturday of each month and check us out.

We had Pierce County Transit come and speak to our chapter about shuttle services. It was informative, and we began to bridge the gap between our local blind community and our local transit services. We believe we made the first steps in their understanding our community needs and how we can begin to get involved. We look forward to future meetings and understanding from our perspective. This is how change begins, right?

Skagit and Island Council of the Blind **by Andy Arvidson**

Our chapter has been considering new ways to increase our attendance and decided to make some big changes, like moving to another venue, perhaps a new city location, and a different day and time.

At the meeting where we planned to discuss these issues and decide what to do, we found that the back door of our meeting location was unlocked and open. Our venue was not very secure.

Some of us were participating in a low-vision support group at the Anacortes Senior Activity Center, so we decided to join them at that location. We now meet on the fourth Thursday of the month from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. After our meeting, we follow that with lunch at the Real Tequila. For those who wish, there is also a luncheon at the senior center.

We were paying rent at the previous location, and now our meeting location is rent free. This will give us a few dollars more for outreach.

By the time you read this, we will have completed our June 4 bird listening walk (see article elsewhere in this issue), and our Blind Promotion of Opportunity and Independence event. The more we let the general population see our skill, the more we can be out in the public, the more things we can do, and not hide away from real life. We are no different from anyone else except we cannot see, but we still enjoy our lives. Access and technology provide that, and make these experiences possible. We do not have to prove this; we just need to show that we are a part of the whole universe, not a separate part of the whole.

South Kitsap Council of the Blind **by Jessamyn Landby**

Since February, our chapter has raised lots of funds without having to do very much. We have completed three fundraisers. First was a T-shirt, sweatshirt, and jacket sale. A big thanks to Jackie Cabrera for placing such a large order. We then participated in the GiveBig fundraiser, and we raised lots of funds from it, especially by taking advantage of the matching funds available during the early giving period. Then, every so often our chapter places a big order with Shop with Script, which is now RaiseRight.

These fundraisers that happened one right after another were really cool. These funds will help our chapter.

In April, we had a guest speaker, Danette Dixon from Washington Council of the Blind Diabetics. She talked to us about Diabetes and what their affiliate

is all about. Several of our members may be interested in the Diabetics chapter.

Here are a few activities that our chapter has planned in the next few months. In June, after our meeting, we are having lunch at a restaurant called That One Place. July is our summer party, and in August we will have our annual picnic. It will be outside in the grass area where we have our meetings. The two activities in July and August will be held on our meeting days, even though we will not be having our July or August meetings.

Please keep our member Shirley Sharmer in your prayers. She fell and broke her hip. She is our phone calling person. Thank you, Kevin, for stepping in and doing the calling of members to remind them of our upcoming meeting.

Snohomish County Council of the Blind by Marilee Richards

Is it winter or spring? While writing for our summer edition of Newsline, I am confused about which season we are in now. I was out yesterday and was freezing. Here's to sunshine this summer.

Greetings to all. We all seem to be moving forward towards in-person meetings. Our April meeting was an amazing event, in which we continue to make connections with many new friends as we visit and share while having lunch. We had an Easter theme this month. Plans are under way for the summer season (providing the weather cooperates).

On May 7, we celebrated Nancy Lind's 80th birthday (right). As at so many of our spring events, it was pouring down rain and freezing outside, but the room inside was full of warmth and joy as we spent the day with her and dozens of friends and family. I had to keep one ear open to the board meeting as Jeanne and I were given the honor of being the first timers chosen to attend the



American Council of the Blind's national convention and conference in Nebraska.

The spotlight is on our support group this summer, which offers opportunities to gain information and provide speakers to our newly blind and sight-impaired members. We are hoping to open it up to all newly blind and sight-impaired folks in Washington state. You can get more information about this group by emailing me at richjeanne16@gmail.com.

We will be having our SCCB board meeting this month to firm up our plans for summer activities and may even come up with an event that involves members from other affiliates in the area. The sky is the limit.

Between conventions, meetings, and summer events, it will be a very busy season. Please stay safe and healthy.

Spokane Council of the Blind by Debby Phillips

It has been roller-coaster weather here for weeks, it seems. Just when we think that spring might really be here, it gets cold and windy and rainy. The other day I had to pinch myself and remind myself that I wasn't in Oregon, because it was so rainy. Our chapter is small, but consistent. We are missing some of our other members and hope they will be able to return now that we are again meeting at Lilac Services for the Blind. It's nice to be back there. At this point, we are not mandated to mask, though some people are still choosing to wear them, which is fine. We can't make coffee or food anymore, but people are free to bring their own drinks or lunch if they choose to do so.

This past Monday we had Denise Colley speak to us about convention. We also have a new member who will be coming to our June meeting but had a previous commitment for May. She will also be going to Omaha for the ACB Convention. I'm happy for her, though a little envious. Hopefully, some of our chapter members will at least be able to participate virtually in the convention.

We are looking forward to our summer picnic, though we do not have all the details yet about where or when. We should have that information by our June meeting and will be able to share that with members and perhaps some who have not been back since COVID. Here's hoping that everyone has a pleasant, safe summer.

United Blind of Tri-Cities by Janice Squires

Exciting news from the WCB GiveBig campaign. The United Blind of Tri-Cities (UBTC) was No. 1 in the state for this fund raiser. With our own donations and the matching funds, we will be receiving \$1,575, and we cannot be happier about this amount. With our candy sales being put on hold for two years, the money will be most welcome in our bank account.

We are such a busy chapter with all our outside activities. One reason for our success is that we do our best to keep things simple. Every week, on the same day, Tuesdays, and at the same time, we have some type of support group happening. Between our lunches, cards, books, and tech groups, there is something for everyone. We have an excellent calling and texting system to keep our members notified of all events. Our Saturday business meetings bring around 15 to 20 members in person and on our conference line. President Frank Cuta seems to always have an informative speaker to keep our meetings interesting and lively.

We also do our best to keep all our members as active participants in our chapter. Those small jobs, to big ones, we want every member to feel included. Vanessa Pruitt is one of those members who has really stepped up to the plate to serve our organization in so many different ways. From sunshine to transportation, she has really taken on such a valuable role. Diana Softich helps in so many ways and has now included a fifth Tuesday of the month activity. It is a dice game called Left Right Center, and it is just a hoot. With the money we collect from our cards and dice game, we have a big pizza Christmas party at the end of the year.

We want to wish one of our long- time members, Mary Ketchersid, a very happy 96th birthday. We love you, Mary!

United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares

As spring begins to turn to summer, the rain has been plentiful, and so has the spirit of giving. Our chapter had some generous donations during the GiveBig fundraiser, from the Delta Gammas of Whitman College, and a local personal donation of some equipment and items for low vision/blind people. We decided to pay it forward and keep the giving going by making some investments in our local community of people with vision impairments, both financially and otherwise. The chapter has decided to set up a lending library with existing and new equipment so that it can all be useful. We created a committee to oversee this project by developing a catalogue and system for keeping track of who has each item and if it is being used or needs to move to the next person. One of the items is a Perkins Braille we are going to get refurbished, and already have a member interested in being the first one on the list to try it out. Other items include a color detector, a watch, a recorder, and a few other cool things.

We are also very proud of our member, Alexann Tureman, who is graduating from college and starting grad school, and has also secured a job at the Washington State School for the Blind. She has worked so incredibly hard to achieve these goals with pure tenacity and determination. We wish her the best on her new endeavors and give her a heartfelt congratulations.

In other news, we thank our new treasurer, Joleen Ferguson, for managing a complicated bank transition successfully and give her the Juggle is Real award. This is something I made up for my own personal life, but feel it is appropriate here. She has also taken on updating our website on a regular basis, created an email for our group, and is encouraging us all to use the Amazon Smiles program every time we shop. Amazon is an easy fundraising tool. Great job, Joleen. We appreciate all you do.

Some of us also attended a community transportation meeting to give perspective and feedback regarding current issues and solutions that can

make our local transportation more accessible for all. It was a great opportunity to be part of the dialogue.

Wishing you all wisdom and well-being from Washington's beautiful wine country.

WCB Diabetics
by Danette Dixon

The Washington Council of the Blind Diabetics special interest affiliate chapter is still going strong. The officers and board members have spoken at different WCB chapters. I am creating a resource document for speakers. We meet the second Monday of each month via Zoom. We do have business cards. Now we will decide who we want to put Braille on them.

I would like to turn a spotlight on WCBD board member Jeanne Jacobs. Jeanne has such a joyful, happy heart; she is always laughing. Jeanne will send out cards and contact members. Wherever Jeanne is, there is a crowd of people because she has lots of friends. She is an upcoming leader in WCB and WCBD. Watch for an article from Jeanne when she returns from ACB National Convention. Jeanne was our first timer in 2020.

If you would like the Zoom information, or you know someone who is interested in learning more about our chapter, send an email to [**wcb.wcbd@gmail.com**](mailto:wcb.wcbd@gmail.com).

2022 WCB Calendar of Deadlines and Events

For more details on events listed,
please subscribe to the wcb-l list on groups.io or call 800-255-1147.
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

JULY

1-8 – ACB Conference and Convention, Omaha, NE Hilton
11 – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
14 – WASILC meeting from 10 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. on Zoom
17 – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
19 – WCB Committee leaders call at 7 p.m.
25 – Presidents call at 7 p.m.
31 – Last day to donate funds for scholarships awarded in 2022 (donations received after cutoff will be held for 2023 awards)

AUGUST

1 – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.
6 – WCB Board Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. on Zoom
8 – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
15 – WCB Convention online registration begins, as well as DoubleTree hotel reservations: <https://book.passkey.com/go/WCB22> or call the toll-free reservation number at (800) 222-TREE, or (800) 222-8733 and reference the group code WCB or the group name Washington Council of the Blind.
21 – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
22 – Presidents call at 7 p.m.
31 – Submission deadline for WCB Newsline Fall 2022 issue

SEPTEMBER

9 – DSB State Rehab Council meeting at 9 a.m.
12 – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

- 18** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
- 19** – Last day for the “Early Bird drawing” convention registration
- 20** – WCB Committee Leaders call at 7 p.m.
- 23** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting
- 26** – Presidents call at 7 p.m.
- 30** – Record Date for WCB members’ voting eligibility

OCTOBER

- TBD – Proposed Constitutional Amendments Forum Call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)
- 1** – Deadline to donate items to WCB fundraising auction
- 3** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.
- 8** – WTBBL Patron Advisory Council from 9 a.m. to noon
- 9** – Proposed 2023 WCB Operations Budget Forum Call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)
- 10** – WCB convention online registration ends at midnight
- 10** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
- 15** – White Cane Safety Day
- 16** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
- 21** – Deadline to sign up for 2022 Showcase of Talent
- 22** – WCB live fundraising auction on Zoom
- 24** – Presidents call at 7 p.m.
- 27** – Door Prize donations must be received by 5 p.m.
- 27-29** – WCB Annual Convention at DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport, 18740 International Blvd., Seattle, WA 98188
- 27** – WASILC meeting, location TBD

Washington Council of the Blind

is pleased to acknowledge donors who have generously supported our programs in the second quarter of 2022.

Thank You!

Johanna Rodman Foundation
Fred & Dolores Williams Foundation

Anonymous donations In Memory of: Dolores Acosta, Bud Adams, Berl Colley, Mel Dubbin, Darla Hatfield, Byron Kaczmariski, Josette Kernaghan, Bud Kohl, and Karyn Vandecar

Donations In Memory of:

Lin Folsom and Phil Holdsworth (SICCB) - Colette Arvidson
Marlaina Lieberg - Jeanne Jacobs
Bobbie Jean Tedrow - Randy Tedrow
Tokyo, Venus and Fenton - Andy & Colette Arvidson

Donations In Honor of: Danette Dixon - Dixie Wilson

Jeri Dixon - Danette Dixon
Heather Meares - Anonymous
Kim Leis Moberg & John Moberg: Karl & Shelly Leis
Anne Ridenour - Lisa George and Christel Peterson
Diabetics across the state of Washington - Anonymous

Colette & Andy Arvidson, Kathy Ayala, Alan Biné, Philip Bleyhl, Anita Both, Carol Brame, Julie Brannon, Judith Brown, Zandra Brown, Terry Butler, Konnie Chitty, Young Choi, Kitty Cummings, Tim Downie, David Edick, Alberta Finley, Julie Gray, Ginny Kohl, Bunch Lindy, Dana Marmion, Beth Marsau, Donald & Sally Mayo, Glenn McCully, Marilyn Milburn, Kim L Moberg, George Mues, Rhonda Nelson, Marilee Richards, Sheri Richardson, Craig Schell, Evilo Schwab, South Everett Lions Club, Holly & Jim Turri, Linda Wilder, Cathy Wilson, Lucy Yochim