**WASHINGTON**

**COUNCIL**

**OF THE BLIND**

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Founded 1935

# WCB NEWSLINE

Summer 2023 Edition

﻿“Seeds of Change”

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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 November**

**and are anxious to read your quality content.**

**Please send all submissions by  
September 30.**

**Digital cartridges should 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**](mailto:theWCBNewsline@gmail.com)

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and may also be accessed through the WCB website.

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## President’s Message Summer 2023 by Julie Brannon

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Are you kidding me? It’s already time to write for our summer Newsline? When I was young and would complain about how slow time was going as I awaited an upcoming and very desirous event in the future, my wise mother would say, “You wait until you get my age, time will go so fast you won’t have a clue what happened to it!” Guess what, mom, you’re right!

We had a Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) board meeting on May 6, in very close proximity to our March board meeting.

In August of this year, we will have a joint event, which will include a WCB board meeting on Aug. 6 and a leadership summit in-person event the same weekend, Aug. 4 and 5. Location is being worked on as I write this article, so stay tuned.

The fund-raising committee submitted an article for the Give Big page of The Seattle Times, and on May 2 and 3, several individuals and chapters participated. We made half of our monetary goal of around $7,843.

Many WCB members are readying for our upcoming American Council of the Blind (ACB) convention. This year, per my last count, we have 15 members attending in person in Schaumburg, IL. I don’t have a count for those attending virtually. As with last year, as ACB is again presenting a hybrid convention, many events have already started online and will keep attendees very busy a couple of weeks before convention.

WCB can be very proud, in that two of our members are running for ACB offices: Deb Cook-Lewis for ACB president, and Denise Colley (still a WCB member so we’ll continue to claim her, even though she now resides in Houston TX) for another term as ACB secretary. Denise Colley, Frank Cuta and I connected with interested WCB chapters and affiliates, calling ourselves convention posse members, to present information about the ACB convention. We will do the same when our WCB convention is on the horizon.

This year, Andy Arvidson, Denise Colley, and I offered an ACB voting information session for all interested WCB members, since a member now doesn’t have to attend the convention to be able to cast their votes for ACB positions, constitution/bylaws amendments, and/or resolutions.

This year, I will serve as our WCB delegate to the ACB convention, and Andy Arvidson will serve as our alternate delegate. Heidi Coggins was elected as our WCB first-timer attendee.

I am ending this entry with sad and difficult news the WCB family dealt with recently. During the end of May and early June, we saw two very dear WCB members pass away. They are Rhonda Nelson (a very long-time, involved and respected member), and Tracy Fejeran (a newer member, active in the Spokane chapter and very loved and respected by those who knew her). Both fought valiant fights in regard to their wills to survive. They will both be very much missed.

Again, as you can see, we’re continually busy and moving forward, even though time is flying by.

## Letter from the Editors

Greetings and Salutations,

Gardens all around are in full glory right now, exploding in show-stopping shades of vibrant colors. This is their grand finale of the summer, before they begin the next phase of their life cycle, spreading the seeds for next year’s blooms. My own gardens have had very little water this year, as I don’t run sprinklers. I have adopted the concept that the plants will become stronger if they have to send their roots deep to find what they need to survive, and for the most part, that is exactly what has happened. Several plants have appeared unexpectedly, but always welcome, from seeds that self-sowed the previous year. Some wildflowers and a few other interesting surprises here and there make me smile when I discover them.

What seeds are you sowing for others to discover in the future? Are your roots strong enough to survive the dry spells and unruly conditions of difficult times? Have you shared your vibrant colors with those around you to bring them joy, especially when they might be going through their own difficulties? Do you take notice when unexpected surprises come into your life?

This issue is a giant seed packet full of a variety of stories, waiting to be planted in your minds as you read them. Let them settle in, grow, and share them widely if they speak to you. Most importantly, allow them to change you, even if in the smallest, imperceptible way. You will not regret it.

Your Faithful Editors,

Heather Meares and Reginald George

## It’s Your Newsline … Just Say It! Compiled by Reginald George

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Here is your opportunity to express your thoughts, voice your opinions, inspire us with your ideas, and share your feedback as we continue to evolve our publication into the Newsline you can’t wait to read.

We are excited to announce that the audio version of the anthology “Artificial Divide,” DBC19240 published by Renaissance Press, is now available on Bard. This anthology, recorded by the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, features 16 short stories by blind writers. Each story features at least one central character who is blind or visually impaired. This unique book has some great content and is an important contribution to the literature of blindness. WCB Newsline co-editor Heather Meares’ story “Night Pixie” opens the book.

If you haven’t checked out our podcast page for WCB Newsline Unleashed lately, you could be missing out on some great entertainment. We have wonderful podcasts coming out just around the corner. So, stay tuned for those. We will have two chats with puppy raisers, hosted by Marilee Richards and Linda Wilder, as well as guide dog focus calls brought to you by the Guide Dog Users of Washington State, the Washington Author’s panel from last year’s WCB convention, and so much more.

You can listen to all episodes of WCB Newsline Unleashed through the ACB Media Network, or at <https://wcb-newsline-unleashed.pinecast.co>. Or, just ask your phone or Amazon smart speaker to play it.

The deadline for all Newsline submissions, and to cast your vote for the best article from this issue is Sept. 30. Please send all votes, submissions, and content to [TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com](mailto:TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com) before that date.

We thank you for your contributions that keep the WCB Newsline vibrant and alive. We are always looking for new writers on almost any topic. Newsline is especially looking for youth writers. If you are a student or know some young writers with strong opinions and a wish to express their ideas about current blindness issues, their own challenges, the organized blind movement in Washington state, or maybe they just wish to tell their own story, please send them our way.

Thanks to everyone who takes the time to read our magazine and vote for your favorite article in each issue. The winner you chose for our spring travel issue was Tim Downie’s Outstanding article, “Taking the Train from Washington to Ohio.” Once again, the top vote getter for the year will be chosen by you and celebrated with us in our annual virtual award gala in December. 2022 was the best one yet, and the recording is up in podcast form for you to listen to any time.

Reader feedback on the spring issue:

From Julie Brannon: “Truly loved this edition. I felt like I was on an 80-day trip around the world, traveling in a myriad of ways!

As always, it’s hard to choose from the excellent writing, inclusive content, and distinct personalities of each writer. But I am choosing “Taking the Train from Washington to Ohio,” by Tim Downie. It was well written and descriptive, sharing his emotions behind every leg of the trip. It was courageous for a fairly newly-blind person to navigate this kind of excursion with such independence and finesse.”

From Hayley Agers: “I choose Tim’s piece on his adventure across the country by train. As I read through it, I was able to place myself into the story, feeling the rumble of the train beneath me, and how the gentle movement might help me fall asleep at night, wondering about the people I would encounter, imagining the quiet of sitting with a good book and even completing it. But what I really felt after reading the article, was inspired.

Reading this piece from Tim has inspired me to change the story I allow my head to tell, which often leaves my heart feeling defeated. This piece has me thinking about the trips I’d like to take and how I can make them possible.”

Frank Cuta on “The Dragon Revealed,” by Heather Meares:

“Regarding your horrible experience at SeaTac, there is no amount of

training and education that could possibly resolve the problem of not

receiving competent assistance from airport ‘helpers!’ What there needs to be is a 24-hour-a-day emergency phone listing that rings in the on-call supervisor’s office that disabled customers could have access to when there is a service problem like you experienced. I think we should suggest that each app for a major airline has some kind of pop-up that is triggered when you check the box to let them know that you are disabled. This pop-up would list the phone numbers for on-call emergency resources.”

Note from your editors: We heartily agree. While in the midst of several similar experiences at this airport, we were informed that the airlines no longer handle their own meet-and-assist requests. This is now a service provided by the airport itself and contracted by a company called G2. We would have found the following paragraphs from the G2 website to be quite comical, if it was not so incredibly condescending and disturbing.

“… PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

Excellent customer service starts with our front-line professionals. These individuals know the importance of effective communication with your passengers.

As a result of this importance, G2 has implemented the G.O.T. customer service training program. This training program, which is administered to every employee in the public eye, entails a variety of useful tools and information needed to provide a customer service that surpasses all expectations.

Wheelchair Technology: G2’s proprietary dispatching and tablet technology ensure your passengers are greeted and safely transported to their departure gate or pick-up destination in a timely manner. Your arriving passengers are met with a smile, a clean wheelchair and their name displayed on a tablet.

We track each employee performance and even allow the passenger to provide feedback through a digital survey. We are proud to share our customer satisfaction percentage is 99.99%.

Passenger Check-in: For some passengers, traveling can be very stressful. Our customer service representatives assist passengers with the kiosk and baggage check-in process to assure a smooth check-in before they’re gently guided toward the security checkpoint.”

I ask all of you, have you ever been offered a feedback survey after a trip through the Seattle airport? Have you ever met a meet-and-assist person who has been trained in ‘human guide’ technique? I wrote to G2 requesting the link to this passenger survey, but they have not responded.

Newsline wants to hear more stories of your experiences with meet-and-assist service anywhere in the world, but particularly here in Washington state. We will continue to compile and publish them in future issues.

So, if you run into a problem, or find yourself suddenly forced to sit in a chair in their holding tank, watching the world go by, waiting for someone to bring back your boarding pass and take you to your plane as we did, and you need real assistance, the following contact information might help:

Meet-and-Assist Dispatch phone: (206) 574-4141

Website: https://www.g2securestaff.com

Know your passenger rights. Ask for that feedback survey and contact the airline to register your complaints. Be specific about flight, time, and what happened.

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

# FEATURES

## Cheshire Cat Interviews #20 The Love Connection by Heather Meares

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What do I love more than talking about my gardens? Talking with another gardener about their gardens, of course. There’s a wonderful bond between those of us who don’t mind getting our hands dirty in order to reap the rewards of fragrant flowers or fruits and veggies right from our own backyard. These are the obvious results. But what I found in speaking with Hayley Agers is she uses her gardens as a canvas for connecting with others. Whether it’s using certain plants in her landscape to remember someone, or creating welcoming spaces that people feel at home in and building meaningful relationships through gardening, Hayley is a master gardener of both plants and people. So, here’s a glimpse of our chat between two gardeners.

**Heather:** “When you’re in the garden, creating your designs, or enjoying the rewards of it all, what is your inspiration?”

**Hayley:** “Two things…all the memories I have associated with being outside with Nana and Granddad, growing up in England, this started my love of gardening. I remember so many days spent in their garden. It had ponds with coy fish and water features, fruit trees, and a hedge of loaded camelia bushes, and on the other side of the hedge was Granddad’s pigeon sheds. He was part of a pigeon club, and the sheds were filled with pigeons, and also lovebirds and cockatiels that he bred. I recall the pigeons had little rings around their ankles with numbers on them, and we would load them into a basket, drive hundreds of miles, get the basket out and set it on a picnic table at a designated place, open the lid, and all the pigeons would fly out. Then we would race home to get there before the first pigeon. We’d sit in the garden, and as they came in, he would look at the ring number and write it all down. Later that night, we would be at the pigeon club, and there were awards given. I also remember picking gooseberries or tomatoes with Nana and cooking with her. Past memories are a huge part of what brings me peace. But now, it’s memories of my kids when they were little and hopes for the future. That’s what inspires me when creating a new space. It’s always about what can I do in this area that encourages connections.”

**Heather:** “What design aspects do you think about when you’re deciding what to plant in a garden?”

**Hayley:** “Always, there needs to be fragrance. When you’re blind, fragrance is super important, and texture, too. For a long time, around the treehouse, we had lavender for the fragrance and lamb’s ear for the texture. I want it to be enjoyed and not just there, by smelling or touching it, or picking it and bringing it inside. I want the spaces to be functional. As time goes on, we really need to have a party, because when I look at the spaces, we could easily accommodate 40 people with the different little seating areas we have. The areas I designed can give me a place to go meditate and pray and heal, or listen to a book. Now, I realize not only are those places a refuge for me, but when my daughter brings her friends over, they sit in those areas and turn the outdoor fire on. They sat out there for nine hours talking and had music on. It was nice to realize that even when it seems like we are living on a different planet some days, the thing that brings us together are the connections we seek with other people.”

**Heather:** “What you are saying really lends itself to the concept of seeds of change, because when you first made those gardens, your kids were little, and you created spaces that would incorporate that. Now, they’re growing, your gardens are growing, and as you’re changing, you and your husband are entering different phases of your life. The space still brings you peace, just in different ways.”

**Hayley:** “We use to have birthday parties with 60 kids at our house, these big to-dos, and the garden was full of people. Now, I find the desire to connect is still there, but it’s become more about the quality of the connection vs. the quantity of how many people are here.”

**Heather:** “So a more intimate gathering place.”

**Hayley:** “Absolutely. It’s a completely different space now than when we moved in. About seven years ago, we had a knock at the door, and the person said her name was Hayley, and I told her I was Hayley. She said she used to live here and was in the area and wanted to come back and visit the house with her grandfather. She had been recently diagnosed with bone cancer and was doing a walk down memory lane. She asked if she could go to the backyard, and I said sure, but told her it didn’t look anything like it did when she lived here. We bought the house in 2001, so it had been many years. She came to the backyard and climbed the ladder to the treehouse, and we sat up there and talked. She said, “I can’t believe this. I want to move back in!”

**Heather:** “I had kind of an opposite experience. In Walla Walla, things start growing so fast at the beginning of the season, it’s hard to keep up with it all. It gets out of control quickly, and I had not called my gardeners to help get the weeds down yet. A lady knocked on my door, and I thought it was going to be someone from the city telling me to get my yard under control. Instead, she said, ‘I’m a forager, and I see you’ve got some really great weeds out there that I could use for salads. Would you mind if I take some?’

“I replied, ‘Honey, you take whatever you want from my yard!’ The next day, I called my gardener.”

**Hayley:** “I have a friend who is a forager, and she is blind, as well. She makes these amazing cocktails with flowers, and extravagant desserts. I love how gardens, no matter if it’s someone knocking at your door or discovering your love of nature through social media, bring people together all over the world.”

**Heather:** “I remember a get-together with a few close friends where we all brought whatever seeds we had collected from our gardens and exchanged them, and even planted some of them in pots and in my yard. We also had food prepared from our harvests. I served homemade strawberry shortcake. We all wore silly sunhats and had a wonderful time sharing with each other. I will remember that day forever.”

**Hayley:** “My daughter, Sydney, doesn’t like digging in the dirt, but she does love plants. I thought maybe for her birthday, we could go to a thrift store with her friends, and they could each pick out a vessel to use as a planter. It could be anything, like a teacup or a bucket, whatever is unique to them. I have so many succulents that we could dig them up and they could each leave with their own container planted with different succulents.”

**Heather:** “When my daughter was younger, she was the same way. She would watch me out there all day and probably thought I was nuts, but now, as an adult with her own children, she’s an avid gardener as well, and has taught her kids to garden, so it does eventually kick in.”

**Hayley:** “My spaces are forever changing to meet me where I’m at.”

**Heather:** “I have incorporated spiral designs into my gardens for that exact reason. They represent a constant, never-ending evolution. Spirals occur in nature everywhere you look, like in roses, sunflower seed heads, seashells, and even the growth pattern of branches around a tree. Nature intrinsically knows that change is not optional if you want to survive.”

**Hayley:** “I have lots of roses, and four of them are in memory of babies I’ve lost through miscarriages. The reason I picked roses is not because I thought I was going to be a fabulous rose gardener, I’m not. I love how they are so beautiful in the summer, sometimes with hundreds of blooms, and yet I can cut them down to my knees, and next year they’re back again. I feel like that’s us as human beings. There’s always going to be obstacles that cut us down to our bare being, questioning if we can get through this.”

**Heather:** “It’s that whole pruning of the unnecessary… you have to prune to get new, healthy growth.”

**Hayley:** “And we come back because what are our choices? We can choose to grow and change or wither and die.”

**Heather:** “What are your final thoughts to impart to us?”

**Hayley:** “Learn to appreciate change more than fight it. I have butterflies throughout my garden to remind me that it’s through change that we come out the other side our most beautiful self. I would also encourage people to create that space for yourself – it can be as simple as a chair and table, with your favorite blanket, maybe something special someone gave you on the table if it makes you smile. You might have a favorite hand lotion with a scent like citrus or vanilla. Surround yourself with what centers you and brings you back to your core. Create the space, and embrace the change.”

## Take My Hand, Let’s Stroll Together by Hayley Agers

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Welcome to my garden, take my hand and let me show you around. My goal always is that you leave feeling relaxed, cared for, and a little spoiled.

Let’s start where I begin each day, a small deck surrounded by wooden rails and window boxes filled with red begonias and white lobelia. Please take a seat at the table and let me bring you a cup of tea. I’ll turn on the water feature that can be heard from anywhere on either deck. The wind chimes hang here, too, so let’s keep our fingers crossed that a delightful breeze will come along and give us some music. If the wind should not come, never fear, the speakers can play any music your heart desires. How have you been? Tell me what’s happening in your world, and as your friend, how can I support you?

Next, enjoy what’s blooming in the various pots on my larger deck. Did you smell that? Those are the two big pots of cherry tomatoes. There’s not much that matches the taste of a freshly plucked cherry tomato. No need to rinse, just pop it in your mouth and enjoy. And for that caprese salad I’ll be making us for lunch, the basil plant is just to your left. Further along, lettuce and various herbs grow in a raised planter. Pick a leaf or two and enjoy but save room for lunch. It’s not a long walk to the other end of the deck, where the intoxicating jasmine winds up the trellis. Sit at the bistro table and I’ll be right out with that homemade scone and rose jam, made from the fragrant roses that grow at either end of this deck. Watch out, duck! That was a hummingbird on her way to the four feeders that hang from the eves of the covered area, and they sometimes get a little close.

Let’s keep moving, through the gate and down the wooden stairs to the garden below. Yes, that is a hot tub, and don’t worry, we’ll enjoy a dip later to soothe any achy muscles or mental fatigue.

On your left, you’ll be passing the fire pit, made of large paving slabs. Later, we can meet down here and enjoy some s’mores. If you caught a whiff of something sweet, that’s the wisteria tree that blooms right behind the fire pit. I’ll be sure to have one of the oh-so-comfy Adirondack chairs cleaned up and waiting for you upon your return. Be careful, we have a few more stairs before we reach the grass, but I’ve got you. On the right, is our tri-level terrace, and although we enjoy many seasonal fruits from this area, it’s a little difficult to walk around in. When they are ready, I’ll have you back and we’ll enjoy some fresh blueberries in my sheet-pan pancakes or spread some homemade fig jam with our cheese and crackers in the evening. You might also like to reach down to your right and pluck a leaf from the lemon balm plant, rub it between your fingers, and smell its wonderful fragrance. At the bottom level of the terrace, we’ll reach the vegetable garden nestled in the corner. Just a few raised beds that are filled with zucchini, cucumbers, bell peppers, and jalapenos in one, and edible flowers like chives, day lilies, nasturtiums in the other.

The two large pots that you may notice as we walk by are filled with rosemary, the biggest I’ve ever seen. The other pot is filled with a variety of thornless raspberries. They aren’t quite ready yet, but I’ll be sure to get you some when they are.

The back fence of the garden is a work in progress, but right now it contains a climbing rose that I planted in memory of one of the babies I lost. There are also pink and red peonies from my friend Marilyn’s garden. When she passed away, and her daughter asked me if I would like something of her Mum’s, I picked these peonies and went over and dug them up. If you’ve never smelled a peony, please take a moment to bend down, being careful of the cages that hold them upright. What do you think?

Okay, now for the fun. Want to feel like a kid again? We’re about to cross over the iron bridge that will put you at the door of our two-story tree house. It was only one story when we moved in, and you had to use a rope ladder to get in and a fireman’s pole to get out. We made a few adjustments to make it easier, for the kids, of course. That’s my story, and I’m sticking to it.

As we enter the first floor, you’ll need to duck a little, as it’s a low ceiling. This isn’t ever a problem because on this floor, you’ll find the library with bookshelves filled with books and games, and some beanbags and comfy stools to sit on.

In the back left corner, you will find the wooden stairs to take you up to the second floor. Up here, there’s a couch that folds out into a bed for all of the nights Sydney has sleepovers with friends. When friends can’t come, she convinces me to join her. The inside walls are painted white in order to shine the movie projector onto the walls and watch a movie. Most recently, it was Little Women. On any given weekend in the summer, you’ll hear giggling teen girls laughing at a movie or one another’s stories. There is a high ceiling with a chandelier. Around the room are accent tables and drawers displaying and hiding all sorts of goodies. If the idea of a pull-out futon bed doesn’t sound appealing to you, climb into one of the two hammocks, but warn the person below you when you’ll be rolling out.

Would you prefer to leave via the stairs, the fireman’s pole or, just past the couch, you can climb out of the window into a spiral slide and make your exit. If you choose the slide, lying down makes it faster, and you won’t hit your head. Come on friend, you can do it, screaming with delight permitted. As we move back over the iron bridge, you will feel a pool on your left that isn’t quite ready yet, unless you buy into the benefits of ice baths.

I have one special place left to show you. I fondly refer to it as the Kindness Zone. It’s the most recent addition to our garden, and it’s my new favorite place to be. This area can be accessed from the main garden, but I like to enter through the gate at the front of the house. So, hold my hand, we’re going to climb the stairs and head back inside, so we can enter from the way you’ll experience the most beauty – through the garden gate. Before we do, we have to pass by the roses, lavender, and rose lilies that smell so fragrant when in bloom. Reach your hand down, feel those tall stems? That’s the lavender. Go ahead and pick one of those blooms off and rub it between the palm of your hands. Let’s really set the mood for this relaxing space. Later I’ll bring you out a glass of lavender lemonade and you can enjoy that, too. We’re about to walk under the arbor, and you may feel a flower brush against your cheek. It’s okay. The arbor is filled with climbing honeysuckle and clematis. If you sniff, you will delight in the sweetness of the honeysuckle as we pass by. This is a small area but packs a punch with what it has to offer in the way of calm, comfort, and fulfilling moments with loved ones. The area is covered by a four-post gazebo and roof, and the cement floor is covered with a round rug in shades of blue and grey. If you want to take your shoes off, feel free. In the middle of the rug is a round table surrounded by curved couches with cushions. They wrap right around the shape of the table and are so comfortable to either sit or lie down on. The water fountain adds a soothing ambiance to the space, kind of like sitting by a running stream. There are also fragrant flowers in this part of my garden – would you expect any less? Two more roses planted in remembrance of two more heavenly babies, some lavender, phlox, lilies, and some herbs.

This evening, when the sun goes down and it’s not so hot, we’ll venture back out here if you’d like. I’ll put on the fire in the middle of the round table, we can partake in a beverage of your choice, and if it helps you to have a little light on, I’ll be sure to have the lights that surround the roof covering turned on.

I designed this specific place to be an area of reflection, a place people could retreat to when needing to gather their thoughts, pray, read in silence, or just relax and listen to the sounds of nature. It’s very special to me and where I will spend most of my summer. I just added the newest addition to the space, and it’s in loving memory of my Farley, my guide dog who just passed away in May. It’s a garden statue of a black lab, and it brings me comfort to know he’s here with me in spirit, even if he isn’t in body. I hope you’ve enjoyed the tour of my garden, and that the yummy treats I shared along the way have left you feeling like your cup and your belly are full. I encourage each of you reading this to find some time to create those special moments with loved ones, enjoy what is around you, and most importantly, to have a space in your home or garden that allows you to get away and take care of you. Please come back anytime, it’s been lovely having you.

## Lose Your Backpack Filled with Sand by Tim Downie

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In April, I moved into an individual/assisted living home. My doctor hopes that removing some stressors from my life will help all the physical issues I have to deal with. The home I chose is nice, and located in an area I was familiar with when I was fully sighted, as it is right across the street from where my daughter attended middle school. I feel safe here.

The emotions I experienced the first month were all over the board. I was happy at having a simpler studio apartment, one where I had more control over the home environment I needed to deal with every day. I don’t have much clutter, since for me, clutter makes it hard to find the things I need or want. For a couple of years, I’ve been pruning parts of my old life that no longer work. I sold my massive book collection, my coin collection, my camera equipment – all the things that belonged to the sighted person I was, hobbies which are now pretty useless to me. During that time, I also said goodbye to my driver’s license and my car, tangible symbols of adult freedom and mobility.

After moving in, I loved having my own space – a space I could create for who I am today, less clutter, things put in their place, and in a way that makes sense for someone with severe visual impairment. Bump dots soon adorned my appliances, and I put up some hooks on the wall to hold both my support and my white canes.

So, with this new start, I was surprised to find myself feeling depressed – seriously depressed. Why?

Well, I was also walking away from a family, my dogs, and my home of 15 years. It doesn’t matter that home wasn’t good or even safe for me anymore, it was what I knew. All that was gone.

I know myself. People tell me I’m positive and upbeat. I know from my own life experience I can make choices. I could easily let myself descend into a dark place for a long time. I did that once long ago, and it was awful. You know what that was like? It was like carrying a heavy backpack everywhere for years. It was so heavy and impacted everything I did. I went to a recovery treatment center for six weeks in the 1980s, and it helped me lose that backpack. I did that through lots of talking, writing letters, and confronting some people who had seriously harmed me when I was growing up. It was a long, hard journey, but once the backpack was off, I couldn’t believe how different I felt. I felt so light, so good. Since then, I have been acutely aware of when I casually pick up stones to start putting in my emotional backpack again. It doesn’t feel good, so I tend to deal with things quickly.

So, this new bout of depression – what to do? I didn’t know. So, I just started listening to music – music that in the past has made me feel good. Frankly, for me, it happens to be music by some great Jewish artists.

Neshama Carlebach, and her version of Esa Einai, “I Will Lift Up My Eyes to the Mountains, from Where My Help Comes.” Or Matisyahu’s acoustic version of Sunshine, which contains the verse, “So lose your backpack filled with sand, Come along and take my hand, We’ll walk together, walk for forever.” These writings have sustained the Jewish people for thousands of years, and I draw strength from them.

I attend a weekly transition support group at my new home. Through it, I learned how many people here are vision-impaired or blind and unaware of all the resources available, like the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL). So, I’m working with the management here, my local chapter (Snohomish County Council of the Blind), WCB Advocacy’s Judy Brown, and WTBBL, to host an onsite information session at the end of June.

I’m finding strength through music, and purpose through helping others and connecting with friends. I don’t feel sad and depressed today. I feel good that I am where I’m supposed to be, doing what I am supposed to be doing. It does take intentional effort to do things that are good for me. If I do them enough, it becomes habit. Next week, my Snohomish County Council of the Blind has our monthly meeting at Denny’s. We have such a positive, fun group of people, many of whom I count as close friends. We are on our journey together, not to mention the promise of pancakes or maybe an omelet. Yum!

**Grandma’s Garden**

**By Heidi Coggins**

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I spent a lot of time at grandma Alice’s house growing up. My grandma was one of my most important and loved people when I was little. She was from the depression era, so nothing went to waste. This also held true to not only her daily life but her garden, as well.

My grandma taught me the value of working hard and practicing patience when it came to her garden. She composted everything and only used soil she got from that big old compost bin. She saved seeds and got the discounted plants at the nursery that no one wanted because they looked a little worse for wear. Over and over, she would take in these little broken, bruised and off-colored plants and nurture them back to their full potential.

My very favorite place in the garden was right next to the potting shed where the rhubarb grew to monster proportions. One summer, I sat down in that patch and ate myself silly with fresh rhubarb stalks. Too much rhubarb will leave you running to a restroom every two minutes for a day or two if you don’t stop eating after the first stalk.

I learned that composting not only made the best dirt for a garden, but it also provided the best worms for going fishing. I learned how to shuck corn, peas and snap beans to the just right size to can.

I learned that refrigerator pickles from a fresh cucumber were way better than what the stores had. I learned that no matter how hard I tried as an adult, my mashed potatoes never quite were the same as grandma’s fresh mashed potatoes.

I figured out that you could eat an onion like an apple and that a little salt on a fresh tomato made it just right. Making my own little blackberry pies from our leftover pot pie tins was the very best way to have pie. Now I am grown and grandma has been gone for some time, and I feel like the bigger picture she tried to impart was this: If you put enough love and care into something, you will find that it can flourish and nourish your soul. Whether it’s a stinky old compost heap or a badly bruised and busted plant, there is value in things that maybe others can’t see. My grandma was wiser than she realized and she left me a legacy of how to have a bountiful life, even though she may not have known it.

Find the value in your life where and when you can. You never know if that broken, bruised plant (or person) could be waiting to blossom into something greater. It may be that they just need a little extra care and time.

## Lessons from the Natural World by Julie Harlow

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We are all born from the seeds of our parents, and they nourish us and give us the sun and water that fosters our thoughts, emotions, communication, and so much more. What happens when the seeds might be genetically modified, and the flower that blooms is different from the other flowers around? What if the flowers are in a toxic field from environmental pollutants, the harsh winds, and floods? Can that beautiful plant still flourish into the vibrant organism the universe intended from the little seed? How do we help ensure these leafless or weak plants blossom into a healthy, rich, full-bodied organism?

These organisms we call plants are magical in so many ways. They provide nourishment and medicine for the entire animal kingdom. We, as humans, take for granted the intricate, intelligent communication systems that are built into these living things – from the very small organisms to the huge ones, like the grandeur of the redwood trees, to name just one. Plants have something called “secondary metabolites” that work quite intelligently within their own communities, as well as meeting the needs of animals that feed on them, including humans. The chemical signals that these send out are quite extraordinary.

Have you ever seen a black walnut tree? There is no underbrush at the base or around these huge trees. They instinctively put out chemical signals that do not allow other plants to grow underneath. Other plants will emerge together, forming a little community, with a variety of different species within its confines. Plants, unlike humans, cannot pick themselves up and move to a better spot, and thus they become resilient to their fixed place and use their own intelligence for survival. A little bug will come along and start to feed on a leaf, and the plant will send a signal to send out its own repellant that discourages these little buggers to not find their leaves tasty. This resilience to their natural environment will give the animals the best source of nutrition and medicine for those that live within the same ecosystem. For these reasons, the secondary metabolite of our local grown food will give us the necessary resistance to our own local environment. Growing our own food and buying from our local farmers’ markets can be the best we, as humans, can give ourselves.

These signals, which plants have, communicate within their ecosystem, allowing for all the plants around to have the best chance for survival. Can we use the intelligence these plants have, and transfer them into destructive human life? Fungi can build communities under the earth, giving much-needed nutrition and other things to the surrounding community. How can we build a community like the plants, giving each seed the protection and stability to thrive?

I believe we can start with our signals of communication. As a medical board-certified coach, we had to train and learn how to listen at a level that helps our clients. This level of listening allows us to see if the plant is turning to the sun when it is needed, to open its petals to absorb what is being offered, to hear when the petals are lifeless, and how to bring water to its roots. Giving inspiration when it is needed is so critical to our little seeds and listening to our ecosystem. Caring about those around us means listening, moving ourselves to allow the plant next to us to get light when needed, and sharing the water source rather than taking it all for our own survival. Human words are not as complicated as what the natural environment has. However, they are more destructive.

Have you ever felt something when you see an email that makes you wonder why someone said what they did? We naturally want to take up more space in our world, and we branch out, not realizing that we are covering the light from someone else. When we do let someone join the conversation, we hog the water source. We listen at what is known as level one listening, and at this level, we are only listening to gain something that we are seeking. We are not thinking about the needs of others, as we are busy trying to fit things into our big, powerful human brains. Many times, I personally have wanted to reach out and question the person who wrote that email, as it seems so destructive. I hold back and wonder how far that tornado ripped through the thread of emails and caused others to feel lifeless.

This isn’t just in emails. It is everywhere. We naturally listen at a level one to serve ourselves. The “you” statements are a great example of this type of communication. We say things like, “Why did you do that? You should have done…” I encourage us all to take a lesson from our natural world, and use our powerful ability to nurture our ecosystem by asking meaningful questions that give us no information, but rather, allow us to hear others without judgment, which fosters more positivity, confidence, and more.

How many times have you been bothered when a person just grabs your arm and decides where you need to go, without asking? Each of us is different and unique and each of us has different needs. Don’t you think that when a person is kind, caring, and asks you if they can help, and how it is best to help, you become more relaxed? I truly believe that people generally are kind and wish to help, but lack the ability to listen in order to help in the way the person needs. How many people decide for you what the best route is for you to take, or how to get yourself through a door, or anything else? Getting out of your own head and listening is our first step to helping. It is not about us and what we think is best, but rather what is best for the person whom you wish to help.

Every word we say and action we take can be a hurricane, tornado, or a ray of sunshine. Asking questions about them or offering a positive comment provides our little seedlings with choices and the ability to move toward the light. This gives your neighbor the ability to thrive, rather than being the person to pluck their tender leaves. Truly caring about others means we sometimes move aside and share in all that is out there to absorb. Our job, as the stable and rooted plant, is to sit quietly, listen, and not need to fill the space. We cannot grow our ecosystem further if we continue to suck up more oxygen in the room or take water all for ourselves. Sending signals during times of need are words of encouragement and positivity. The “you” statements are like a fire that sweeps through the field, destroying confidence, bringing in anger, self-doubt, and sadness. We would never wish to destroy our own little seeds, so why are we destroying our own ecosystem?

I am a talker, and love to share my stories. I have learned that many have much more interesting stories than my own. Each story I hear allows me to understand my neighbor, appreciate them more, and it tells me perhaps I need to get out of this patch or field. The next time you answer an email, or just listen to your friend, sit without judgment, as the plants do. Responding to every email, without thought of those that are reading it, or asking the questions that are burning within you, may not be what’s best for the survival and stability of your neighboring plant. By thinking of your favorite garden, or wherever you find nature, stand still, listen, and remember that the survival of plants has outlasted everything else to date. They have it right, they work in unison, providing food, shade, nutrition, and medicine. Let us sit with our friends, listen, provide a hug, a handkerchief, a laugh, a piece of our food, or water. We can provide the knowledge of our grounded, strong roots to those little seeds by listening and allowing them to share in the massive space that has become us. Our words can be the sun and water, rather than a hurricane or tornado. The water we provide can be nourishment, or it can drown the delicate flower. We can choose to help the lifeless or leafless neighbors or destroy them. If we do not listen, we may not know that our neighbor was not given the strength for survival from the start. Can we foster their strength? What would you choose?

## Once Upon a Late Spring by Lyussy Hyder

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These are the days of “duty,” but, also, a labor of love. This time, all in the family, looking over two sand-colored guys, furry, beautiful, and full of character. They are a bit careful to encounter at first, but as soon as they see me serving food, it is clear we are going to be buddies. We are, because I am as glad to wait on them as they are to have me as their humans' substitute. We don’t break our boundaries. We play and share moments of endearment.

The home is worth loving description, but I don’t know how to deliver that. The floors are bare-feet friendly, and every room has a selected antique and heirloom décor, as this masterfully restored old house demands. The yard is rather small but has room for a patio under the canopy of curly wisteria, with lilac, hydrangea bushes, and flowers seasonally taking reign of the ground.

Best time this week was spent on the deck with a book. I fill the feeders for birds and squirrels and water the garden and set my leisure in the lounge chair on the front porch. The wall of it is high enough to hide me from the street, and I am in this out-of-sight patch by myself. The noises are traveling freely through my bubble. I hear neighbors walking their dogs, a mailman dropping post in my mailbox, and cars driving by. It is summery warm; cars have windows rolled down. I am surprised to hear the car radios playing no rap or pop. Once, a beautiful Mexican song traveled up the street slowly and turned the corner, disappearing between the buildings. Another time, Pink Floyd made me stand up and see what driver was passing by and giving a gift of my favorite band. An ice cream truck drove by, ahh, I wished I was a kid to run and wave and get a cone or a bar. But when it gets quiet, the birds take over the air. Some come close and chirp and whistle, others announce themselves from afar, but then show up for a brief snatch of peanuts and flap their wings in demonstration of their avian athleticism.

I finished one book, and started another, in this fresh air, hidden-from-people, open-to-animals spot. Mind feasting, skin absorbing UV (in very measured doses), I also thrive in my favorite sense – smell. Right in front of me, two hanging baskets with assorted flowers ooze mixed scents. There are two large boxes with mini petunias, colored lemon, cherry, and grape. The perfume they produce in the 74-degeree sunshine is exactly what you’d imagine, a mix of lemon, cherry, and grape. When the wind swirls, I get a savory whiff of tomato plants behind me. It is sharp and aggravating. In a week, the spring gives in to summer. Big, white lilacs are no longer dominating in blossoms and fragrance. More delicate, down-to-the-ground plants move forward, passing their puberty, dressed in fancy new scents and colors.

Cats will come to the screen door, reminding me what I am doing here. They talk their funny words to me in little, sweet voices. Roman says: “k-khay, k-khay…” and properly rubs his head and body on me. Igor’s vocabulary is “Mheh, Mhee-eh,” and he jumps on my lap and sniffs my lips, as if kissing. They are fond of each other, and whenever they cross paths, always sniff and lick each other’s faces. Two male cats, go figure.

Tonight is the last night staying here. Opened a bottle of wine, sipping, watching a movie, engaging cats to play. It was a fine experience. I might do it again.

## My New Adventure in Education by Beth Greenberg

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In 2020, my hotel updated their Windows 10 platforms, and I started having problems with the Windows Magnifier that I use to magnify the screen and the hotel’s front desk system. I talked with the area information technology guy at the time, and we got something figured out so I could continue to read the reports that I needed to read.

In 2022, Hilton started a new program with Guild and paying for their team members’ education. I decided to give it a try and started out in July with an online school called Thinkful. I took an online course about office presentations. I mostly learned about how to use office software from Google – Docs, Sheets, and Slides. I had never taken an online class before, and it was fun. I did not know if I wanted to continue with school or not.

In December 2022, I signed up for school again, but this time I wanted to concentrate more on information technology. I wanted to learn more about how the different softwares talked to each other and would not work together. I enrolled in Purdue Global University (another online school), to get an associate’s degree in information technology.

My first class started in January and was Microsoft Office. I just took the one class and felt like I could handle working full time and going to school. The terms are 10 weeks long, then a 1-week break, then another term starts.

Each of my classes are five credits, and I need 90 to get my associate’s degree. However, to receive financial aid, you are required to have at least six credits. I was going to have to take two classes in my second term, as well as work full time. I was a little nervous about it, worried I would not be able to get work in on time each week. But I am now in week 10 of the second term and feel confident in my ability to complete two classes and work full time.

I have enjoyed my IT class that I took this term so much that I asked my advisor how to change from an associate’s to a bachelor’s degree. I especially enjoyed the section on coding. I have to say it has been 30 years since I had been in school. On one hand, I am surprised about how well I am doing and that I am enjoying it. I do worry about my college algebra class that is coming up in August. But I will take it one step at a time, one week at a time.

I hope to still work for Hilton after I get my degree, but if I don’t that is OK. I will find another job somewhere in IT, maybe in coding. I even downloaded a couple apps to help me learn more about coding. With the knowledge I am gaining I will be able to write programs or websites to be accessible.

Who knows what the future may bring. I look forward to all the possibilities and new adventures awaiting me on this path.

## The Friendship Garden by Holly Turri

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Our relationships with those about whom we care are like beautiful gardens. When we spend time with others, as we would with flowers, our friendships will flourish, as our gardens do.

Let’s take friendship. When we meet someone whom we think we would like to know better, as we would with a plant, we pick them and stick them in the water of human kindness. As we get to know them better, roots of understanding and shared experience will begin to intertwine. Leaves of listening and flowers of happiness may begin to grow and bloom.

On the other hand, we may learn that the person we thought would be our best friend does not appear as advertised. Sorry to say, but after we give a great try, this little plant may decide to be removed from our garden and either move on somewhere else, or elect to go to the compost and start over.

Like some people, flowers and plants are controlling and may smother relationships. If we squeeze a flower too hard, it will die. Likewise, if we limit the opportunity for someone we know to explore and experience life, the friendship will disintegrate.

After a while, we realize most of the flowers we have chosen bring joy and beauty to our life and others. So, we decide to go shopping, get some potting soil, lots of fertilizer, and place it in an optimal environment. We water it with kindness, fertilize it with listening, and wrap it with love and encouragement. By carefully observing its adjustment and health – voila, our friendship garden has grown and deepened.

Some of my friendship plants are 60 years old, although to the outsider, there may be a few irregularities. They are still growing and blooming strongly. My garden holds youngsters and specimens from differing cultures and countries. Variety is what transfers our garden from a good one to a great one.

The beautiful part about friendship gardens is that there are no zoning restrictions. You can make them as big or as small as you need.

Sadly, some plants get sick. As we would with our human friends, we take care of these. Maybe the human friendship is breaking down because of moving, growing in different directions, or any number of other reasons. With both the human and the flower, we do what we can. If they can’t survive, we cry, put it in the composter, and start again.

## Planting More Than Seeds by Marilee Richards

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The title of this article is from a picture that I have in my bedroom that I bought years ago, painted by Robert Duncan, who uses nature and family members for his canvases. It is an inspiration to me every day I stop to look at it.

Life is full of changes every day. As I grew up, got married, divorced, went back to school, and then got my first real job, there was nothing but change for me and my family. Being retired has brought about a different sort of change.

When I think of “seeds of change,” my mind immediately goes back to oh so many flowerbeds I had planted over those years of change. I will highlight three that stand out most. However, there were many more I developed.

Flowers, like people, go through seasons of change. It depends on if they are perennial plants that return to bloom each year or annual flowers that are started from seed each spring.

My experience with planting and caring for flowers, watering and weeding, reminds me of the care we give our children as they grow through their different changes in development. I raised a son, Ken, and two daughters, Karen and Kimberly. I was, for all intents and purposes, a single mother.

My grandmother, mother and father, sister, my son and daughter-in-law, and youngest daughter and I all have received much joy and fulfillment from working with flowers. My daughter was a master gardener in the past, and has her own flower business. She works with customers to do container planting, weddings, and decorating for seasons. It is easy to see I have many examples to follow.

There are two homes where I planted flowerbeds. The first was my home in Arlington, on the Stillaguamish River, where I lived for 20 years. We started in a mobile home and then had to build a house, as we did not have two lots to keep it on. We built the home from the ground up, and that was a very positive experience. Next came the yard and flowers. We built a fence around the backyard, put in a patio, and built a fireplace outside. I planted shrubs and flowers around all four sides of the house. There was a lilac tree from my parent’s yard, a snowball bush from my grandmother’s yard, and flowers from friends and neighbors.

Many years later, I moved into a small home in Everett, after many years of apartment living, where I had developed small beds of flowers for outside beauty. The house in Everett had one rhododendron that the landlord pulled out with much relish. I offered to keep the yard mowed if he allowed me to fix it. It was very hard work. There were blackberry briers to clean out, ivy to thin and train up, huge rocks to move and flowers to plant. After I did a lot of work, he decided to do hardscape in the backyard and planted new grass. I was no longer mowing weeds. I guess you could say my work had paid off after all the hours of labor. I worked at the Crisis Line at that time, and that became great therapy for my stressed nerves. The last yard I worked in was my parents’, and they had created 11 beds around their home. Some were raised, others covered much of the hill coming from the backyard, and others ran along the sidewalk and road. I worked from one bed to the other until I got back to the beginning and then started all over again. My parents both had terminal cancer at that time, and my son soon had to take over the lawn mowing and edging my father had done all the 51 years they lived in that home. I put a scrapbook together of pictures from the start with not a blade of grass in the yard. What work of dedication it was.

If we do not nurture our own lives, we will wither and get stuck, because we don’t move forward in our struggles without change, whether it is positive or negative. For the blind and visually impaired, that movement or change can seem like it is happening every moment of every day. Change is difficult, but I have learned it comes easier if you face it straight on. We also need to allow time for acceptance to come along with that change. We need to absorb each change and get a good handle on that process before moving onto something new. It all takes time and we all want instant answers.

In one of the parables, the sower planted some seed along the pathway that was eaten by the birds, some fell along rocky places where it did not have much soil, while other seed fell on good soil and grew thirty, sixty and a hundred-fold crops.

I have experienced each of these kinds of growth in my life, and I hope you are in good soil and progressing well. Helen Steiner Rice has written a timely poem about planting. I will close with that.

**Bloom Where You Are Planted**

Though the ground you’ve been given is rocky,

No good will come from complaining,

o’er your less-than-ideal lot

Roll up your sleeves and dig in,

Make the most of what you’ve been given,

Turn your desert into garden verdant,

it’s the way of successful living.

Few joys will give you more pleasure,

few rewards rival or match,

That thrill that comes from creating

something glorious from scratch.

Now the Lord may someday present you

with a place far greater than now,

Green pastures that stretch forever,

fields that have not seen a plow.

But don’t wait for a dream line harvest,

don’t pass up the crop at hand,

Opportunity’s a fickle day flower,

make the most of your God-given land.

Bloom where you are planted,

work today as if it’s your last,

The Lord will richly bless you,  
And you’ll never regret the past.

## The Girl in the Garden and Why I Don’t Grow Plants Now by Sarah Edick

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A four-year-old girl planting pumpkins in Grandma C’s garden:

Oh, what fun I had. Mom made us go out and keep an eye on the pumpkins. Oh, those pumpkin plants grew. They were small, medium, large, then…huge.

I couldn’t believe how big those pumpkins got. I had to let them become giants. Feeling them grow was so exciting.

All summer they grew, grew, grew, and…grew. The pre-school year began again. We still waited until those giants became huge. To this day, those pumpkins are the biggest that I’ve ever felt.

I couldn’t believe that mom said, “No more pumpkins!”

Now, I know why. We gave so many pumpkins away that it was like we lived on a pumpkin farm. It’s like when you’re selling Christmas trees, and you can’t get rid of them all.

The grossest part was cleaning those filthy pumpkins out. I’ve always been creeped out by goo. I still get creeped out, to this day.

Pumpkin seeds: When we were older, mom roasted pumpkin seeds. They make sunflower seeds taste cheap. They are so delish. It’s a taste that I’ll always love.

Green onions: When you can’t see, you don’t realize that people can see you eating food from the garden. I’m an onion freak. Ask anyone who knows me. I eat onions like candy. They’re healthier. However, people can see the missing onions in the garden. Mom said, “We need some of those for dinner, you know.” I really made her mad when I ate so many green onions. Even my caregiver knows that I eat any onion like candy, excepting the red ones.

So, yes, I got busted as a kid for porking out on green onions.

I also porked out on peas that were raw, green beans, also raw, and…catnip. If I grow kitty catnip, she’ll eat it. Long-term gratification doesn’t enter into Joy-Joy’s mind. Her idea is instant treats. If I grow catnip, that catnip will be gone. And, that kitty will be quite relaxed and lovable – a bit too much, I think.

I’ve got a plastic plant, and Joy-Joy tries to eat it. Joy-Joy has no self-control. She cracks me up. So, what do I do? I buy catnip at the store. If I hide the catnip, a certain fur-baby can’t get her little paws on it. Sneaky? That’s her middle name. It’s probably her first and last name, too.

What I’d give for another pumpkin plant, corn, green onions, radishes. However, I’m stuck getting them at my local store. I miss those gardening days.

If I miss one more thing, it’s home-grown chicken eggs.

Oh, I miss farming. Even someone who’s blind can do the farming thing.

If you have the chance, farm, farm, farm. And if that doesn’t work…farm.

I think of those days as summer hits us yet again. Grandma C said that I’d grow, just like those plants in the garden. Well, I never grew to be as tall as a pumpkin plant. However, I’m happy as a kid at Christmas that I’m taller than a green onion. Happy growing!

## One Wild, Precious Life by Heather Meares

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I don’t claim to know the meaning of life or understand why we are all here, but one thing I have learned is to always expect the unexpected. It sneaks up on us frequently, and if you don’t pay close attention, you will most surely miss opportunities to find glimpses of your purpose in the midst of all the chaos.

I spent about three weeks in Kansas recently, visiting and getting to know Phil, someone I met earlier this summer at a conference I attended in Phoenix. It was an eye-opening experience that perhaps has given me more questions than answers, one being, “Do we always have to have answers?” We are taught to think we need answers from an early age. Why, instead, are we not taught to be satisfied with the constant and ever-evolving questions?

The first weekend we spent in Wichita, attending the Self-Advocacy Coalition of Kansas Conference. Most of the attendees were what we commonly refer to as developmentally disabled, but from my supposedly blind eyes, all I witnessed was unbridled enthusiasm, laughter, joy, and a strong desire to learn how to advocate for themselves. I overheard conversations about whether or not they would be attending the big dance on Saturday evening, what drinks they were planning on ordering at the bar, and asking questions about guardianship issues, who to call for legal advice when their rights were being denied, and a few jokes being told between friends. I could not help but smile the entire time, listening to their beautiful voices.

The last night of the conference, I sat on the steps outside the hotel, chatting with Phil after an evening of walking around the area, exploring restaurants on a lovely night. We met three mounted police officers who invited us to come over and talk to them while we took photos and interacted with their horses who were Clydesdale-sized magnificent beasts, yet so gentle as they allowed me to feel their faces and pet them. The officers explained to us their purpose was mostly to do community outreach, but sometimes on nights like this Saturday evening, they had to establish a presence and that in the wee hours, people may get out of control, and it could be like herding drunk cats to go back to wherever they came from.

Unfortunately, 20 minutes later, this became reality. As we sat on the stoop chatting, I heard what I thought was a lot of firecrackers hitting the ground about half a block away. Phil grabbed my hand and told me we needed to quickly get inside the hotel, and that those were not firecrackers. We heard about 30 gunshots as they splattered across the street. Nine people were shot, some multiple times, and two were trampled, resulting in injuries. One man even walked himself to the hospital. We watched from our fourth-story window as the scene unfolded below us, flashing lights everywhere, the street now blocked off and surrounded by at least 20 ambulances, cop cars, and other emergency vehicles coming and going. It was surreal and unbelievably real simultaneously. The one thought that kept cycling on repeat through my head was that life and death are merely separated by a fraction of a second in time, and you never know when that unexpected moment is going to be yours or one you love.

As we returned to his residence in Topeka, I was intrigued by the absolute juxtaposition of where he lived. It was located in an industrial warehouse district and, in fact, his building was an old, historical warehouse that had been renovated into posh, expensive loft apartments, or at least the people living there viewed it that way.

The main road in front of these grand lofts was the route to the local mission, and a place where people could get meals when needed. It was heavily traversed by many homeless people.

At first, this concerned me a bit, and I admit I was afraid and felt vulnerable to the unknown potential of what may happen if I encountered someone dangerous. I soon realized that my friend fully embraced this opportunity to talk with anyone and everyone who walked by, determine if they needed anything he had to offer, and proceed to give them food, clothing, make them breakfasts fit for a king, give them survival items in backpacks, and lend an ear or offer resources to help get them back on track if they so desired.

Reactions were varied, some responded by remaining closed, not talking, and continuing on their path as if he was not there, absorbed in their own world. Others openly engaged in conversation with him, sharing small bits of their stories and accepting what he offered.

Gradually, I, too, became more comfortable around the people of this strange universe I was now immersed in. I spent time with a few of them, talked with them, and even found them asking me about my blindness. One of them, Terrence, even started referring to me as Mama, because he felt the presence of his own mother through me, and I gladly accepted this small thing I had to offer him. For the most part, my fear had been replaced with a grace I had never felt in quite this way before.

The most heartbreaking part of this story, in my opinion, was the brazen, oblivious, and entitled reactions of the loft residents. They ignored what was right in front of them and were disgusted with Phil for embracing the human lives passing through their bubble of good fortune and security. In fact, Phil was asked to leave because of this, and he was more than OK with this. The undesirables just so happened to be living inside the building, not on the street outside.

On one of our walks together, Phil pointed out to me a thriving flower, most likely a weed but beautiful nonetheless, growing out of a sewer grate in this cement city environment where no flower should be able to exist. This image has remained with me, as well as the faces I imagined for each of the people we encountered.

I don’t know what happened to any of them, or if anything that happened between us as humans made a difference to them. It’s not my place to know the answer to this question. What I do know is they made a difference to me, and for that, I am forever grateful.

During my time in Kansas, Phil shared with me a poem, one of his favorites, and I now share it with you, because it so encompasses all of these experiences, and my own philosophy for how I try to live my life.

“THE SUMMER DAY” BY MARY OLIVER

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean —

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?



Photo left: A flower grows from a crack in a concrete wall, next to a rusted iron grating.

# LIFESTYLE

## Book Chat by Alan Bentson, Readers’ Advisor Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

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Some Riffs on Change

“Life is change, how it differs from the rocks, I’ve seen their ways too often for my liking, new worlds to gain, my life is to survive and be alive for you.” — John Wyndham in his novel “The Chrysalids” (DB44711), adapted by Paul Kantner for the song “Crown of Creation” (by Jefferson Airplane).

Of course, rocks do change, any geologist will tell you. We just don’t notice it because we’re people with a very short lifespan and limited perspective. Of course, the universe is changing constantly, which makes me wonder about religion, which promotes the idea of a changeless God. Surely even God must change her mind once in a while. Anyhow, “The Chrysalids” is a wonderful novel that originally appeared in 1955, but the BARD incarnation is not narrated by Patrick Horgan as the version on phonograph records was.

“Seeds of Change: Five Plants that Transformed Mankind,” DB25466 (1986)

* Hobhouse, Henry
* Reading time: 12 hours, 57 minutes
* Narrated by Ralph Lowenstein, Science and Technology
* Nature and the Environment

Asserts that five substances derived from plants have been vital factors in the progress of human history. Contains five sections: Quinine and the white man's burden; Sugar and the slave trade; Tea and the destruction of China; Cotton and the American South; and The potato, Ireland, and the United States.

When I was in school, they said liberals believe in change, and conservatives believe in things as they are. The conservatives I read, the really sincere breed, do believe in change. They want things to change back, often to a past that never quite existed. Though I’m not of their persuasion, I do appreciate how real conservatives have a reverence for history and reason. Anyway, this is my kind of history book, a big picture history book.

“To open my eyes and fully arrive in the world, with its beauty and its cruelty, with its heartbreak and its joy, with its constantly giving birth to life and to forces that destroy, and the infinite power of change alive in the world.” — Jackson Browne, “Alive in the World.”

“The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast, the slow one now will later be fast, As the present now will later be past, the order is rapidly fading, And the first one now will later be last, for the times they are a-changing.” — Bob Dylan

In the library biz, we go to lots of trainings. At one workshop, I remember the lady saying, “We would all like to change our lives, or we know that change is bound to come. The question is, when will we change, and the answer is, when we have to.”

In ninth grade, I was your typical early adolescent full of stormy emotions and resentments. My parents decided to try the residential school for the blind. There seemed to be a lot of things the public school wasn’t teaching me and, really, the high school in our district didn’t want me. I was apprehensive about the change, of course, and during that summer my mother — or possibly my librarian — sent me a young adult book by Kathryn Vinson called “Run with the Ring.” It was just your typical young adult book, full of humor and storyline in order to disguise the life lessons the author wanted to convey. It concerned a high school boy who is blinded in an accident and transfers to a residential school. The author had created some good characters and described the school atmospherically, and the story moved right along. It wasn’t a great book and, of course, it was full of things I felt the sighted author didn’t get right. Don’t we always feel this way when reading blindness fiction? Mostly, though, it did make me feel better. An author had actually written a book about the situation I was in, and a great guy like Larry Robinson actually read it aloud. I have often found books to be a solace in times of change, and it doesn’t seem to matter if the book is great literature or not.

This column is dedicated to our friend Rhonda Nelson, longtime member of ACB and WCB, who made the big change and left us on May 30. I never met anyone who didn’t like Rhonda. She was a genuinely good person who left the world a little better just for having been in it. So, I leave the last word to the 17th century British poet John Donne.

“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were. Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And, therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

## It’s A Dog’s Life Chapter V by Marilee Richards

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Pitter, patter, pitter, patter, the honeymoon is over. Training has hit a glitch. Taryn finds places at her discretion, and stops like a statue, frozen in place. She has a problem crossing the parking lot for us to go walking. It happened a few times when I brought her home, but this is happening every time I take her out, multiple times each walk.

A call to Guide Dogs in Boring, OR sent me some real help. Lorissa Montfort came up from the California campus. She spent several hours working with Taryn and me. She watched as I worked with Taryn to see if there was any logical reason for her behavior, and finding none, gave several ideas for me to use to change that behavior. We also spent time on Broadway, a very busy crossing, where Taryn seemed to not walk in a straight line. We got that resolved that day, and Taryn is doing fine crossing there now. We also walked to Starbucks, her favorite walk, to observe her at work. She did so well on that walk.

On the other hand, she wakes me up every day, with special kisses of greeting, telling me it’s time to get up for another day, feed her, and see what new adventures are ahead for both of us. She also wakes me up if I am napping when it’s time for her to get her dinner. She takes care of me, and I take care of her.

All the folks who live here are careful not to talk to her when she is in her harness. She is partial to the men but loves all my friends that I spend time with during my daily events. We have coffee on Wednesday, bingo on Monday evening, karaoke on Friday nights, and just get together by the front door to catch up on current news. She also has special friends when we go to church on Sundays. I have considered walking over to the Everett Community College campus. The last time I was there was during COVID, and you could not get through anywhere. I am sure it has greatly changed since they were doing so much construction work then. It will make a nice walk.

She has become friends with a little rat terrier, and they spend time playing in George’s and Walley’s apartment for some crazy play, as the yard is not fenced, and they won’t disturb anyone on the first floor. George and I have asked for gates, but it is low on the list of things to get done.

For a person who has never had a dog, I get a lot of comments on how well I am doing with Taryn. When I watch experienced guide dog friends, I know I have a long way to go towards improvement. As they say, one step at a time, and one day at a time.

In June, we are meeting her puppy raisers for a day of fun and visiting with Rob and Bailey. They are up from Portland and staying close to Pike Place Market. It should be fun and exciting to see the market again. I haven’t been there in decades. Maybe we’ll go for a walk on the beach.

This past week, Taryn and I went back to my home on the Stillaguamish River. We walked the shoreline across the walking bridge and drove around the neighborhood. Every lot is built on now, and when I moved out, there were only about 30 folks living there.

Don’t forget, we have two puppy raiser podcasts coming soon. They are both very different. Watch your email for time and date. Stand by for more adventures with my sweet guide dog, Taryn.

## Consider Gardening by Ashley Trenkenschuh

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Gardening is not always easy, but it’s a blessing.

Do you want to know why? Well, for one, not everyone has this privilege. They may not have the space to grow a garden. They may live in a big city, may not have the knowledge, or maybe they simply just don’t have the desire. But even if you’re in a big city, you can have a container garden. If you don’t have the knowledge, you can go look it up. If you don’t have the desire, go pick up a little shovel, play in the dirt for the afternoon, and plant a few seeds. Because, my friend, it is a privilege to watch your garden grow and know you did it.

What’s more, with a little love and water, that garden will feed you – from salsas to zoodles (noodles from zucchini), and strawberries to jams. The world is your oyster (or seed, rather). So, get out there and enjoy.

## Mammoth Bones Undergo Braille Inspection by Frank Cuta

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On the first Saturday in May, one of the first beautiful days of spring, 14 members from the United Blind of Tri-Cities and United Blind of Walla Walla went out to meet our local mammoth. This was an amazing hands-on tour of an actual archaeological dig that had started in 2008, and is still in the process of being meticulously uncovered.

Early that morning, the tour members and all of our drivers assembled at the Edith Bishel Center parking lot, and from there a lead vehicle took us out to the digs. The site is actually only about 20 minutes outside of town, but to discourage unauthorized intrusions and possible vandalism, the exact location of the site is not public knowledge. (I would tell you that it was necessary to blindfold the drivers, but since we all got there alive, you would probably not believe me).

Speaking of belief, you might have a hard time crediting the incredible size and weight of these bones. We were able to examine some of the actual bones, plus exact models of several others, that had been produced using 3-D printing. These included an upper femur bone more than 3 feet long, and a tooth the size of a small ham. We learned that a mammoth had only four teeth, but shed and replaced six such sets as it grew to full maturity. We also had the opportunity to touch a sample of the skin of a current close relative of our mammoth, so we know what it might have felt like to pet one of these huge beasts. I was surprised to learn that our mammoth was not as shaggy as the woolly mammoth species. In fact, it was actually not very hairy at all. Its hair probably would have felt very much like the soft coat of a typical small mammal.

Among the bones we touched, the spinal vertebrae were perhaps the most interesting. Each individual spinal vertebra is clearly recognizable as such, despite being incredibly huge. The one we examined was about 8 inches thick, compared to less than 1 inch for typical human vertebrae. In addition, the mammoth vertebra has an unusually long protrusion of bone on the back side. This extension served as a fulcrum against the adjacent vertebra, to provide necessary support for the weight of the mammoth's enormous tusks.

While we passed around the bones, our host, Gary Kleinknecht, explained the history and science associated with the discovery, and answered all questions from the tour group. These included some rather technical ones raised by Joleen Ferguson and Mary Lamont, both of whom are retired physical therapists. It was a great presentation. We finally ran out of questions after about two hours.

It is believed that our mammoth was deposited at this site as the result of one of the great cataclysmic floods that occurred here near the end of the last Ice Age. At the time he died, our mammoth was about 40 years old, stood about 11 feet tall at the shoulder, and his curly tusks may have been as long as 13 feet. In the Tri-City area, the altitude of the Columbia River is about 400 feet; the location of the mammoth digs is at about 1,060 feet. This means that the water from this flood would have to have been over 600 feet deep.

During the latter part of the last Ice Age, a huge lake formed in Western Montana, referred to as glacial Lake Missoula. Ice dams at the western outlet of the lake formed and failed in repeated cycles, releasing torrential floods typically consisting of more than 590 cubic miles of water across Idaho, Eastern Washington, and Oregon, carving out many of the region's unique geographic wonders, including the upper portions of the Columbia River gorge. The theory is that about 17,500 years ago, our mammoth was caught up and drowned in one of these cataclysmic events. It is difficult to even speculate as to where our mammoth originally lived, but he probably came from Montana, or maybe Idaho, or perhaps only a bit farther east in Washington.

![Janice Squires holding a 3-foot femur bone of a mammoth. 
]() ![A group of people standing next to a skeleton of  mammoth. Copyright Denver Museum of Nature and Science

Description automatically generated]()

Right: An old photo from a slide show showing a life-size mammoth skeleton, surrounded by men. The photo says, “Denver Museum of Nature and Science.”

Photo Left: Janice Squires holding the 3-foot femur bone of a mammoth.

After the tour was technically over, some of us were still a little pumped up and continued to look over the rest of the research facility and got lots of photos with the bones. And, on the way out, many of us purchased souvenir T-shirts.

As far as we know, our mammoth has not as yet raised any objection to being dug up. If he ever does, I would not want to be around.

We do regret that although the work continues, our mammoth will probably never be completely reassembled. Crucial parts, such as the jawbone, were claimed by the initial owners of the property and remain in private hands. For more information and updates on this exciting project, go to mcbones.org.

## Traveling the Road Less Traveled by Debby Phillips

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In my lifetime, I certainly have traveled, going to Israel in 1990, going on a trip to Europe in 2016, and a cruise the next year. I thought about writing about those experiences, but decided that I would take a different tack. I actually began writing this article in my head as I was finishing my recent training with my new guide dog Ruby at The Seeing Eye®.

Back in 1980, I was living in Oregon. I had two friends who had recently gone to get dogs, and they had chosen to go to The Seeing Eye. I was just playing around in my head with the idea of getting a dog, not really that sure I wanted to get a dog, but not very happy with my cane skills. It wasn't that I didn't know how to use a cane, or that I couldn't cross streets, ride buses or whatever I wanted to do, but I did not use my cane with any great confidence or joy. And then, one night I had a dream. I dreamt that I was back at the Oregon School for the Blind campus walking around with a dog. And that's how my journey began.

Living on the West Coast, I was certainly familiar with Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB). I had even been on the GDB campus during high school when my mother and I accompanied one of the doctors she worked for and his daughter who had raised a puppy for GDB. The family had invited my mother and me to go with them to the graduation of a student and the puppy that they had raised. I was given a brief tour of the campus, and we attended the graduation.

So, in 1980 when I made the decision that I was going to get a dog, everyone expected me to go to GDB. But here is where taking “the road less traveled” comes in. Being on the West Coast, everyone assumed that I would go to Guide Dogs for the Blind, including my family. At that time, they only had the one campus. It was certainly tempting to go there, and I certainly would not have had the long flight from Eugene, OR, to Newark, NJ.

To the surprise of my family and friends, I made the decision that I would apply only to The Seeing Eye. If they did not accept me, then I would reconnoiter and figure out where I would go.

Now, I must tell you that taking that road less traveled does have some drawbacks. First of all, you will probably get some negative feedback. I had to think about what I wanted, and why I would choose to go somewhere different than most of the people I knew at the time would go. So, I decided that it gave me a sense of "paying part of my way" even though the $150 that I would have to pay did not cover much of the expense of the training, for the dog or myself. But I wanted to pay something. I also wanted to have ownership of my dog as a graduate. Probably most of all, I did not want to go through the graduation process. It struck me as corny.

These were and are my personal, very personal opinions. But when you are going to make a trip, it's good to have the reasons you are going to a particular destination in mind. After all, there are a lot of choices that one can make. Whatever you choose, you are not choosing something else. By choosing to go to The Seeing Eye, I did not have the option of yearly visits from the school. I also had the inconvenience of having to change time zones. And there was a huge culture shock for me when I first arrived on the campus of The Seeing Eye.

I grew up in a pretty informal atmosphere. The West Coast has always been a lot less formal, and a bit more casual, than the East Coast. At the time that I first went to The Seeing Eye, it had a very formal atmosphere. We were addressed by our surnames, so I was Miss Freeman, not Debby. My instructor was Mrs. Waite. When I first arrived on the campus, we had to change clothes every day for lunch, wearing a dress and nylons, etc. The men wore suits and ties. So, I felt like I had entered a totally different world. I grew up in Southern Oregon, and rarely even went to Portland at that time in my life.

So, has it been worth taking the less traveled road? Absolutely! I feel like I'm part of history. The Seeing Eye was the first and is the oldest training school in the U.S. I am walking in the shadow of people like Morris Frank and Peter Putnam. My instructor this time in class is the son of the instructor who trained me and Lamar, a couple dogs back. And it is an honor for me that I count Lukas Franck, in charge of special projects at The Seeing Eye, as a friend. If I had it to do over again, would I make the same choice? Yes, but I definitely would be more aware of the advantages and disadvantages. It is not a given that I will have a visit from my school in a year unless I contact them and ask for a visit. And I still have the hassle of the time change. And my school doesn't pay for vet care, except to supply us with the first six months of heartworm and flea and tick prevention. It's a little harder for us to have a reunion, and I sometimes feel like an outsider if I'm with a large group of people with their guides, because often I'm the only one with a dog from my school. I still get jibes from people saying, "I don't know why you go all the way to the East Coast to get a dog." But you know? We all have to take our own journeys and make our own choices about things in life. In a typical gathering of my friends, I'm one of the only ones that likes black licorice, too. Red is bland and boring as far as I'm concerned. Give me my black licorice any day.

## Collage Compiled by Reginald George

For this, our “Seeds of Change” issue, we asked our readers to answer the question, “If you could be a specific flower, fruit, or vegetable, which would it be and why?”

From Heather Meares: “I would be a Brussels sprout because they are the cutest vegetable of them all and completely underrated. They are so delicious!”

From Debby Phillips: “If I could be a fruit, I would be an apple. Apples are so versatile. They can be made into yummy pies, cobblers, or crisps. They can be dipped in cheese fondue, or have peanut butter spread on them for a great, healthy snack. The apple can also be cooked or stewed, made into apple sauce, which is so good with roast pork. They can be packaged with oatmeal and heated in the microwave for a quick breakfast. I have eaten an apple while hustling for the bus, back in my working days. So yes, let's enjoy those apples, especially the ones grown in Washington.”

From Lisa George: “If I were a flower, I would be a lilac. We had a lilac bush at one end of the clothesline in our backyard when I was growing up, and the smell reminds me of helping my mom hang the sheets and towels on the line in the summer. When I bought my townhouse in Kansas City, I was thrilled to have a lilac bush right beside the front door. It felt like home right away, and I loved the sight and smell of those lilacs.”

Haiku on Change  
by Judy Brown

A small change ripples,

Through the world like a stone,

Cast into the water.

## When TV was Free by Alan Biné

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A long, long time ago, watching television didn't cost anything, although there wasn't a whole lot to watch. Every night at 11 p.m., the stations played the national anthem to signal the end of TV for that day, and from then until about 6 in the morning there was absolutely nothing on. Time for everyone to rest, I guess. It's hard to imagine now, when we have 24-hour cable news, and so many channels and subscriptions it can make your head swim.

When I was a kid, I remember I had just three subscriptions – to Boy's Life, Mad magazine, and the Columbia (vinyl) Record Club. A so-called friend of mine kept mailing in subscription cards to the record club for me without my permission, and I kept getting billed for unwanted records. It wasn't easy solving my dilemma.

Wow, have times changed. Now I fret that my subscriptions may be getting out of hand. You can only watch and listen to so much stuff in 24 hours unless you're a couch potato, and finding what you might like can be daunting, not to mention the rising costs. Has anybody noticed that you have to keep paying until the end of time unless you cancel, and the canceling process isn't always that obvious?

And TV subscriptions aren't the only ones, of course. I have online versions of The Seattle Times and New York Times. For some reason I don't understand, The Seattle Times insists on delivering the actual paper every Sunday, which I promptly toss in our recycle bin. Come on guys, how much bad news can a person take before he cracks up or goes completely blind? That tells you something about yours truly.

Where would I be without my subscriptions to Amazon Prime and Costco? Perhaps somewhat richer I suppose. Along with memberships at the Edmonds Waterfront Center and a current events discussion group there. And I most definitely can't overlook the Snohomish County Council of the Blind.

Add in the various I-love-dog subscriptions for People for Animal Welfare Society, the Humane Society, and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Just who on earth isn't moved by Sarah McLachlan's rendition of "On the Wings of an Angel," and those sad dog faces for the ASPCA? I'd promise to give more if they cut down on those commercials. The World Wildlife Fund, Sierra Club and Greenpeace, NPR and PBS are worthy too, and a host of other charities like Food Lifeline, St. Jude and the Shriners.

And finally, last but most certainly not least, there are all those requests for political contributions stuffing both our emails and physical mailboxes. Whatever happened to that great idea of taking the money out of politics? I'd wholeheartedly subscribe to that.

## Goalball! by Beth Greenberg

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I never heard of the sport goalball until I moved to Vancouver, WA. I have had interest in learning more about it but have never really looked into it until writing for this article.

Goalball was invented in 1946 by Austrian Hanz Lorenzen and German Sepp Reindle in an effort to help in the rehabilitation of blinded World War II veterans. During the 1950s and 1960s, the game evolved into a more competitive sport as players became more skilled in finding new ways to push the boundaries.

In 1972, goalball made it to the Paralympic Games as a demonstration sport. Four years later, goalball was officially added to the Paralympics.

Goalball can be played at any age with an adaptation of the size of the ball. Participants attempt to roll a ball (with two bells in it) into an opponent’s net for a point. Opposing players must remain on their hands and knees and use ear/hand coordination to block shots thrown at their net. Even after a point is scored, they just keep playing until the ref calls time.

Goalball is played on a court by two teams of three players. Up to six players total are allowed on each team. The ball itself is about the size of a basketball and weighs 2.8 pounds (for adults). The objective is for each team to throw or roll the ball (in some cases like rolling a bowling ball) toward the opponent with the hopes of getting the ball past them into a net that extends the length of the court on each side to score. To stop the ball from going in the net, teams must block the ball with their body by diving from a crouched position. One of the goalball videos I saw on YouTube showed the ball as it hit one of the girl’s legs and bounced right into the net. The ball will be sent from side to side of the court during 12-minute halves, with a 3-minute break. Eyeshades are worn by every player on the court, and they must always be worn during game play, even for those that are totally blind. The field of play is to be equal. Those that have some sight get a gauze type padding put on their eyes before putting the sleep shades on.

To start the game, the referee will call “quiet please” (for the spectators to be quiet), then “center” to let the center player know the ball is coming toward them. Once the referee calls “play,” the clock for the half and the 10-second clock begin.

There are eight personal penalties and five team penalties that can be called. Personal penalties include short ball, long ball, high ball, eyeshades, illegal defense, personal delay of game, personal unsportsmanlike conduct, and noise. Team penalties include ten seconds, team delay of game, team unsportsmanlike conduct, illegal coaching, and noise. It is important to note that these rules and regulations are utilized at most levels of gameplay or are adapted for younger players.

I talked with Tim Breitenfeldt at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) track meet about goalball. He is preparing to go to Atlanta for a national goalball championship.

Tim leads a goalball team in Vancouver, WA, that is sponsored by Northwest Association of Blind Athletes (NWABA). Tim was introduced to goalball when he attended school at WSSB. Tim described the court as the size of a volleyball court. They tape off the play area so you can feel it on the floor. The net comes up to your elbow in height. Tim and one of his team mates are going to Atlanta and will see if they can be added to a team. They just want to be able to play with some other great athletes of the same sport.

There are goalball teams in the Seattle area. They have the King Cobras, the Killer Cobras, and the Queen Cobras. They practice on Saturdays from 2-4 p.m. September-May at the Van Asselt Community Center (2820 S. Myrtle St.). According to their website, if you are interested in playing, they invite you to come to a practice. ([Goalball Adaptive Sports](https://www.seattleadaptivesports.org/our-programs/goalball/)).

In the Vancouver/Portland area, the NWABA also has men’s and women’s goalball teams. If you are interested in goalball in the Vancouver/Portland area or Boise, ID, area, contact the NWABA ([www.nwaba.org](http://www.nwaba.org)).

I have to say that it would be interesting to try this sport, even at a practice, just to sample it out. I enjoyed researching this and talking with Tim about it. Thank you, Tim, for your time and for answering my millions of questions.

## What’s On Your Plate A Letter to My Guide Dog by Hayley Agers

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Change comes, even though there are times we might want with all of our might for things to stay the same. Change can leave us feeling excited about what is to come. Have you ever heard the saying, “When God closes a door, He opens a window?” Change can also leave us full of regret, longing for the past, and struggling to see the purpose in all of it. That is where I am right now, and to help me process, I write this letter to my beloved guide dog, Farley, who crossed over the rainbow bridge unexpectedly on May 6.

Dearest Farley, my best friend and confidant,

I’m having difficulty finding the words to express how much your existence made my world a better place to live. I find it hard to imagine a future without you in it, and some days, it’s difficult to even take a deep breath. Some days, my heart feels so full of wonderful memories, and I find myself smiling when I think about them. But most days, my heart feels actual, physical pain, longing for just one more day, one more snuggle, one more chance to go for a walk with you. I pray you know that, despite it taking me a while to apply for a new guide dog after Alma Lou’s passing, I knew from the minute I picked up your harness for the first time that we would be okay. It wasn’t long after bringing you home that you decided to walk me down the middle of a busy road here in town. It wasn’t long before you were chewing a hole in the new carpet of one of my favorite restaurants, and it wasn’t long before we’d become the best of friends. I forgive you for those little mishaps, and I’m proud of the amazing guide you became over the years.

Some days, it’s as if you are still here. I feel your presence, and it’s as if I could reach down and run my hand over your silky, black coat, able to recall every lump, the softness of your velvet ears, your stubby muzzle, your unruly eyebrows, and so much more. Although I never physically saw you, I have such a vivid image of you in my head. I love every inch of you, especially the love that radiated from your eyes, your soul, and your big, sloppy kisses, every time you looked at me. You knew my emotions better than any other soul walking this earth, and you always knew what to do to heal the parts of me that felt broken. It’s that part of our bond that makes it so hard to let go and that whispers to me in my saddest moments, “Mama, I love you, I’m here for you. I always want my being with you to make you smile and feel confident. I don’t want to be the reason behind your tears, the reason you find it hard to give your heart completely to your new guide dog, Neruda. I want you to live a beautiful, busy life, knowing I’ll always be in your back pocket. I’m never really gone because I live on in your heart and memories. We’ll see each other again someday. It was my privilege to guide you and thank you for loving me.”

It is those words I hear that will give me strength in the days to come, those words that help me pick myself up off the floor and reach for the harness once again. I miss you every day, and I’m sorry that I couldn’t be with you when you crossed over. That is what I struggle with the most. Know that I would not have wanted you to stay around any longer than necessary, just because you still felt you needed to take care of me. I am so honored to have been your person. Know, my boy, you will always have a piece of my heart.

R.I.P. My Sweet Farley Warley

3/11/12 – 5/6/23

**Gluten-free, immune-boosting dog treats**

* 1½ cups brown rice flour
* ½ of a 15 oz. can of pure pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
* 1 egg
* ¼ cup natural peanut butter, not zylitol (look for a brand that is just peanuts)
* 3 to 4 drops of Doterra’s On Guard essential oil (optional, but this is what gives your biscuit the immune-boosting properties).

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine all ingredients and stir well to combine.
3. Pour mixture out onto a lightly floured work surface and using a rolling pin, roll out to about ¼-inch thick.
4. Using a shaped cookie cutter, cut out the cookies and place on a cookie sheet.
5. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until lightly browned and slightly firm. They will continue to harden once on a cooling rack.
6. Store in an air-tight container

**Apple and cheese salad**

I like to make this in a mason jar, so it’s ready to go when I am hungry, but you can just as easily make this the day of. It’s one of my favorites because it was one of Farley’s favorites, yup, he would come running any time he suspected I might be in the kitchen cutting up an apple.

* ½ cup apple cider vinaigrette (recipe below)
* ¾ cup diced apples (1 small apple)
* Handful of baby spinach
* ¼ cup cheese cubes (mozzarella, Monterey jack, cheddar, or feta will work)
* ¼ cup pumpkin seeds

Vinaigrette:

* 1 cup olive oil
* ½ cup apple cider vinegar
* ½ Tbsp. dijon mustard
* 1 garlic clove, minced
* Salt and pepper, to taste

Combine all of the ingredients for the vinaigrette in a lidded mason jar and shake well to combine. Store in the fridge for up to two weeks, being sure to shake well before each use.

# BRAIN FOOD

## Technically Speaking An Expert is Just a Has-been Drip Under Pressure by Frank Cuta

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I may not be an expert, but here is a short article on drip-line irrigation. The basic idea is that in many cases it is possible to replace a wasteful wide-dispersal watering system in at least part of your yard with a line or lines of individual “drip emitters,” generally called “drippers.” These drippers can deliver a regulated amount of water directly to each plant in your garden. Drip lines are an ingenious way of conserving water, and they are cheap and easy to install.

I've bought mine at various local hardware stores, but you can find a wide range of drip-line kits on Amazon for around $40. A typical kit should include a couple of threaded cylindrical items, about 33 feet of half-inch flexible distribution tubing, a corresponding amount of quarter-inch tubing, a hole-punching tool, a wide assortment of fittings and couplers made for this tubing, and a bag of drip emitters.

You first screw the two cylindrical units onto the end of your garden hose. The first one is a check valve to keep garden water from getting back into your household water. The second one is a pressure reducer that drops the pressure to drip-line levels. This pressure reduction is the crucial factor in your system, since it brings the water pressure in the drip line down to the pressure at which the drippers are designed to operate. With the check valve and pressure reducer installed, the remaining components of the line are easy to assemble. You just push them together with your bare hands. No wrenches or pliers required.

As a simple example, let's assume you have a 20-foot row of 10 evenly spaced rose bushes. You cut off a suitable length of half-inch distribution line and connect it to the output of the pressure reducer with a coupler fitting. Then starting at the first rose bush, you use the quarter-inch punching tool that comes with the kit to make a hole in the line every two feet and insert a dripper into each hole. Last, you block off the far end of the line with another fitting, and you are finished.

In a large system, you can run distribution lines that are as much as 100 feet long. Different couplers in the kit allow you to make sharp elbow turns in the distribution line, or T-off secondary lines. You can also use the smaller quarter-inch tubing to branch off and get water to plants that are farther away from the main distribution line.

Common flow rates for drippers are half gallon/hour, 1 gallon/hour, and 2 gallons/hour. With these low flow rates, you will probably be watering for fairly long periods of time, so a digital water timer is a good investment. This device connects in-line with the pressure reducer. They come in either battery-powered or USB models, and many can be controlled with Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. With a controller in the system, you can pretty much set it up and forget it.

I have not experimented with the indoor versions of drip lines, but I found several on Amazon for as little as $20. The basic concept is the same, but in general these systems do not connect directly to a water line. Instead, they use a small battery-operated pump to distribute water to the drip line from a refillable reservoir.

The bottom line is that for maximum water conservation in your yard, you might want to consider drip lines. Also, if you miss the fun of playing with the Lincoln Logs and Tinker Toys of your childhood, you will probably enjoy putting this sort of irrigation system together.

## Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs Announce ONLINE Business Expo Opportunity, and Ten Tips to Keep You on Track by Ardis Bazyn

Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs (IVIE) is offering the following opportunity to blind or visually impaired business owners/entrepreneurs. When you join in our Online Business Expo, you can describe your products and services, pass on contact information, and allow participants to ask questions. For IVIE members, the fee for a half hour is $10, or $20 for an hour. Not an IVIE member? Then, the fee is $25 for a half hour session or $35 for an hour. Nonmembers have the option of having $15 of the payment used to pay IVIE dues for 2024.

All those participating in the call will use the same Zoom information to connect. The date and time line would be November 4, 2023, from 11:30 am to 7pm Eastern.

At 11:45 am, an introduction of all the vendors participating with their specific time slots would be given, along with instructions for those attending. A wrap-up at the end of the presentations would be available for anyone to ask any final questions of those exhibiting online.

The deadline for purchasing a time slot is October 21, 2023. To purchase a time slot or ask questions, send an email to

[info@ivie-acb.org](mailto:info@ivie-acb.org) with your request to present/exhibit. Please send your business name, product line, your telephone number, and your email address. You will be sent a link for payment and additional information. If you wish to attend the IVIE Online Business Expo and listen to this unique shopping experience, there is no cost. However, please send an email to register so we can send you the Zoom call details. Send the email request to [info@ivie-acb.org](mailto:info@ivie-acb.org) or contact Ardis Bazyn, phone 818-238-9321.

Here are Ten Tips to Keep You on Track:

When you are making transitions in your life or your business, several strategies can assist you in making those changes.

Benefit from the support of friends and family. Tell them about your latest efforts. Sharing your goals and struggles can help clarify your initiatives. They may even be able to point you in a different direction or give you a lead you can follow.

View challenges as opportunities. As you face roadblocks, you may find work-arounds or alternate ways of progressing to your next step, perhaps a more positive tactic.

Use humor to keep positive. Think about an amusing aspect of your efforts – perhaps your mistakes did show your ineffective methods and may seem humorous when you look back. Just laugh at yourself.

Learn strategies for life's challenges and changes. Keeping sight of your goals at all times will keep you striving and allow you to move forward, keeping you more positive.

Develop visualization techniques. Picturing your next move or completion of a project will help you plan a follow-up step more quickly.

Recognize positives in every situation. If your plan is proceeding more slowly or your personal life is causing problems with your timeline, realize you can adapt to these changes. Perhaps a blip in the road will make the goal even better than perceived originally.

Create positive scenarios to current challenges. You have the inner strength and power to change your perspective and often the ultimate outcome. Think of possible positive scenarios.

Integrate relaxation and exercise into your daily schedule. This will invigorate you to work harder and think more clearly.

Set realistic goals. If your goals are reachable, even if there are some delays, you will still be able to complete them.

Discourage outside influences that would stop you from reaching your goals. If others try to tell you it's out of reach, just remember others who have been successful even when facing challenges.

-- For business coaching, contact Ardis at 818-238-9321 or abazyn@bazyncommunications.com

# HISTORY

## Voices: Our Untold Story The Pussy Willow Ladies by Chris Coulter

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I have a confession to make. I am not a gardener. However, I do enjoy the smell of flowers and the sharp, tactile feeling of evergreen trees. In spite of my lack of inclination to get down into the dirt, as all gardeners do, I have a story to tell and it does relate to plants. So, sit back, relax, and listen to the story of “The Pussy Willow Ladies.”

These two ladies were named Marion and Clara. Marion was the leader of many of the projects, fundraisers, and the Tacoma League of Parents of Blind Children. Clara was my mother. She brought light and fire into her advocacy. She and Marion were both women of class, as well as women on a mission.

When I was about seven years old, Marion and Mom could often be found either helping us kids in the resource room, where we learned to read and write Braille, or off on an adventure in a park or a day camp time to learn that we could find beauty in the perfume of flowers and trees. Our ears helped us to know the beauty of song birds.

One day, Marion and Mom both came into the resource room and began to sing a sweet chant, consisting of the words, “Spring has sprung.” Pussy willows were said to be the first signs of spring. Marion and Mom would tap our faces with the soft pussy willows, and we all loved the playfulness of our education.

Now it’s time to fast forward to around 1977, when I was about 27 years old, embarking on a singing career. Mom went with me to help with everything, from driving the car to working with the speakers and microphones, as well as curling my hair and putting on my makeup. The makeup made me look better under the spotlights. We were in Olympia, WA, during the Legislature’s session for voting on bills and all the other work they do during the session.

One evening, I found that no one was really responding to my singing. It always made me feel uncertain if the room was quiet. When the night was over, I fell asleep feeling quite discouraged. But, as morning came, I was in for a change.

Mom went out into the parking lot and went to her lovely, red Monte Carlo to see if everything was all right. She took quite a long time checking everything out. Finally, she came back and walked with me into the restaurant. There, in a little entry way, she began tapping my discouraged, half-asleep face with something soft, and she sang “Spring has sprung.” I had forgotten about the pussy willows, and I reached up, touched one of the little branches, and exclaimed with delight, “pussy willows!”

I felt like a little girl again. I felt less discouraged. I learned from that experience that discouragement can often melt away in plants and sunshine, even if the night before seemed to have very little to recommend. Since then, I have learned to hold onto hope and remember that faith can really bring better times and sharper ears, as well as more tender and receptive hearts.

# ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

## Government Affairs Committee Report by Judy Brown

**Accessible Voting**

We are continuing to find ways to make voting more accessible in Washington state. Sheri Richardson, Dorene Cornwell, Lynne Koral, and Judy Brown have met several times with representatives from Common Cause, Verified Voting, and Free Speech for People on this issue.

Included in those discussions were Dr. Michael Specter, who is a computer security expert, and Dr. Juan Gilbert, who has been developing a secure online ballot marking system he calls TeleVoting. Tim Cumings, a United Blind of Seattle member, described accessible voting in Massachusetts using the Omniballot. So far, these meetings have been information gathering meetings.

Washington Council of the Blind has spent time outlining the current challenges that blind and visually-impaired persons face with the current voting systems. We have also learned a lot about voting security and the work that is being done in this area.

Judy was able to briefly meet with Misha Lujan, who is the new community liaison for the Secretary of State’s office. Misha and other representatives from the SOS office will be important contacts as we move forward with the issue of more accessible voting.

**Updated FAA Guideline for Guide Dogs**

Rep. Pramila Jayapal’s office reached out to Judy after the annual legislative training and outreach in March. Rep. Jayapal is interested in updating the FAA rules for guide dogs. Sheri Richardson, Andy Arvidson, Deb Cook-Lewis, and Judy Brown met with a legislative aide to discuss the issues surrounding the online forms requested by the airlines for guide dogs and accessibility of those forms. Deb stated she would have people from the national ACB office follow up on this meeting to help move this important issue forward.

**Advocacy Report**

Dorene Cornwell has been working with members of the Broad Coalition of Advocates in Seattle. They plan to hold meetings in June entitled “Ask Candidates for Seattle City Council to Think About Mobility.” The planned dates are June 5-14. A wide range of citywide and local organizations will be hosting this series of mobility-focused candidate forums in the four open races for Seattle City Council. Hosts include 350 Seattle, Ampersand Bike Club, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587, Cascade Bicycle Club, City of Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee, Disability Mobility Initiative - Disability Rights Washington, National Federation of the Blind, Seattle Chapter, Puget Sound Sage, Seattle Subway, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, Seattle Transit Riders Union, Transportation Choices Coalition, Transportation for Washington Teamsters 117, Washington Bikes, West Seattle Bike Connections, Duwamish Valley Safe Streets, Central Seattle Greenways, NE Seattle Greenways, and Neighbors from District 5 and the Washington Council of the Blind Advocacy Committee.

As stated in the press release: “From transit reliability to safe places to walk, ride and roll, from smooth sidewalks to neighborhoods that can sustain and support us, mobility access and equity are part of all of our lives on a daily basis. And while our needs – as caregivers and transportation workers, as young people and disabled people, as BIPOC leaders and climate champions – may be different, we all need to be able to get around our community safely, reliably, and in ways that will lead us to a sustainable climate future. At this series of four forums, we will learn about how candidates for Seattle City Council will support our needs and build towards a more accessible city with mobility justice for all.”

**Accessible Medication Labels**

The Washington State Pharmacy Commission is still in the initial rulemaking phase. It held a meeting in May. Dorene Cornwell and Lynne Koral were able to attend. While there is forward movement on this issue, the work is slow. We believe the commission has heard us but the pharmacy commission still needs to hear from you. Here is the commission’s email address so you can send a comment. Let the pharmacy commission know why accessible medication labels are important to you and your health and safety. Send email comments to [Joshua.munroe@doh.wa.gov](mailto:Joshua.munroe@doh.wa.gov)

**Week Without Driving**

The 2023 National Week without Driving is set for Oct. 2-8. Start contacting your representatives now to get them to participate.

**Member Advocacy and Support**

The Advocacy Committee meets the third Thursday of the month to discuss issues relevant to our community. In between meetings, we work directly with members in need who have reached out to us. We help guide members to resources and teach self-advocacy. You are your most important advocate.

## Make Your Opinion Count: Paid Phone Survey Available for Social Security Recipients by Everett Elam

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(This article appeared on Penny Forward.com, “where blind people build bright financial futures one penny at a time,” and is reprinted here by permission.)

“Thank you for calling Social Security. Please hold, someone will assist you shortly. Your call is important to us.”

We’ve all been there. Several hours spent on hold with Social Security can tax the mental patient’s quotient of even the most seasoned among us.

From hardworking single parents to individuals whose lives were affected by workplace injuries, Social Security and its programs provide crucial support for getting back on our financial feet. Yet, navigating the system can be overwhelming and stressful. Even with our paperwork in order and questions prepared, visits to local Social Security offices can leave us feeling anxious. Expressing our opinions on service improvements or advocating for ourselves when policies aren’t being followed often leads to scripted explanations that fail to make sense, or even encounters with rudeness.

Recognizing the need for change, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has taken a commendable step toward improvement by offering those who use their services an avenue to express their opinions and they’ll even pay us for it.

This initiative is made possible through a partnership with Mathematica, a reputable non-partisan research company specializing in conducting surveys and gathering data to enhance processes for various organizations.

One such opportunity is the National Beneficiary Survey, a comprehensive questionnaire designed to gather valuable insights from Social Security recipients.

This survey, which typically takes around 60 minutes to complete, allows participants to pause and resume at their convenience, accommodating even the busiest of schedules. To take part in the survey, you can contact Mathematica at 1-844-684-9433 or visit their website at <https://tinyurl.com/bpa2b3pe> for more information.

My experience with this survey was seamless. I contacted them while on lunch break at work and spoke with an agent who clearly explained the nature of the survey. Questions ranged from my feelings on Social Security’s options, to my opinions on the improvements SSA should make to my income. When I was not comfortable with a question, I told the agent that I would rather not answer, and they moved on to the next one. I also had to stop halfway through and the agent informed me that they were open till 8 p.m. Pacific time, which accommodates for busy schedules. It felt like a safe avenue to express my opinions and let’s be honest, we could all use an extra $40.

While this survey is most definitely a step toward smoother waters for future users of SSA’s myriad options, notices for taking these surveys are sent out via the usual print, Braille, or CD. This means that while you may have received your notice in the mail, it may still be in your to-scan list, or you may not even have the means to access it. Their webpage does say that the survey is for “select participants,” so if you have not received your survey yet it might be worth a call to check if you can contribute.

Your participation in this survey empowers you to contribute directly to the improvement of Social Security services. By sharing your experiences, opinions, and suggestions, you can help shape a system that truly meets the needs of its recipients. Together, we can foster a more responsive and efficient Social Security Administration, ensuring a smoother journey towards financial well-being for all.

This is a follow-up to let readers know that I did receive a $40 payment in the mail two weeks after I took the survey. You do not have to call a mysterious number to activate the card. You can identify the card by touch if you feel raised lines on one side of the card. Call 1-844-684-9433 if you receive SSI or SSDI, and take the survey. What do you have to lose?

# AGENCY UPDATES

## Washington State Services for the Blind Update by Michael MacKillop

Michael.mackillop@dsb.wa.gov

Hello, WCBers. Thank you as always for giving space in your WCB Newsline for updates on things happening at the Department of Services for the Blind. We are always grateful for your interest, your input, and your guidance that helps us provide better services across the state.

DSB is grateful to all of you who joined our agency town hall meeting this past May. We really appreciate hearing the input of community members like you. The DSB town hall events are designed to be an opportunity for the community to dialogue directly with DSB leadership and to tell us your priorities and hopes for the agency.

A topic of discussion during the most recent town hall event was how the agency will address the challenges highlighted in the recently released findings of our 2022 federal audit. A general observation of the audit was that DSB is great at getting people the adaptive and vocational skills they need to work, but may not be fully taking advantage of the workforce development and business partnerships and other networks that can connect participants to real-time labor market information, career tracks, emerging recruitment practices, and the evolving skill sets that employers are seeking.

The community also shared strategies and tactics to help increase agency meaningful engagement with participants; best practices from other organizations and programs; and ideas on how organized mentorships can improve participant outcomes. The agency gathered some information about best ways to do outreach to ensure the people who need our services get informed about them, and to assist us with the alignment of messaging that all vocational rehabilitation services are tied to the individual’s employment goal. If you, as WCB Newsline readers, have thoughts that can assist us in any of these areas, don’t hesitate to let us know at [info@dsb.wa.gov](mailto:info@dsb.wa.gov).

Our summer Pre-Employment Transition Services programs for students age 14-21 are in full swing. The YES 1, YES 2, and Bridge programs are all fully in person again. Many blind students are practicing workplace readiness, developing social and independent living skills, and participating in work-based learning experiences this summer through our programming.

We are beginning to address the challenges of losing federal funding a year ago to serve youth under age 14. Fortunately, the governor's budget included state funding for one new staff member to provide services to youth under age 13, which provides us a small starting point to rebuild services. Once this position is recruited, DSB will be meeting with the Washington State School for the Blind to identify key areas to target.

Other updates include:

* The Business Enterprise Program rebuild projects continue and are funded for the next two years. Construction has been underway at both the Legislative Dome and Office Building 2 BEP facilities, which are slated to reopen later this fall with a new and refreshed model for business. The old cafeteria model of business is, in most post-pandemic facilities, no longer sustainable. However, the addition of micro-markets as a core concept will allow BEP ventures to expand into areas that have a smaller customer base.
* State funding was secured to support and expand recruitment and retention of independent living service providers across the state. The goal is to review compensation fee structures and to ensure vendors with a disability are compensated to address the accommodation and driver services needed to conduct the necessary field work.

The second half of 2023 will see DSB moving forward on all the things we have learned so far this year:

* Implement ways to improve the customer experience.
* Investigate and implement ways to shift and streamline processes to expand meaningful and more frequent counselor facetime with agency participants.
* Deepen staff experience and understanding of the community in which we work.
* Increase connections and pathways to jobs.
* Better support needs of businesses to assist them in developing disability-friendly workplaces.

Thank you again, WCBers, for all your ongoing support, feedback, referral and resource options, and technical assistance in helping us in our goal to provide the best services to the community. We are grateful for you.

## 2023 CAP Overview by Jen Bean, Executive Director

Purpose:

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a private non-profit organization funded by the federal government under the 1973 Rehabilitation Act as amended. CAP is an advocacy program for customers and applicants in Washington state seeking vocational rehabilitation services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, and Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

CAP provides information about vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs, services, and the VR process. We also help customers understand their rights and responsibilities and navigate the rehabilitation process. CAP works to resolve problems through individual advocacy. CAP also engages in systemic advocacy. We strive to amplify the voices of customers and staff to improve service delivery, employment outcomes, and satisfaction with program services.

CAP is mandated to resolve issues at the lowest possible level, which includes information and referral and support with self-advocacy. In this fiscal year, CAP provided over 1,000 instances of these services that include providing information about VR programs, CAP, Tribal VR, IL services, ADA, and general referral to community resources. CAP also serves both the general Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) and the State Rehab Council for DSB (SRC-B).

This year, CAP focused on modernization. We updated our data, file, and tracking systems to be electronic and ensure they meet necessary confidentiality and HIPAA compliance. Most exciting is our new website that is now directly targeted at our customer base. It is a work in progress, but as a start, it makes it easier to understand who CAP is and the services we provide. Check it out at <http://www.washingtoncap.org/.>

Staff:

Jen Bean, MA – executive director. Jen has been working in the vocational rehabilitation field for 25-plus years. Her work experience includes being an independent living counselor, vocational rehabilitation counselor, benefits specialist, and regional trainer at Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Jen serves as chair of the Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Subcommittee for both the Washington State Rehab Council and the State Rehab Council for the Blind and is a member of the WSRC Policy and Planning Subcommittee.

Doug Burkhalter, MA – rehabilitation advocate. Doug has been working in the vocational rehabilitation field for 25-plus years. His work experience includes being an employment/business relations specialist, vocational rehabilitation counselor, rehabilitation technician, and trainer at Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Individual Advocacy:

Most common disabilities served: 27% mental illness, 15% autism spectrum disorder, 10% blindness and other visual impairments, 9% intellectual disabilities and 9% personality disorder.

Problem Areas:

The majority of CAP customers are working with DVR and DSB. Their No. 1 reason for contacting CAP is due to communication problems with their counselor. 32% of our calls last year were related to communication. Conflicts about services (29%) and difficulties related to their plan development and implementation (29%) were the next most common. Requests for general information (4%), application and eligibility process (2%), and Order of Selection (waitlist) (4%), were other top problem areas.

Intervention Strategies:

CAP is mandated to resolve problems at the lowest possible level. 24% of CAP cases were resolved with short-term technical assistance, 33% involved investigation and monitoring, and 43% required negotiation with the VR agency – for example, with the VR counselor and supervisor.

Closure Reason:

49% of CAP cases were closed with all issues resolved, and 21% with some issues resolved. In 30% of the cases, CAP determined the VR agency position or decision was appropriate.

Results Achieved:

27% of CAP cases resulted in plan development and/or implementation, 22% re-established communication, 13% of customers were assigned to a new counselor or VR office, and 13% participated in an evaluation to better understand and address their barriers and limitations. In 11% of cases, CAP helped customers understand the controlling law and policy that guided VR’s decision. 11% completed an application, and 3% had their eligibility determination expedited.

Systemic Advocacy:

CAP utilized our strong partnerships with state rehabilitation councils for our systemic advocacy efforts. Last year, federal monitoring by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was a focus. VR agencies are monitored periodically to determine whether a VR agency is complying substantially with the provisions of its state plan and with the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

CAP was invited by both agencies to be a partner in the pre-monitoring preparation activities, the virtual monitoring process, and wrap-up meetings. CAP had one-on-one interviews with the RSA monitoring team for each agency. CAP director appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the process and share feedback and insights about both DVR and DSB. Feedback included the impacts of the pandemic on both VR staff and customers, such as personal challenges and difficulties accessing the VR service delivery system. WA CAP was pleased to hear from RSA that we have some of the best working relationships with VR agencies and state rehab councils in the country. Yay Washington!

Training:

Last year, CAP provided 87 training sessions, reaching 931 people. The majority of training included information about CAP purpose, mission, mandates, services, and role in the VR system. We also covered VR history and law, customer satisfaction trends, customer rights, and conflict resolution options.

Training models included attending individual office/unit meetings, one-on-one orientations with new staff, group new employee meet and greets, attending regional and statewide management meetings, presenting at the WSRC and SRC-B quarterly meetings, and presentations to VR stakeholder and partner organizations.

Equity, Diversion, Access and Inclusion (EDAI):

CAP hired an anti-racism coach to provide individual EDAI coaching to CAP staff. In the upcoming year, we plan to work with our coach to look at CAP data and trends, individual case issues, training needs, etc. through an EDAI lens. This professional resource supports CAP’s work to promote anti-racist values and address the impact of systemic racism on service delivery and accessing employment, as well as help with CAP’s strategic planning.

Please contact us if you have questions or want to learn more about CAP. Customers can contact CAP by calling or texting

206-849-2939 or emailing [washingtoncap2@gmail.com](mailto:washingtoncap2@gmail.com).

## Skills, Tools, and Confidence Available Assistive Technology and Richard’s IL Story by Kim Canaan Washington State IL Program Manager

[kimcan@uw.edu](mailto:kimcan@uw.edu)

The Department of Services for the Blind has several programs critical to its mission of inclusion, independence, and economic vitality for people with visual disabilities. The Independent Living program (IL) is one of those programs. IL clients experience difficulty performing customary life activities due to their vision loss, diminishing their ability to live independently. Through the IL program, clients often receive tools, called assistive technology, that make accomplishing day-to-day tasks possible or easier, including magnifiers, talking watches, canes, tactile dots for kitchen appliances, and so much more. Recently, the IL program launched two lending programs, available only to IL program clients, to get a variety of higher tech assistive technology into the hands of program participants.

These programs are the Special Device Lending Program and the Desktop Video Magnifier Program, or CCTV Lending Program. The Special Device Lending Program has cellphones and tablets, electronic handheld magnifiers, smart home speakers (you, too, can talk to Alexa!), and text-to-speech smart readers available today. The CCTV Lending Program is available through a partnership with the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library; recipients of CCTVs must also become library patrons (although they do not need to also receive books or any other service from WTBBL). The CCTV Lending Program offers several different models and sizes of desktop video magnifiers, including Merlins, Acrobats, and ClearViews. The devices from either program are available for free through the IL program. Training is provided to ensure that recipients can use the devices independently. And, just like with WTBBL’s talking book players, the devices can be used as long as they are needed. If devices are no longer useful or being used regularly, the IL program can help clients figure out how to return the devices.

The following success story, about a man in his sixties, is just one example of how the IL program significantly increases independence and quality of life. He received a couple of devices available through the higher tech lending programs, which are mentioned below. His name has been changed to protect the client's privacy.

Richard is a cheery 64-year-old man living with his wife, Geraldine, in Spokane. Richard is legally blind and is also deaf in his left ear and hearing impaired in his right. His remaining level of vision fluctuates throughout the day and with different lighting conditions. In addition to being legally blind, he also has some other health concerns, including Type 2 diabetes, nerve damage related to several strokes, and short-term-memory issues. His vision recently declined more rapidly than it had before, which caused Richard to be concerned about maintaining his autonomy and utilizing his remaining vision. With that in mind, Richard contacted the IL program to inquire about portable electronic magnifiers.

Richard met with an IL provider to walk through different magnifiers, originally intending his meeting to be a short introductory session to what assistive technology options were out there. However, after learning more about the higher tech lending programs, Richard decided to pursue further services with his IL provider. Though Geraldine helps Richard maintain his health appointments and day-to-day tasks, Richard wanted to maintain his ability to complete tasks independently and hoped the IL program could help with that.

Richard expressed interest in getting a Ruby, which is a portable handheld electronic magnifier, and a new CCTV to replace his self-described “dinosaur” model in disrepair. The Special Device Lending Program and the CCTV Lending Program, which are only available through participation in the IL program, provided Richard with both devices, as well as training to be able to use the devices independently. He expressed his excitement about getting the Ruby – Richard is a handyman who is constantly tinkering with items around the house. The Ruby’s magnification would allow him to read directions and fix things himself. The CCTV, specifically the Merlin Elite Pro with Speech, further enabled him to read documents as his vision fluctuates throughout the day. He was especially excited about the CCTV’s speech mode since he could listen to documents like mail and lengthy news articles, when his eyes grew tired.

After services ended, Richard, who also received a pair of sunglasses to help address vision changes related to light levels, told his IL provider that he uses all of his devices every day. On his progress, Richard’s IL provider noted that he was “working on using multiple adaptive devices, including the CCTV with not only magnification but text to speech functions, as well. That adds a whole different level of effort on his part. Richard has shown a great amount of progress and will continue to have many successes.”

If you or someone you know may benefit from the skills, tools – like the assistive technology Richard received, and increased confidence that the IL program provides – do what Richard did: call DSB at 800-552-7103 or email them at info@dsb.wa.gov and ask about the IL program today.

## WSSB Spring Update By Scott McCallum

scott.mccallum@wssb.wa.gov

It has been a wonderful and busy year at the Washington State School for the Blind. We began the year with a large group of incoming students, filling each of our cottages to near capacity. Full cottages lead to larger class sizes, boisterous lunch times, and ample opportunities to make new friends. The 2022-2023 school year is now drawing to a close with eighth-grade promotion and senior graduation just two weeks away. During the last couple of months at WSSB, we have learned about our budget for the 2023-2025 biennium, dove headfirst into summer program planning, held our annual track and field day, and celebrated student accomplishments and retiring staff.

The legislative session kicked off in January of 2023. This year, WSSB requested, and the governor supported in his proposed budget, several improvements to WSSB campus and outreach programs. Thankfully, most of our requests were also supported by Senate and House budget writers. Specifically, WSSB was provided the funding to add several types of expert support to our outreach services team. This expert support is focused on areas such as assistive technology; assessment and services for blind and low-vision youth with complex needs, including brain-based causes of vision loss; mentorship for new teachers; and temporary support for districts in need. These services will be rolled out beginning next school year and will be offered at no charge to districts.

This year’s legislative session also provided funding for a digital accessibility specialist to join our instructional technology team. WSSB was provided the resources to continue updating our campus in Vancouver. Several projects were funded, including a pool deck resurfacing project, a new roof for the Dry Building, adjustable lighting updates for student cottages, resurfacing of our track, and turfing the field within the track to include the west coast’s first official five-aside-soccer pitch. Finally, the third floor of Old Main that currently houses the Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow program will be converted to short-term residence for parents of children who attend WSSB and participate in WSSB residential programs.

WSSB will host a wide range of summer programs this year, beginning with our own Empower summer program for youth ages 11-14 during the week of June 25-30. Our goal is to provide a safe, inclusive, and fun-filled environment where campers can learn, grow, and build lifelong friendships. Shortly after the Fourth of July, our collaborative program with Department of Services for the Blind, Youth Employment Solutions 1 (YES 1) program begins. WSSB Summer Institute training for classroom teachers and other school professionals who will be working with a blind or low-vision student will be offered during the last full week of July. In August, our partners from the DSB and the National Federation of the Blind will be hosting summer programs on the WSSB campus in Vancouver.

The 2023 WSSB track and field day was held on a beautiful and sunny Thursday in May. Several hundred people, including blind and low-vision youth, their teachers, parents and siblings, traveled from all parts of Washington to participate in this fantastic annual event. In addition to track and field activities, students and other participants enjoyed completing art projects, swimming, games, touring the sensory safari, eating good food, and good times. At the track meet, WSSB welcomed others such as the WCB, NFB, Northwest Association for Blind Athletes, DSB, Pacific Foundation for Blind Children, Lighthouse, and more to set up tables and interact with track and field day participants, guests, and volunteers. Thank you to Kim and Donny Moberg, and Bob Cavanaugh for staffing the WCB table at this year’s track and field event. If the number of smiles from students, parents, staff, and volunteers are any indicator of success, this year’s track and field day was definitely a good one.

Finally, student awards and graduation are just two weeks away. WSSB would like to congratulate everyone reaching a significant milestone on their educational journey. A very special congratulations is due to everyone in the class of 2023. WSSB would also like to acknowledge and thank parents and caregivers of all blind and low-vision children. We recognize that parents and caregivers are every child’s first and most important teacher and provider. In addition to those students and parents, WSSB would like to acknowledge and thank the teachers, mobility specialists, Braille transcribers and paraprofessionals, custodians and grounds crew, and transportation service providers for the role they play in empowering students and ensuring that every blind and low-vision individual in Washington has the supports and services they need to succeed. We would also like to say thank you to all WSSB staff who will be retiring. A recent review of the seven known individuals planning to retire noted that those seven individuals have contributed over 200 years of combined service at WSSB. Thank you for everything you have done over the course of your long and distinguished careers at WSSB.

# WCB HAPPENINGS

## Adventures in ACB Convention Land by Heidi Coggins

Heidi.Coggins@outlook.com

I was a first-timer this year, and when I was selected by Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) to attend the American Council of the Blind (ACB) convention in person, I was both thrilled and terrified. All of my adult life I have been fiercely independent, and losing my vision has been a blow to that part of me. Since “going dark” in April 2021, I hadn’t traveled alone, let alone on a plane to a large convention center.

This year, our ACB convention was held in Schaumburg, Ill., at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center. I arrived June 29 with all my accoutrements of travel. Since the flight was delayed, we had enough time to check in, grab some food to go, and settle in for the night. I had no roommate for this event, so I made sure to get lost in my room several times and managed to map my way to and from the elevator banks successfully.

Our first full day consisted of the board meeting, and then a wonderful meal with friends at a local restaurant. We managed to also haul along a volunteer named Emily we had befriended that very same day. The ensuing days were filled with general sessions, seminars, exhibit hall visits, and numerous special breakfasts and luncheons.

Along the way, I had the pleasure of acquainting myself with some of our wonderful WCB members and made some new friends from all over the country. I attended a wine tasting, a bingo night (what a great time that was!), a candy tour, and a live stage production of “Tommy” at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago.

My adventure ended with an amazing banquet, with an excellent guest speaker named Lou Sharp. He was uplifting and full of hope, and left me filled with possibilities.

This convention was well-planned and executed. We had plenty of volunteers, tons of educational opportunities, and loads of ACB information on a daily basis. Bravo to ACB, as this must have been an incredibly large undertaking. I have been to prior conventions in my past corporate life; however, this was one of the most exceptional that I have attended.

While there were plenty of experiences that I truly enjoyed and learned from, one moment in particular was my most touching and memorable. I was in one of the Welcome Hosting sessions, and I had the pleasure of meeting several new and old friends. Cindy Hollis told me to make sure to stop by the exhibit hall and check out Guiding Eyes. I am in the process of getting my first guide dog through GDB. However, this little excursion wasn’t for the purpose of finding out about getting a dog from Guiding Eyes, but rather meeting a person.

As many of you have probably experienced, when you lose your vision, it can be incredibly difficult to find resources at first. While there is a vast array of resources, the path to get there can be frustrating and tedious. The first person I ever spoke to regarding this search was Meka White. At the time, she was at the Lighthouse, and she was not only incredibly helpful, she offered me a beacon of hope that everything would be OK. She was my first human being who also had vision issues that told me I could still do anything I wanted to, and there were several paths to get there. Meka was at the Guiding Eyes booth. When I approached the booth, I asked for her and said my name. She stood up, rushed around the booth, and we hugged and squealed with delight to finally meet one another in person. It’s funny how sometimes you don’t know the effect you have on someone else’s course, and I was overjoyed to tell her how she affected mine.

This convention was filled to the brim with excellent highlights, and amazing experiences and people, too many to even list out – but Meka White, you get the biggest and loudest shout out from me!

I want to send my heartfelt gratitude to WCB and the people who selected me to attend this convention in person. This was such a life-changing experience for me in so many ways. I found I could travel with a little assistance. I found a new sense of confidence while navigating around. I found new friends in my ACB family. Most importantly, a spark of my fierce independence returned back to me. I will grab onto this renewed sense of hope and freedom and run into my bright future with WCB and ACB at my side.

With an attitude of gratitude,

Heidi Coggins AKA The Spicy Blind Unicorn

## WCB Convention, “Putting Our Best Foot Forward!” by Beth Greenberg & the Convention Committee

Here’s the convention information you’ve all been waiting for. Join us Oct. 26-28 for the annual Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) convention. This year’s theme is WCB, Putting Our Best Foot Forward! The weekend hybrid event will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Seattle Airport. We are delighted to share this program information with you and hope it will assist in your decision to attend, either in person or virtually through Zoom.

We have awesome speakers lined up, including:

* Abby Griffith, a WCB member and Clark County Council of the Blind chapter treasurer in Vancouver, WA. In 2022, Abby won the Holman Prize grant to implement a technology program for blind and visually impaired students in her hometown in Ethiopia. She enjoys advocating for non-drivers and is the Bus Riders Unite! Community Organizer at OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon.
* Denise Colley, a longtime WCB member who now resides in Texas. The immediate past president of WCB, Denise currently serves as the American Council of the Blind (ACB) secretary.
* Kenneth Semien, currently serving on the ACB Board of Directors. Kenneth will be sharing the latest on ACB activities.

For breakout sessions, we have technology, essential oils with guide dogs, Integrated Health, travel after COVID, and foot health, just to name a few. For the first time, we’ve scheduled open hours for our exhibit hall on Thursday night, as well as the usual Friday afternoon hours. Now you won’t have to choose between that general session that captured your interest and checking out the latest technology.

The History Committee wants to hear your stories, and you could win a prize for your participation.

The History Committee is planning again this year to have a booth in the exhibit hall or a table set up in an adjacent room in the hotel where we can conduct personal interviews. We want to provide an opportunity for you as convention attendees to come and share your favorite WCB or national conference highlights.

Our plan is to use these for future podcasts, web posts, or Newsline articles. Our conventions are a lot of fun, and we want everyone to know about the experiences that made it a memorable event.

So, don’t forget to drop by our booth. You never know, you could be the lucky winner in our drawing.

REGISTRATION RATES

Convention registration only, in person or virtual: $50. WCB members get a $15 discount, so they pay only $35.

Add-on meal options:

* All five meals will be an additional $140, which includes Friday breakfast and lunch, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and Saturday’s banquet.
* New this year: Friday-only breakfast and lunch is an additional $100.
* Banquet is an additional $65.

So, to recap for WCB members: it’s $35 registration only (no meals), $175 for in-person registration and the complete five-meals package, $135 for in-person registration and two Friday meals, or $100 for in-person registration and banquet.

HOTEL

With a guest room rate of $115 (plus taxes and fees) based on single or double occupancy, the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Seattle Airport is ready to take reservations now. The online reservation link is https://book.passkey.com/go/WCB23. You can also call the DoubleTree’s toll-free reservation number at 800-222 TREE, or 800-222-8733, and reference the group code WBL, or the group name Washington Council of the Blind. Room reservations must be made no later than Oct. 9 to get the guaranteed room rate. Complimentary in-room Wi-Fi is included, and convention attendees get a reduced rate for self-parking of $12 per day.

Make your plans now to join other blind and visually-impaired Washingtonians and friends from throughout the U.S. and Canada for what is sure to be a fun-filled, informative weekend. Please share this info with your friends – we certainly don’t want to leave anyone out. Be sure to check the “News you can use” page on the WCB website to read the latest convention schedule and updates.

The online registration form will be available by Sept. 1. There will be an informative Zoom call a week or two before the convention if you still have questions and the snippets on the listserv are not answering them for you.

-- Cathy Wilson, Beth Greenberg, and your 2023 WCB Convention Committee

## Become a WCB Convention Volunteer by Linda Wilder

Every year, our annual Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) convention is held in person. We utilize the assistance of sighted volunteers to help convention participants in a variety of ways, such as helping persons with low vision or blindness navigate the hotel in general, locate convention event rooms, and navigate the exhibit hall.

The 2023 WCB convention will be Thursday, Oct. 26, through Sunday morning, Oct. 29, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport, 18740 International Blvd., Seattle, WA, 98188.

We need volunteers to serve as volunteer sighted guides each day. We offer potential volunteers a choice of shifts. Most sign up for one shift. Some work two shifts. Shifts range in length from 3 to 5 hours, from early morning through 9 or 10 o’clock at night. We schedule volunteers in advance of the convention, to ensure we have adequate support every day of the convention.

Past volunteers tell us they enjoyed the time they spent with convention participants very much. New volunteers said they appreciated the opportunity to chat with and learn from people with low vision and blindness, and the support and guidance we provide for our volunteers. Many said this volunteer opportunity was a highlight of their year, and they hope to do it again.

No matter the length of time you are able to serve as a sighted guide, if you drive, WCB will provide you with a free hotel parking pass valued at $42. The hotel has a monitored surface parking lot.

During every shift there will be a volunteer table outside the main ballroom. It will be staffed by at least one WCB member, a coordinator and a trained sighted guide. At the start of each shift, they teach new volunteers how to be sighted guides. They orient guides to event times and destinations, coordinate guide assignments, and provide assistance for volunteers as needed during every shift.

Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering, or have questions about this rewarding endeavor. Lindasuewilder@msn.com

## Awards Committee Announcement by Jessamyn Landby

Once again, the Awards Committee needs your help. We are now accepting nomination letters for seven awards:

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

Your nomination letters should include your first and last name, email address, and phone number; the nominee’s first and last name, mailing address, email address, and phone number; a description of what they have done to receive the nomination; a description of why they deserve the award.

Email nomination letters by midnight Aug. 31 to Jessamyn Landby at landjess@icloud.com. Contact Jessamyn for questions or descriptions of the awards. The Awards Committee looks forward to your nomination letters.

## What is the DEI Committee by Lynne Koral

Washington Council of the Blind, through its board of directors, has formed an ad hoc committee concerning diversity, equity and inclusion. This group is empowered to do its work for one year.

These are not just buzzwords or categories that people check off to make themselves look good. These are unrepresented or misrepresented groups in which people find themselves. They are generally thought of as disenfranchised and marginalized, and thought of as minorities, but not always thought of this way.

If you believe you fall into a group that is unrepresented because of age, race, class, thought, religion or sexual identity, please get in touch with Sheri Richardson, second vice president, or Lynne Koral, vice chair. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to form a more diverse affiliate. It is important that everyone feels included.

## Hat’s Off Compiled by Linda Wilder

[lindasuewilder@msn.com](mailto:lindasuewilder@msn.com)

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

Jim Palomarez on his graduation from the Orientation and Training Center of Washington Department of Services for the Blind;

The 2023 graduating class of Washington State School for the Blind;

Dr. Lynne Koral for completing her dissertation study of blind college educated females and their obstacles to employment, thereby earning her Doctorate in Philosophy from Walden University;

Vivian Conger for receiving The Moffitt-Gleitz Award from Guide Dog Users Inc., a special interest affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. This award recognizes her steadfast dedication to guide dog teams and unwavering work with Guide Dog Users of Washington State.

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

The following are reasons for inclusion in this column:

* Birth of a child, grandchild or great-grandchild
* Birthdays 75 years and older in 5-year increments (yearly after age 90)
* Marriage or wedding anniversary 25 years and more in 5-year increments
* Graduation from high school, college or vocational program
* New job, career promotion, or retirement
* Partnering with a dog guide
* Appointment to a city, county, statewide, or national board or commission
* Exceptional recognition or award

# AROUND THE STATE

## Clark County Council of the Blind by Bob Cavanaugh

﻿Well, hard to believe that another quarter has come and gone. Here in our corner of the state, things are pretty quiet for our chapter, but that doesn't mean we aren't moving forward.

After what seems to have been a contentious last year of finding an in- person meeting place, I think we've finally found one. The membership decided at my recommendation that we move our meeting time to Saturday evening, because the third Saturday of the month seems to be the best possible day. Hopefully, this puts an end to the constant changing of our meeting time and location.

One of our members recommended going to an axe throwing place, so I'm going to try and set that up for our normal meeting day in July. Other than that, we are working on partnering with the Portland chapter and IQ Credit Union on improving their website.

Our members have a lot going on in their personal lives though. Personally, this is my last full quarter of school. I have one class I need to take over the summer, then I will be on the job hunt again. Our treasurer, Abby Grifith, won the Holman Prize, and is using the money to set up a technology program for blind students in her native Ethiopia. She also told me that she will speak at WCB's convention.

## Pierce County Association of the Blind by Julie Harlow

Pierce County Association of the Blind continues to meet with its membership despite some venue challenges. If not in person, we will continue to connect with our members and still utilize Zoom.

We have had some good speakers. In April, we had the pleasure of having Rafael Ramirez, an IL Specialist. In May, The Tacoma Glass Museum brought samples of some tactile items, which are available to feel for yourself at the Museum. Elisabeth E. Emerson, Education Program Manager, spoke about their desire to make the glass museum enjoyable for all people, including the blind community. Many of our members have attended their blindness specific tours, and we encourage everyone to take part in future tours and keep this project going.

In June we were visited by Melanie Tobin of the Pierce County Library System. In July Pierce County Transit gave us an update on our busses and Shuttle services.

We are excited about our upcoming annual picnic on July 29th from 11:00 – 5:00, at Spanaway Park, in Tacoma. Our favorite blind chef, Jackie Cabrera will be catering this event, and we know the food will be fabulous. We will have entertainment by Steve Stefanowicz. Also, Northwest Association for Blind Athletes will be there. This will be a great time of fun and games.

We are very proud of our member and artist John Halliday. He was chosen to go to Denmark in May on behalf of his tribe. What an honor to see John be given this opportunity. You can see the story of his amazing trip here: <https://tinyurl.com/3hpxpe4n>

## Snohomish County Council of the Blind by Marilee Richards

The member spotlight of Snohomish County Council of the Blind (SCCB) this time we feature Greggory Wilson. He comes to us because of his contact with Heidi Coggins. He will be active in the new music group Pacific West Music for the Blind (PWMB). He will be learning to play the guitar. In fact, he left our meeting to get his guitar last month. He is very excited about that. If you are interested in learning how to play an instrument, get in touch with Brent Boon at brent.s.boon@gmail.com.

SCCB is getting involved in a few new activities over the summer. One of our members has a relative who works at Evergreen Lanes and will provide lanes to bowl on and enjoy regardless of our scores. What a relief for me. We have also discussed a game night at Starbucks, and meeting for lunch at different locations.

We did extremely well on Give Big this year, thanks to donations from friends and family of our members. I am so grateful that we have a little money to put aside to help the group and other needy folks.

Heidi, Shay, and I are working on two grants, one from the Tulalip tribe and the other from the Stillaguamish tribe. I know there is no guarantee we will get anything, but we don’t know until we try.

Our affiliate has decided to host the fall Washington Council of the Blind state convention. It is a lot of work, but our group is large, and we have a lot of folks with fantastic skills from former employment, and many hands make little work.

Our summer is full of events. Heidi Coggins is representing WCB at the national convention, and many other members from this state are also attending. We are proud to have another SCCB member filling that position again this year.

We are meeting twice for ferry rides and lunch, along with a bus ride on Whidbey Island. Instead of a picnic we are also going to Edmonds for a ride to Kitsap.

Have a wonderful summer, find time for yourself, get some fresh air and enrich your life.

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

Summer is a time filled with lots of fun for our chapter! It means games, food and lots of sunshine. We might be a small chapter, but we are a busy little chapter.

After our May meeting, we all went to lunch together. We went to a place called "That One Place" that has great burgers, fries, and shakes. The décor is all about cars and auto shops and driving. When you come down the stairs there is a stop sign, and when you go in a little further you can find traffic lights. On the wall in the room we usually use they have all kinds of signs having to do with 76 gas stations. It is always a fun place to hang out, enjoy a meal and chat.

Most of the time we have some kind of food at our meetings. Usually, we just bring whatever we want to share with others, but for June we are going to have a theme. Everyone likes tacos so we are having a taco bar. Everyone has chosen to bring an item. It should be fun and different all rolled up into one.

Our president has been sick with COVID. Our new member and Vice President took charge and ran the meeting in Jess' absence.

Gayle, you did an awesome job! You have the makings of becoming a great president for this chapter in the future!

Our secretary (Chris Brame) and his wife (Carol Brame) have been married for 31 years. Congratulations to you both. Chris also had a birthday this month (May). Can you figure out how old he is by this clue? He is a double nickel this year. While we are on the subject of Chris...He won the 50/50 raffle at our May meeting. Y'all continue having fun with outdoor activities!

## United Blind of the Tri-Cities by Frank Cuta

In April, United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC) had a strong representation at a very successful Dinner in the Dark fund-raiser put on by our local service provider, the Edith Bishel Center (EBC). We were sorry to hear about the disbandment of the local Kennewick Lions Club. However, their remaining funds were distributed to local non-profit organizations. With guidance from our former president, Bill Hoage, generous sums were awarded to both UBTC and the Edith Bishel Center. Frank took advantage of the occasion to make a short presentation to members explaining the difference between an organization that is FOR the blind, such as Edith Bishel, and one that is OF the blind, like UBTC. Both provide a valuable contribution to the community. It is so great that the EBC, which is a service provider, and UBTC, which is a group advocating for better services, can work hand-in-hand with each other locally for the good of the blind and visually impaired.

Listenership is down for our local radio reading service, unfortunately, even though it provides great daily programming. Where else can you hear current grocery ads, Dear Abby, and the funnies read aloud? Any WCB member who qualifies for library services and uses Facebook can join the live-listening group, and we would love to have you. Just contact Frank.

Lisa and Reggie George, along with Frank, were our speakers in April. They told us all about their fantastic adventure on a cruise through the Hawaiian Islands on a small, inter-island ship.

Also in April, we met via Zoom conference with the legislative assistant to Dan Newhouse, our District 4 congressperson. Frank Cuta, Janice Squires, Reg George, and Sally Mayo presented the four ACB legislative imperatives for 2023, which we would like to see passed in this session of congress.

For our May program, Frank explained how any member of UBTC can fully participate in the American Council of the Blind national convention. Each UBTC member is automatically also a member of ACB and, therefore, has a vote on the national level. This means UBTC members can fully participate in elections and can engage in debate on proposed resolutions or amendments to the bylaws. With all of the business sessions available via Zoom conferencing, the financial burden of being there in person no longer needs to be a hardship. Even many of the convention tours are available online. You just need to register as a virtual attendee.

Lastly, on the first Saturday in May, 14 members from the Tri-Cities and Walla Walla chapters participated in an amazing hands-on tour of our local Mammoth archaeological dig site. (See article “Mammoth Bones Undergo Braille Inspection” elsewhere in this issue for details).

## United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares

Things have been hot, hot, hot in Walla Walla this summer. We have had many days of temperatures in the triple digits, including the day we had our picnic, which was moved inside Annee Hartzell’s home. Delicious food and socializing were enjoyed by all who attended. Annee served a taco bar feast.

Attendance at our meetings has been increasing as we have been back to in-person meetings. We welcome our new member Zack, and look forward to getting to know him better.

Heather Meares and Reginald George both attended the National Disability Rights Network Conference in Phoenix, AZ, at the beginning of June. This was quite an experience, which included attending many seminars, a couple of receptions, and learning to edit video content as blind attendees. This was challenging, but worth the effort.

Annee also talked with us about some exciting AI technologies she has been using as a teacher, including Chat GPT and the Envision glasses, which she demonstrated at our last meeting.

We hope you are all enjoying your summer and send you well wishes from Walla Walla.

## Yakima Valley Council of the Blind by Sally Mayo

YVCB continues to meet at the Eagles Club on Chestnut Avenue on the third Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. We have recently welcomed three new members to our group: Sabrina Dade, Charles Marsh, and Jim Palomarez. Our group continues to bowl at Nob Hill Lanes every Friday at 11:00 am. We also have our social and outreach meeting on the 4th Friday each month at the Harman Center from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

In May, two of our members presented at the Sunnyside Senior Center, in conjunction with the Lions Knights of the Blind, discussing the book “Grandpa’s White Cane” and talking about vision loss and blindness. Frank Cuta and Sally Mayo talked about using white canes and the vision aids used by them. Sally also gave information about Vision for Independence Center (VIC), a nonprofit in Yakima, and Frank shared info on Edith Bishel Center, a nonprofit in Kennewick.

Jim Palomarez, our newest YVCB member, graduated from the OTC on June 15. His Capstone project was a joyful success that allowed him to share his newfound skills with his family on a trip to Las Vegas. Congratulations, Jim!

# 2023 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

**AUGUST**

**4-5** – WCB Leadership Seminar at Crowne Plaza SeaTac

**6** – WCB Board Meeting from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Crowne Plaza SeaTac

**7** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**14** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

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

**26** – Museum of Glass Touch Tours 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tacoma -- MUST PRE-REGISTER: call 253-284-4713

**31** – Last day to donate scholarship funds to be distributed to 2023 recipients

**SEPTEMBER**

**1** – WCB Convention registration opens for attendees and exhibitors

**11** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

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

**17** – WCB Candidates Forum Call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)

**17** – “Early bird” drawing for registered conventioneers for a $100 gift card

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

**19** – WCB Committee Leaders call at 7 p.m.

**21** – Last day to donate items for the WCB Fundraising Auction

**23** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting

**25** – Presidents call at 7 p.m.

**28** –Record Date for WCB members’ voting eligibility

**30** –Submission deadline for WCB Newsline Fall 2023 issue

**OCTOBER**

**1** – Last day for WCB members to request a convention loan

**1** – Proposed 2024 WCB Operations Budget Forum Call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)

**1** – 2023 WCB Fundraising Auction at 4 p.m. (Zoom)

**2** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**5** – WASILC meeting

**8** – Proposed Constitutional Amendments Forum Call at 3 p.m. (Zoom)

**9** – WCB convention online pre-registration ends at midnight

**9** – Last day for eligible WCB members to request a travel stipend

**9** – Last day for guaranteed $115 rate on DoubleTree hotel reservations

**9** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**15** – White Cane Safety Day

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

**21** – WTBBL Patron Advisory Council meeting (Zoom)

**26-28** – WCB Annual Convention at DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport

**NOVEMBER**

**13** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**18** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting

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

**27** – Presidents call at 7 p.m.

**30** – Submission deadline for WCB Newsline Winter 2023 issue

**Washington Council of the Blind**

is pleased to acknowledge donors who have generously supported  
our programs in the second quarter of 2023:

**Thank You!**

Anonymous (10)

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