# WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

Opportunity, Equality, Independence
Founded 1935

# WCB NEWSLINE

Winter 2024 Edition
"A Winter's Pot of Stew"

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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 Spring 2024 WCB Newsline in April and look forward to reading your quality submissions.**

# Please send all content by February 29.
## Digital cartridges should be returned by this date.

### *** Publication Guidelines

- All submissions will be edited for brevity and clarity.
- We reserve the right to edit, publish or refuse submitted content and author contact information.
- 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**, or through the contact form located at:
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## President's Message
### by Andy Arvidson

Hello Washington Council of the Blind (WCB). It comes with great honor and a ton of humility that I sit here tonight and say thank you for allowing me to become your next president of this incredible organization. The grace and dignity of such a grand scale sometimes puts me in awe. Therefore, I am going to do my best to lead in a positive and productive manner to make WCB the top of the list in everyone's mind as the place to go and become a part of. With your help, we can do this. Join me in the path of enlightenment, so we can all walk on the sunny side of the street.

As a leader, I want to also be a listener to all of you, so if you have ideas that you think can make what we do better, do not delay – call or email me. I am here to take your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to heart and into consideration. I cannot be a leader without followers, and I am willing to be on both sides of the street with you.

The new 1st vice president, Cathy Wilson, and I have already been talking about a D.C. trip in March to attend the American Council of the Blind leadership and legislative seminar, and it looks like we will both be attending. We believe we are going to make a good team as your new leaders. We will be getting out the legislative imperatives as soon as they are available. Some of the issues I know we will be addressing are accessible exercise equipment and medical equipment. Also, we will still be working on accessible websites.

I am looking at having all WCB committees in place as early as possible so we can hit 2024 running. So, if you have not yet notified me about a committee position you are interested in, please let me know where you would like to serve. Service is a blessing, and the adage "the more you give, the more you will receive," is surely a true statement. Let us see how strong we build our organization together.

We have been trying to build a new special-interest affiliate of young members, ages 18 to 40. If you are interested, let us know. If you know

of anyone in this age group who is hesitant, encourage them to jump into this wealth of information and community that keeps us together, and striving to become better.

## Reflections from the Outgoing President
### by Julie Brannon

I always hoped I could run for president of Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) someday, but I didn't feel I could do so while I was working. Others had done this successfully, but I knew that wasn't me. So, when retirement came in 2019, I felt it was time to give back to the organization by running for this position.

Being involved in various leadership roles in WCB is truly what assisted me on my own journey. I used the skills I gained to help me become successful in a variety of arenas.

I remember so well the day in 2019, at our WCB convention, when I gave my acceptance speech. I had already been a member of WCB for 25 years, serving in various leadership roles, both at my local chapter and within WCB. But this was a completely new horizon. I had some idea of what to expect, but much of my responsibilities could never have been foreseen until the time for action was necessary. I couldn't have made it through without the support, knowledge, and hard work of our marvelous officers and board members. A leader needs to be ready to learn new things, stretch beyond one's comfort level, and be willing to take input with grace and grow from it.

Here are just a few of our ongoing accomplishments together.

We encourage and motivate other state affiliates in the American Council of the Blind through our leadership development efforts. Over many years, we've held this work as paramount. We owe huge thanks to Past President Berl Colley for promoting this aspect of WCB.

Our excellent quarterly publication, “WCB Newsline,” won a national award and continues to grow.

Our active and constantly expanding WCB Families Committee provides education and support for so many children and parents through all their programs and partnerships.

WCB’s Advocacy Committee’s progress in getting mandated accessible prescription labeling.

These are only a few of the 20 standing and three ad hoc committees and the internal and external programs of WCB that make us great.

I helped support and guide the development of our latest affiliate, WCB Diabetics, which was the dream of Danette Dixon. I also participated in the creation of the ad hoc Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, which has hit the road running.

It was a privilege to connect with board member Tim Breitenfeldt to establish a young adult’s affiliate. This work continues.

I worked with the Membership Committee to develop the Community at Large group, and with Steve Fiksdal and the outstanding Leadership Committee to expand and enhance our training.

We held an in-person retreat in 2023 to train our new officers and board members, and all of them were present. The Fundraising Committee was also revived during my tenure.

We started quarterly meetings with rotating facilitation by all the committee chairs. This helped build more involvement throughout WCB and create stronger leaders.

Here are some of my thoughts as I leave this position of president. What a shock we had, just as I got going, when COVID struck. There were so many necessary changes and adjustments that had to happen quickly. In my second and third years, I needed to depend on our

officers and board of directors more than I'd intended, due to having a severe case of COVID, as well as subsequent surgery and rehabilitation from a broken shoulder. This all proves that one of WCB's greatest strengths is the ability to chip in and work together for our common goals. Thank you all.

So many people are asking me, "What's next, since you won't need so much time to devote to WCB?"

That is a good question. I know the work is never done. I will remain on the board as past president to serve and support the incoming president. I will continue as chair of one committee and work on other WCB projects.

There are ventures I plan to put more time into and develop further, but there is also an awareness of some personal re-definition occurring, and some feelings of loss.

However, there are also feelings of gratitude for having more time available.

I know that as my role changes and our new president steps in, WCB will continue to be strong, thrive, and move forward in our ever-changing world. I thank all of you in WCB for this phenomenal opportunity to serve as your president.

## Letter From the Editors

Greetings all: Winter is a time of reflection, stripping ourselves back to the bare bones, rest, re-evaluation, and healing. We must do these things in preparation for the upcoming season of newness and rebirth, as individuals, organizations, and as a community. Washington Council of the Blind is beginning the year with a new president, Andy Arvidson, several new board members, and a fresh list of new committee chairs and members. These are some of the obvious and necessary ingredients in our winter's pot of stew, the meat and potatoes, if you will. But the ones that really refine the flavors are the herbs, spices, and that mystery weird ingredient the chef throws in at the last minute, just because they can. And what makes these ingredients so beautiful is that each is uniquely grown, aged, and has survived a lot of harsh conditions to become so full of flavor. These are you and your stories of what unique and wonderful elements you add to our stew. We, your Newsline editors, already know we're one of the weird spices. Which one are you? How did you get where you are today? What do we all need to do to keep enhancing our flavors?

This issue is full of some very potent and powerful stories of some of our individual endeavors to constantly redefine ourselves, heal our wounds, fill our empty bowls, and be useful to others in doing the same. We are starting with our bare-bone broth, and throwing everything in as we go, so be ready to embrace whatever this issue holds for you personally, and do what you will with it. Cook on low, simmer as long as needed, smell, taste, and most importantly … always stir the pot!

Your Faithful Weird Spices,

Heather Meares and Reginald George

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

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.

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 20 timeless episodes, with more wonderful content coming out just around the corner. So, stay tuned for those. We recently released a two-part podcast highlighting the work of puppy raisers for Guide Dogs for the Blind, and featuring new podcast hosts, Marilee Richards and Linda Wilder.

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 Feb. 28. Send all votes, submissions, feedback, and other content to TheWCBNewsline@Gmail.com before that date.

Newsline is always on the lookout for new writers on almost any topic. We are especially interested in new youth writers. Help us tell the world that we are currently running a contest, and if you are under 21 and submit something for publication, you will be placed in a drawing to win one of three gift cards. Deadline and address are the same as above.

Thanks to everyone who takes the time to read our magazine and vote for your favorite article in each issue. We provide this space to continue the conversation and encourage our writers, without whom we would not exist.

The 2023 Readers' Choice winner is "Taking the Train from Washington to Ohio," by Tim Downie.

**Reader Feedback**

Holly Turri: “I pick Marilee’s, ‘It’s a Dog’s Life Chapter III.’ She is one of the smartest and bravest women I know. Therefore, her article wins.”

Heidi Coggins: “Excellent job on this issue! From the summer issue, ‘Take My Hand, Let’s Stroll Together,’ by Hayley Agers. I still find myself wanting to go into that treehouse and sip on a lavender lemonade each time I read this article. Not only is it descriptive and welcoming, but there is also a tinge of emotion and memory for her lost babies, and her remembrance of her guide dog, Farley. I can fully imagine an afternoon in this space and what it would entail. It gets my vote!”

Janice Squires: “I choose, ‘Taking the Train from Washington to Ohio,’ by Tim Downie. I love the thought of him being so independent, taking the train, and seeming to enjoy every minute of it! Sounds like something I would love to do.”

Joleen Ferguson: “It was a difficult choice, but Hayley made her descriptions live for me. I would love to experience her garden.”

Randy Tedrow: “It was great listening to this podcast with Webster, my now retired guide, snoring in the background. Thank you, Linda, Marilee, and the Newsline editors for putting on such a great show.”

Jose Lopez: “That was very, very cool. I was a guide dog user for about eight years, and I kept my dog ‘til she went over the rainbow bridge, at the age of 13. However, I didn’t know much about puppy raisers, especially not in such awesome detail. Keep up the good work y’all. This message was sent to you from the Batmobile.”

Frank Cuta: “This is my kudos to our great editorial staff. Their use of a theme-based model for our Newsline has been very successful in drawing increased numbers of us to spill our blood onto these pristine pages. What I want to know is this. All of the themes have inspired us to share many diverse interests and feelings. What is it about digging

around in the dirt that inspired so many to go farther in, to leave thinking behind, and actually poke at some of our deepest emotions and heartfelt experiences?”

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 #21
## The Girl in the Snow Globe
## by Heather Meares

In December, I had the privilege of staying at Sherry Dubbin’s home while in Tri-Cities for a winter concert. I felt so welcome, even though I had never been there before. My room was so cozy, with extra quilts laid out, and she gave me a tour of the layout of her home. We spent some wonderful time together, sitting at her kitchen bar with other guests, having great conversation and food. I could tell she loved having people in her home, as she was such a gracious host. She showed us a little Christmas village she had set up, but I had no idea that it was very similar to where she was raised. Her story reminds me of a snow globe from days gone by, so let’s shake it up and see what we find out about our friend and her little village.

**Sherry:** “I was born and raised in Ely, Minnesota, and I lived in a logging camp from the time I was six weeks old until I was 16. There were around 200 people, which included about 50 families. We had the old country store where you went to buy everything, including shirts, pants, and boots for loggers. There was one church that anyone could use. We had an elementary school, but after 7th grade, we rode a bus to the nearest town, which was 52 miles each way for school. You know kids, we had a pretty good time on that bus.”

**Heather:** “I’ll bet it was quite the adventure.”

**Sherry:** “Yeah, it was…sometimes couples smooching in the back, or occasional fights. The bus held 72 passengers and quite a few kids came out of the woods to do that. We only had two telephones in the whole area, and there was a blacksmith who made all the horseshoes for the horses. Because my father was a foreman, I was able to watch this man make the horseshoes, which was amazing, like you hear about in books.”

**Heather:** “It sounds like going back in time.”

**Sherry:** “It really was. Winter was a really special time for me as I was growing up. We had roller skating, and ice skating on the frozen lake where they’d come in with their big equipment and swish it off for us. The wintertime was so beautiful. At Christmas, they had big Clydesdale horses that did a lot of work in the woods. They would come with a big sleigh, and all of us kids would get to go riding on some of those logging trips. I remember on Sunday nights, I’d go with my dad to the horse barn to feed the Clydesdales. They were huge!

“There was a huge light plant, because there was no wired electricity, so I would go with my dad to check the light plant. We had record players back in those days, and the electricity was so slow that the music would play very slowly. We had a big hall where maybe every three months, we’d have a dance where all the kids could go, and the parents as well, with live bands. Weddings were held there, and everyone would cook for each other. It was a village; you did everything together.”

**Heather:** “It sounds like there was a real sense of family and community.”

**Sherry:** “Yes, and if anything ever happened, you could bet they would be there. When I was 16, they closed the camp down, and now it is full

of lakes. My parents' ashes are out there. Many of the people wanted their ashes by the homes there when they died."

**Heather:** "What did you do next, when you left there?"

**Sherry:** "I got married when I was 17, the same year I graduated. Mel was a construction worker, and we traveled all over the place. I'd just get used to relationships with people, and off we'd go again. With my vision, I noticed things early on, but it didn't really dawn on me that I was losing vision until later."

**Heather:** "What are ways you have learned to cope with vision loss?"

**Sherry:** "When I worked as a nurse, they made it nice for me, with lights containing different colors, computer programs, and large keyboards that all the doctors loved, too. I found the Edith Bishel Center and Department of Services for the Blind, and they set up everything for me at work. And luckily, my husband thought a lot about things like putting certain lighting under cupboards for me. And then, I discovered the United Blind of Tri-Cities, and that's when my life really got going. Getting together with these people, and going to their tech groups helped because I had been really depressed. I met Janice Squires and Frank Cuta, and thought, 'I can do this'."

**Heather:** "How many years ago did you start meeting with them?"

**Sherry:** "Probably about 15 years ago. I really did think my life was over before that."

**Heather:** "If you learned one thing from growing up in that environment you have brought with you for your whole life, what would it be?"

**Sherry:** "The relationships with people, and helping, and doing things together. I'm definitely not a loner. In fact, I'm still close to a lot of those people I grew up with. I think this year, I've lost four of those special people that I started grade school with. You can go through life, you

could have billions of dollars, but if you don't have relationships, you have nothing."

**Heather:** "I love hearing things about a person you would have never guessed. I bet a lot of people don't know you were raised in a logging camp. That, in itself, is fascinating."

**Sherry:** "That was such a big part of my life, even today. I have a little village I set up every year, there's all these little houses with snow around them and people walking around, and it's like I lived in that village."

**Heather:** "Yeah, not too many people could say they lived that kind of life, especially now, when everything is so fast-paced and technology driven, big cities everywhere. So, how do you get through tough times, especially when you are alone, what do you do to get yourself out of that horrible moment?"

**Sherry:** "Unexpected calls from friends at just the right moment really help, and going to all my groups, like book club or Bible study, doing activities with friends. I have to have people, and another person who's lost vision understands like no one else could. I love having people stay at my house…the more, the merrier."

**Heather:** "Having people over, that's a good one, and having people with similar experiences in your life is important, even if it's not related to vision, but anything we go through."

**Sherry:** "The key is always other people, and getting with new people coming in, too."

**Heather:** "I can see this directly relates back to your community when you were growing up. You were taught that at an early age, and it is your lifestyle. What are your final words of wisdom for us?"

**Sherry:** "My faith is number one for me, I couldn't do it without it. The other thing would be, put yourself out there, be able to be used, and

communicate with others. It all goes back to relationships. My attitude has changed about what people look like or how they live, because I learn people's hearts. That's one thing I am so thankful for, that by losing my vision, I can see people for who they are. If I had it all to do over, would I like to see? Yes, but would I go back? No."

## What Can We Do?
### by Tim Downie

For some reason, this article feels important for me to write. Probably because it is near my heart. I need to share a little back story for those who may not know me.

The first part of my work career had me serving 12 years in the U.S. Navy. It was good for me. I learned a lot and did well. I was made Sailor of the Year for my work in Guam. Later, I was given my second Navy Achievement Medal for my work during Operation Desert Storm. I'm most proud of that because it was my idea, my unique experience and knowledge that made it happen. It was something a friend and I worked on for two years, and it had a significant, positive impact on our ability to mobilize the needed troops. I made a difference.

I followed that with a 30-year career in healthcare in Washington. I worked at Harborview, then University of Washington Medical Center. Then I went on to a large physician practice where our doctors worked at hospitals all over the state. I worked with physicians and leadership at most major hospitals in Washington. I had a reputation for being able to handle and resolve very difficult issues. I provided guidance on many topics, including ever-changing, complex state and federal regulations.

That came crashing to a halt from November 2020 to March 2021, when my vision was in free fall due to keratoconus, Fuchs' dystrophy, and cataracts. In 2021 and 2022, I also had two hip replacements, sepsis, and two corneal transplants. As my eye surgeon noted, the corneal transplants ended up worsening, not improving, my vision.

I had good rapport with my doctors. I speak their language. However, I discovered what you all know. Doctors only treat the mechanical condition. They did nothing to answer questions about living, like “how do I get around since I can’t drive?” Or, “how do I get groceries? How do I take a walk outside without getting hit by a car?”

I knew there had to be something, so I did what I did when I was working. I started relentlessly calling and emailing places for help. I tried the Veteran’s Administration, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), the Lighthouse, all while fighting all kinds of battles with Social Security and my work’s disability insurer. Doing this while dealing with all the physical problems was a total nightmare. No one wants to come home from surgery and begin working on Social Security Disability Insurance paperwork that you can’t see.

I was getting nowhere until a friendly voice from Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) returned my call. He listened, talked with me, and put me in touch with my local chapter, Snohomish County Council of the Blind (SCCB). Our president, Marilee Richards, was so kind. She understood severe vision impairment could be a living hell. She put me in touch with other members of our chapter.

With persistence, I eventually was able to get some help from the Lighthouse. They have worked with me on multiple occasions and have given me many tools to help me begin to navigate daily life. They are a great organization, but stretched way too thin.

One big thing bothered me. If I, a seasoned and well-connected healthcare professional struggled so hard, what on earth is this like for someone experiencing vision loss with no healthcare expertise?

I had an accident in December 2022. I have multiple physical problems in addition to my vision issues. My doctor and my therapist both started suggesting that I move into an independent/assisted living facility. My doctor said any one of the things I experienced takes a long time to recover from, and he hoped taking some stressors off me would give me a chance to heal a bit.

My sister flew out from Chicago to help me pick a place. In April 2023, I moved in.

So far, it's been a good move. I feel safe here. I have a kitchenette, and they provide dinner. They have weekly light housekeeping service and provide free transportation on weekdays within an eight-mile radius. This is all very helpful.

Living here, I started meeting other residents. I was soon amazed how many people here at this large facility have low to no vision. Macular degeneration, glaucoma, and other eye diseases are in abundance. And while everyone was being treated by a doctor, no one was getting help from any organization regarding daily living activities.

This is a nice facility, and the staff are great. People all over our state with vision loss aren't getting any help learning to live with vision loss, as no one is pointing them to where they can get help.

I approached the activities director and asked if I could put on some kind of low-vision-awareness event. I told her I knew people and could bring in resources. She was totally onboard, and I was surprised to see she titled the event "Tim Downie's Vision Symposium." That name cracks me up, as it sounds like a medicine man show from days of old.

I was able to get Rylee Curran from the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) to come. She was amazing, and has offered to return. I also was able to get materials and information from the Lighthouse, WCB, and DSB, and I called in the troops. I had a half-dozen people from SCCB come, all willing to travel here, give up their free time, answer questions from residents so I wouldn't get overwhelmed, and speak about their journeys.

The event was a huge success. The large meeting room was packed full of residents. Many people signed up, and continue to sign up with the WTBBL. Many came up to talk to my fellow SCCB members.

Then residents asked if we could have a monthly vision-support group on-site. We have been meeting monthly since then. I often tap members of SCCB to come speak. Heidi Coggins came to talk about how she is adapting to recent vision loss. Shay Tigner came to share tips, like putting rubber bands on shampoo bottles to tell them apart. Alan Biné read one of his articles published in the Edmonds paper about adapting to vision loss. Marilee Richards and Christi Sobiesky have come and shared, too, and Hayley Agers is hoping to do a craft workshop. My chapter friends are amazing. I truly love these people. They are my friends, and so willing to come help.

We have spent many meetings talking about groups that can provide them help. We have also handed out plenty of bump dots and signature guides, and demonstrated liquid-level indicators and other simple tools and resources, all practical things that make a difference in daily living. Just today, I was stopped by the daughter of a resident who wanted to thank me for all the support we have given her mom, who is now a client of the Lighthouse.

With the strong support of my chapter, this isn't that hard for me. I just call someone, ask if they can talk about something, and they come. The marketing director at this place recently met with me and said she wanted to support me by helping me schedule things. She's able to use the vision support group as a benefit to discuss with potential residents.

I have limits, too. Having worked in healthcare, I value and understand education, certification, and licensure. I have none of those in regard to orientation and mobility training. I won't teach anyone how to use a white cane. When someone asks about my Cocoon glasses for light sensitivity, I tell them Dr. Shagas and the Lighthouse staff have helped me determine which lenses work best for my eyes in various light conditions. I actually have several lenses I carry for different lighting situations. With my severe light sensitivity, I won't work on anyone's computer settings or phone settings, as it would bring on massive eye headaches for me. I talk about apps that help me, like Seeing AI, but I won't look at anyone's phone. My phone is set to very dark, low-light settings and even with that, I get headaches if I look very long. While

I’m also glad to chat with people, I’m here because I need healing, so I don’t invite people to knock on my door. And, at our support group meetings, sometimes I can’t find words, as I have some cognitive issues as a long-term side effect of sepsis and my brain working overtime to make sense of the nonsense my eyes display as images. By inviting others to come speak, I’m more of a conduit, not the 24/7 on-call answer man. I’ve set boundaries for my own well-being, and people are so far very good at respecting that I’m just a fellow resident.

While the monthly vision support group is going strong, other things have come up.

Anyone walking off our property has to walk down a horrible sidewalk. For months, I thought this sidewalk was just built way too narrow. I mean, there was so little sidewalk you could feel the cars on this very busy street whooshing by. It is really dangerous.

One day, taking this walk, I finally realized it wasn’t the sidewalk construction, but was actually very thick, heavy vines which had covered over 60 percent of the sidewalk. Anyone using a walker, wheelchair, or cane was hanging out in traffic, trying to walk past it all. Once I realized it was just horribly overgrown vines, I contacted the mayor’s office. I told them it was just a matter of time before someone was hit.

While I was at it, I mentioned that further down the street, a new assistive crosswalk was in place, but to get to it, you had to perilously cross the road unassisted to get to the little island where the crosswalk button resided. Getting to that island is so dangerous for anyone like me who can’t see traffic coming.

Well, the city came and removed all the vines from our problematic sidewalk within a week. I can’t tell you how many residents have thanked me. And every time I walk on that sidewalk, it makes me feel good. I did something that makes a real difference. It is tangible evidence I can help; I am still useful.

The city engineer called me, and came to view the intersection himself. He had ideas for our problematic crosswalk. He wanted to run them by me to see which I thought might work best. He is recommending changes for that intersection, and all the other intersections in the city with the same problem. I thanked him for listening. He shared that no one had ever complained about these things before, but that wasn't surprising. He said it is a high-density area, and people in those areas complain less. Most complaints come from high-income residential homes.

After all this, I started looking at my environment differently. I'm in such a mode of trying to adapt to everything, I had forgotten there are some things we can actually change.

Thinking of that, I had become quite intimate with an overgrown evergreen tree that slapped me in the face every time I passed a certain church. So, I knocked on their door. The maintenance guy walked over to the offending tree with me, and was surprised how overgrown it was. He apologized and asked for a couple weeks to get it trimmed back. One day, I was walking and heard a couple guys calling to me. They had just trimmed the tree, and wanted to show me. I thanked them, and told them how much I appreciated their help.

I didn't get angry or yell at anybody about the need for a vision support group, overgrown sidewalks, dangerous crosswalks, or overgrown evergreens. I just presented the problem and asked if they could help. And I have relied heavily on my home chapter, my family at Snohomish County Council of the Blind. I am so grateful for my amazing chapter. I'm not changing the world, just fixing up my corner of it a bit.

Every day I reap the rewards of the people who came before me: Whoever started American Council of the Blind, WCB, whoever pushed for assistive crosswalk signals, whoever invented the white cane, I benefit daily from them, and am grateful for their work. Hopefully, some of what I do can survive beyond me to continue helping others.

As I dictate this article, I've been struggling with pain. The surgeries, sepsis, and accident have kind of left me a bit of a mess. There are days I can't do very much at all. I can't follow audio books due to cognitive issues. I can't walk right, and my back is a mess following two hip replacements and six months in a boot for a broken ankle that won't heal. I get eye headaches, can't handle light, and get sensory overload often. But I can usually make a phone call, or dictate an email. And some days, I can do more than others. No matter my state, I can still help. I can still do things that matter. I can make a difference. And you can, too.

"Some days, people don't see you, you feel like you're in the way…Today live like you want to, let yesterday burn and throw it in a fire, in a fire, in a fire. Live like a warrior."

-- Live like a Warrior, Matisyahu

## Winter Changes
### by Heidi Coggins

Winter was never one of my best friends. Dry skin, icy roads to white knuckle on, chapped lips, and just feeling cold were never really in my repertoire. My idea of an exquisite winter day was to curl up with a good book and a just-right cup of Joe and a warm blanket. I would have my little dogs snuggled up to me and maybe some light background music going. My best friend of 30-plus years would come over with her kiddos and watch silly holiday movies while our young ones were crunching snacks and giggling manically to Elf, Home Alone, or whatever else they had all seen a million times over.

It's funny how we talk about the first time for things or life events, such as first steps, first kiss, or first concert. We never quite get around to talking about the last times. Seldom are we prepared for change, especially when it is forced upon us. These days, my comfort zones have changed due to change of circumstance or simply children growing up, old dogs crossing rainbow bridges, and permanent loss of

lifetime friendships due to tragic car accidents – or perhaps the loss of sight.

I find my comfort now shifting to new adventures and being a comfort to others when they need it. It's no longer a fluffy blanket and quiet repose. It's now going to play in snow and hoping I have layered enough. It's now learning how to cross-country ski completely blind. It's now calling those I care about and offering a shoulder or a shared giggle. It has become trying new experiences and embracing new people when they arrive in my universe.

Don't get me wrong, I love my fluffy unicorn onesie just as much as before, but only when I have gone into the world, hair flying out of control and a pumpkin spice latte in hand, climbing those rock walls and eating something I have never had just for the feel of it on my tongue, using up every spare moment I still have on this little blue and green marble. Only then will I crawl into the soft, still quiet and relish that I am here. I am alive, and I won't let the world forget it. I feel my purpose changing and winter has become my friend.

## Waiting
## A poem by Frank Cuta

When I am lonely and desire solace, I think of these four lines I wrote for mom when she was about the same age that I am now.

Waiting

I think of you, your trials all through, still a fire within your head.
Your eyes so bright and full of light, a dreamer born and bred.
Time out of space, I see your face, your eyes turned out to sea.
Chained to the shore, you've quested for the ship to set you free.

## When Did My Joy Come?
### by Marilee Richards

When I think back to my personal Christmas memories, there was no joy in those times for many reasons. I did not measure up to the family standard. I was a stay-at-home mom with a vision disability, unaware of the skills that lay within. Christmas night I went to bed in tears every year because I did not think my gifts were good enough.

I have always done most of my gift giving with homemade gifts that included toy blocks, playdough, candy, peanut brittle, and cookies. I enjoyed making them, but not giving them. The things I did give my nieces and nephews were learning gifts, books, Christian children's records, etc.

There is nothing wrong with this, but I longed to give much more popular gifts to them. I received my own rewards from this because they became another accomplishment upon finishing something new, but there was no joy in the process.

Since my parents passed away in 2012, I became involved with the blind community. I went from being invisible to sighted folks, to being visible to blind folks. Working with this group has opened up many closed doors in my past, such experiences as writing for Newsline, serving on multiple committees, learning to play the piano, and many other things.

I have made so many new friends who don't care what I can do, or what I look like. There is so much more to a person than what you can observe on the surface.

Down deep, I think what developed for me was true joy in my heart. For the first time in my life, I have found what keeps a person moving on in their life with confidence and contentment. I have a beautiful guide dog, Taryn, friends at my home, in church, and a group I feel is worth giving all the support I can muster. My soul is full. I have peace in my heart and room to grow more.

Now, what does that have to do with Christmas, my favorite holiday? I work on cards year-round, finishing up with this holiday, cards for all occasions. Some of you received a packet of them at our convention this October, others have received birthday or get-well cards from me. I love sharing my joy. I do bulletin boards for two churches during all four seasons. They are like a large greeting card. Still another gift I give out all year is my special cookies, candies, and pies. I bless others, and myself, with cards all year-round.

Even with my vision problem, God blessed me with color and center balance, or good perception in art and space. I did not make cards when my parents were still living. Now, I am using mom's old cards to cheer up others, and it brings many memories and much joy when I use them to cheer others throughout the year.

Music has always been a major part of my life, singing with family, in music groups, choirs, and sharing this with others. Great Joy was an ensemble I was a part of years ago. We were a group of ten members, all with music in our background. We sang once a month and loved the experience. I made friends for life from that group.

All of this has given such joy, the kind you find deep down in your soul. Let's all look anew at the things that make us richer and bring joy to one another.

Years ago, my daughter asked what I had in my Happy Box. The box is figurative, and mine is full of these activities. The last one, my favorite, is wrapping gifts. They are very fancy, with ribbons and such, so beautiful most don't want to unwrap them. I used to watch my mother wrap my uncle's gifts every Christmas at my grandma's house. I learned a lot watching her work. So, when you are down, remember your Happy Box, full of fun things, whatever they are and your mood will change when you take one of them out and enjoy.

Thank you for helping me find this joy. It only took almost 75 years.

# A Pot of Stew Hospital Style
**by Holly Turri**

It's that time of year, the days are crisp, and we can indulge in one of my favorite dishes. Come join me in a bowl of warm, nourishing, and delicious stew. Eating the simple mix of beef and vegetables is a truly multi-sensory experience. You don't even have to include the meat.

Soups and stews can warm the heart, and can assist us in feeling cherished. Those who are dear to us may be far away, but a bowl of something warm and nourishing brings them close to our hearts.

Last October on a Saturday night, Jim, a friend, and I returned home late from the wonderful Washington Council of the Blind convention. Naturally, I went to sleep. On Sunday morning, I got up and wasn't acting normal. To make a long story short, I got to ride in an ambulance with two hot paramedics to the hospital, where I spent the night. Memories of that time are vague, but the wonderful care given by the paramedics and during the trip was interesting. Oh, did you know that when you enter the emergency room on a stretcher, they have a special scale that weighs us? After many tests, I went home on Monday with a diagnosis of a TIA, or mini-stroke.

Believe it or not, I'm getting to the soup. For lunch, I got a sandwich, and some of the best vegetable beef stew I've ever tasted. It appeared to be homemade, and contained tons of beef, vegetables, and a rich broth. Who knew you could eat so well in a hospital?

Although my husband was keeping me company, which I so appreciated, tasting that delicious dish made me think I was at home. As I enjoyed each bite, my concerns lessened. I felt like I was in my mom's arms.

If you ever stay at St. Joseph's Hospital, ask for the veggie beef soup. You will be convinced you are eating in a five-star restaurant.

Soup and bread are one of the most comforting meals. Sick people love it, as do sad, lonely, and stressed folks.

Last week, in our women's Bible study, we had friendship soup. This is when a bunch of folks gather and bring what they think would taste good. This surely did. Thrown in a pot and cooked together, the mixture contained everything from curly pasta to ground beef and vegetables from many gardens.

Try having your guests make friendship soup at a party sometime. Additionally, it could be a great chapter activity. It would be a fun experiment. Everyone would feel proud that their contribution was part of a wonderful meal.

If you wanted to do so, you could have some folks bring their favorite bread to share. At my Bible study, we had everything from sour dough to gluten-free loaves. Yum!

## 4th Dimension
**by Kyle Woodard**

Once the Christmas tree is taken down, decorations put away, party hats stowed, and presents unwrapped, you're left with a bunch of cold, dark days. What does one do? How does one muddle through the dreary days of January and the soon-to-come, bleak days of February?

Despite its cold, dark days. I've always found something extra special about January. I'm not sure if it's because of the freshness of a new year being ushered in by the month, the time spent reflecting on the past year and how it wrapped up, or the contemplations of the future and the year to come.

Perhaps January simply seems extraordinary to me because that is the month of my birth, and although I do think about time a fair bit at this time of year, perhaps I have it on my mind a bit more now since I hit 40! Pretty impressive, considering that when I was six, the doctors only gave me two weeks to live, but they just didn't know which two weeks they were giving me (I'm saving them up for something extra special).

Regardless of the reasons for my focus or ponderings, one of the ways I get through the winter is poetry, whether it's visiting an old friend or getting into the excitement of crafting a new creation. So, I thought I would share this acrostic poem I wrote with so much time on my mind, that relates to how time is spent navigating these days, regardless of where you are this winter. I wish you well and hope you are happy and surrounded by loved ones. And, I hope you enjoy it.

## 4th Dimension

### A poem by W K Woodard

This
Is
My
Experience.

Small
Echoes
Countless passing by
Often not noticed.
Nuggets of space
Decisions
Salvation.

Moments of memory
Instances of rhyme
Nourishing respites

Unlimited, so it may seem.
Tall tales told.
Effort.
Silly Songs. And stories, both new and old

Healthier Habits
Only one appointment at a time.
Unrealized possibilities.
Reading
So much Reading

Dreams, desires, and dogged pursuits
Aspirations, actions, and activity
Yoda Says, “Patience you must have, my young Padawan.”
Still reading.
Washing clothes
Endless work
Extended breaks
Knowledge gained.
Sandwiches made.

Monetary
Obligations
Natural
Transitions
History
Self-reflection

Yester
Experiential endeavors
Aspirational Adventures
Rituals of Reality
Special Occasions

Dignity
Elements of age
Contemplations and Calculations

Abstract ideas
Dreams
Emotions
Seeking Satisfaction

A
Generally Good
Experience

## Ingredients for Happiness
**by Stephanie Mellor**

In a panic, I franticly searched my pantry, wondering where I had hidden those ingredients. I put them in such a great place, safely on my shelf. It had been years since I utilized them, and it was coming back to bite me when I finally needed them. These feelings only made things worse for me. I took a deep breath and a step back; I'll try again later when I am calmer. I think they will show up.

After letting some time pass, I re-entered my pantry to search again for the ingredients needed to make my meal. They were there the whole time, exactly where I left them long ago. I gathered them and moved to my quaint kitchen to begin my culinary endeavor.

Like the missing ingredients in my soup, I have found an absence from my life lately. Something missing has kept me from living my happiest life, filled with friends, experiences, and loved ones. Years ago, I was earning my undergraduate degree in social work at a local university, making friends, getting out there, and studying hard. After all of that, life got smaller, as my college friends and I moved apart and life began to take over. That was a miserable period, especially after five years of great adventure and joy. My once fantastic soup was yet again bland bone broth.

Fast forward years later, I once again found myself eating plain bone broth and not even having other ingredients in my pantry to make

anything more exciting and nutritious until I met a new friend on a random outing. I will be leaving out this remarkable woman's name to protect the innocent, but you know who you are, and I adore you, friend and sister.

I started attending Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) local chapter and state outings this summer and found such kind, welcoming individuals. We had good times and lots of laughs. Before I knew it, I was registering for our state convention. Then, I began making travel plans, and my October quickly filled up. Suddenly, my soup was slightly more varied and not quite as bland. After being home for years, I looked at my calendar and saw that I was only to be home four nights in October; good golly, how was this true? What was I getting myself into?

October began coming to a close, and I attended my state WCB convention. Boy, was it ever incredible. Being there opened my heart again. I took in all it had to offer, from scheduled events to spending time with new-found friendships and seeing old friends, too. This must be what flavorful, hot, fresh soup tastes like and, boy oh boy, have I been missing it. You had to have known this would go back to the soup.

Now that the convention's complete, sadly, I am sick with a cold and am reaching for soup. I feel the happiest I've been in years, as I snuggle in for the winter season. On top of all this, I am joining American Council of the Blind (ACB) calls regularly and planning to attend my first national convention this year, which is only a few months away. So, with happiness in my heart and gratitude, I will talk with you all soon, sitting around our social pot of soup, which is our incredible community for when we are not afraid to contribute. We each bring our unique contributions and flavors. See you this summer in Florida for my first national ACB convention.

## Shattered
## by Heather Meares

I sit here in my writing chair, saying out loud to no one, and everyone, “I don’t know where to start, I don’t know where to start.” Keyboard on lap, turned on, waiting for me to begin typing letters that turn into words, and then eventually, a story that quickly feels raw before it even hits the keyboard. And so I stop before I have even started, and allow the flood of uncontrollable tears to make their daily appearance once again. They are like shattered pieces of what was once a beautiful, glass ornament that dropped somewhere inside me, and all the tiny remains have to escape. This is what depression looks like today.

Yesterday, it came in the form of a little worm stranded on the track my friend and I were walking on. She always stops our walk to rescue the worms that have been washed onto the concrete, or the track, or wherever they will not survive for long, and puts them gently back in the grass where they belong. I love this about her. She is a gardener extraordinaire, and to her, every life matters, no matter what form or shape it comes in. This time, it triggered me so deeply, as I found myself relating to this worm. It’s a good thing I can’t see, because I discovered that walking and crying simultaneously, with a bit of vigorous conversation thrown in, can be an intensely therapeutic release, and paying attention to where I was going was not part of this particular meltdown. Thankfully, my friend had my back as far as navigation goes, on the track and through my messiness, in the same way I do for her when it’s her turn to fall apart. It’s what we do. On rough days, she brings me loaded baked potato soup, or chili with cheese, because she knows I have to have cheese with my chili. I bake her gourmet cakes, or brew up a pot of hot, spiced cider or mulled wine to share as we chat. Even though these things don’t erase the reasons we struggle, they remind us that we are not alone.

Tomorrow, I will most likely awake from another parade of weird and disturbing dreams, still lingering heavily as I try to make sense of them before I’m even able to think straight. That’s probably best, as dreams are not usually meant for linear thinking. The truth is, they are trying to

help me defragment and process what can't be done during waking hours, so I will give them a wink and a nod, and say, "Nice try, but not quite there… We will try again tonight." If I'm lucky, I will retain some of the interesting parts for future writing if I dare go there. Then I will load up on coffee, call some friends to see how they are doing, and try to start, for I know I am not irretrievably lost, I'm just having trouble finding my grass.

# LIFESTYLE

## Book Chat

**by Alan Bentson, Reader Advisor, Washington Talking Book and Braille Library**

"Joy, the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires."

— Merriam-Webster

Joy does not appear to be something I have. The priest talked about Christian joy this morning, and he also seemed to indicate it was a steady state sort of thing. One feels joyful because one is surrounded and protected by the love of Christ. One does not jump for joy (as the phrase has it) but just finds life generally enjoyable.

So, where do we find joy in winter when the weather is cold and dark every day, the snow or rain falls steadily, and life seems kind of desperate? Though I do not have joy, I do have moments of unreasonably joyous contentment. As when I found my wedding ring in an obscure pocket of my back pack after believing it was lost forever after eight months. Sometimes, I feel this contentment reading a long involving book while traveling on the bus or walking in the rain. The world seems muffled and far away, and me and my fellow man are too busy surviving to pick on or shout at each other and, of course, the rain sounds nice, too. That's why they say on a rainy day, "This is good sleeping weather."

I recently read a long book that made me feel this way. It was called "To the Edge of the World," by Harry Thompson, who apparently was a famous British radio and TV writer and producer. This was his only novel.

I wanted to read it because it was a massive historical novel, one of my favorite kinds of book, but also because the New York Times Book Review was very enthused about it. I like the New York Times Book

Review, and I'm glad NLS makes it available. But all their reviews are very judicious and measured, and usually say, "This was a good book, but …" In this case, the reviewer had nothing but good things to say. So, I went out to look for it. Not available on BARD, not available on Bookshare, not available from Audible, but it has been recorded by Learning Ally, known to most of us as Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (the textbook agency).

I am not as enthusiastic about Learning Ally; in fact, I have serious reservations about their continued existence. I'm sure that in 1948 when Anne McDonald started this agency in the basement of the New York Public Library (yes, this is another consequence of World War II), the agency met an urgent need. Many service persons had suffered vision loss in the war and were going back to school on the GI bill, hoping education would help compensate for lack of sight. They needed textbooks and they needed them fast, and no one else was in that business. The nice person who would read to you was about your only hope.

Unfortunately, though they have kept up with technology, their actual product has not changed much in 75 years. This novel was recorded by the Boston Massachusetts Chapter, one of their better units, but the same old horrible multiple narrators were still present.

This is a good sea yarn about the HMS Beagle – yes, Charles Darwin's Beagle. However, the principal character is Robert Fitzroy who commanded the ship, and the story concerns his adventurous voyages and eventful after-life when he left the British navy. This book had everything a historical novel should have – adventure, exotic locales, exposition of many challenging ideas, many characters who the reader can feel empathic about, and a clear comprehensible style and plot. Those who like the sea yarns of Captain Aubrey or Horatio Hornblower will revel in the many escapades of Captain Fitzroy as he struggles to do his duty and the right moral thing. The author's note at the end of the book makes it clear that all the major characters in the book were real historical personages, which is another hallmark of good historical fiction.

After struggling for over two weeks through this book in cold and rainy weather, I felt a lot of joyous contentment in having enjoyed it so much, even with all the faults in the recording. I looked as I always do to see if Mr. Thompson had written anything else and discovered that in the U.K. this book was published under the title “This Thing of Darkness.” It is available on audible.com and read by a really great narrator. Customer reviews on Audible tend to say, “This was a good book but…” But all the reviewers agreed that the British narrator on Audible was terrific. My contentment was diminished to say the least. Please read this book whether you believe in evolution or not, but get it from audible.com.

Keep reading!

## Sporting Spotlight
## A New Winter Sport for the Blind
### by Beth Greenberg

While Canada invented hockey in 1875, it is a fairly new sport for the blind. In Canada, the blind have been playing since the 1970s; in the U.S., we have only had blind hockey since 2014.

I grew up in Massachusetts so I have watched the Bruins on TV. When I lived in Denver, I listened to the Avalanche on the radio. Even now, some friends and I go see the Portland Winterhawks play (a minor league team that is part of the Western Hockey League, which feeds into the National Hockey League). So, I know some things about the sport. Listening to the announcers, they have to talk pretty fast because it can be a fast-paced game.

The puck in regular hockey is one inch thick and three inches round and weighs 5½ to 6 ounces. An NHL net is six feet wide by four feet tall and 40 inches deep. The NHL hockey rink (the ice they skate on) is 200 feet long and 85 feet wide. In Canada, the rink is the same length but 15 feet wider.

With blind hockey, the adaptive nets are six feet wide and three feet high. They have adjusted the puck to be 5½ inches round (two inches bigger than an NHL puck), thickness is 1 7/8 inches (which is 7/8s thicker than an NHL puck), and 7¾ ounces (1¾ ounces heavier than an NHL puck). An NHL puck is solid rubber, whereas the adaptive version is hollow steel, with eight ball bearings inside to make noise so the players can hear the puck moving on the ice.

In most sports, you have the home team in a white or dark jersey and the away team is the opposite. To help with contrast in blind hockey, the home team wears a dark jersey and the away team is in a bright, florescent-colored jersey.

The goalie on both teams must be blindfolded. When it comes to switching sides at the end of the period, the teams switch benches at ends of the rink.

“Blind hockey is the same exhilarating, fast-paced sport as ice hockey with only one main difference – all of the players are legally blind. Players must be classified as eligible in one of the three International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) classifications,” says the USA Hockey website.
**https://www.usahockey.com/blindhockeyn**. You can also buy a puck from the website for $59.

The Blind Hockey Classic was held in Chicago in November. This event does change venues each year.

If you have questions that I did not answer in this article, send an email to **DisabledHockey@usahockey.org**.

## Winter White
## A poem by Marilee Richards

Winter is the snow drifting softly from the sky,

Each flittering flake slowly falls from on high,

Silently waiting to hear its resounding crunch,

As we dream of the fun that is shared with the bunch.

Winter is God’s Wonderland

Filled with the sleigh and the snowman.

Just waiting for all to enjoy,

Its white beauty day to day,

This wonderland filled with fun and games,

It will be for each to play.

## Time to Make Nice and Make Friends
## by Alan Biné

I'm sorry, I really don't get it. Why does everything these days seem so contentious, controversial and polarized, and not just our politics? The list is long. School curricula, books, best places to eat, the effects of social media, tipping, drugs and prescription prices, healthcare, you name it. Car insurance, new or classic country music, impossible burgers, almost anything you can think of. Especially what are facts or fiction? Ethics, the proposed banning of assault weapons, impending climate change, recycling, gender issues and pronouns, the best credit cards, inequality, food stamps, interest rates and the Fed, what to do about the homeless, inflation and immigration. Some people even mix it up about the health benefits of organic vs. non-organic produce, for crying out loud.

We have many more differences of opinion regarding such things as vaccines, Disney, CNN and Fox News, electric or gas vehicles, what constitutes free speech, ageism, affordable housing, rent rates, the electoral college, public transportation, and the Supreme Court. Blah, blah blah, ad infinitum. I'm sure I'm forgetting something important.

While I happen to be a rather opinionated old coot, this is hardly the space for me to express my personal beliefs about these many different subjects. Suffice it to say, we're all entitled to our own opinions.

I just have a couple of thoughts for your consideration. Are we really all in this together and more alike than different?

Remember Rodney King, who said, "Can we all get along?" I sincerely hope we haven't forgotten the Golden Rule.

I'm not a particularly religious sort, but wouldn't our little bubble of Edmonds, and our entire planet for that matter, be a far better place if we could simply be nicer and more friendly and less judgmental? Have we forgotten about working for the common good? What would happen if we started placing greater value on our friendships and gave up on always having to be right? When we call someone an idiot, why are we surprised when we get an angry response? What if we made a concerted effort to be as nice as we possibly could be?

A few weeks ago, "60 Minutes" aired a program on the survival of the friendliest. It was a show about dogs and wolves, but also concluded that present day humans evolved because we were more friendly and thoughtful than ancient man.

I don't know about you, but I could use a few more friends. Studies show that social isolation and loneliness are becoming an epidemic among older adults, and it can have a severe impact on one’s overall health. A true friend can really make a difference.

If you think I'm being kind of simplistic here, I realize you're probably right. But we have to do something. Some people say we are better than this, and I would truly like to be better than I've been up to this point. If you agree, let's get started. It couldn't hurt to give peace another chance.

## It's A Dog's Life
## Chapter VI: Taryn's Latest Journeys
### by Taryn the guide dog, and her person Marilee Richards

Pitter, patter, pitter, patter…

Wow, what an amazing summer my mom Marilee and I experienced. We have been working hard to get all the wrinkles out of our walking behavior. The one I keep doing that upsets my mom is stopping right in the middle of the sidewalk for no apparent reason. My guide dog workers have mom bringing her cane to get me moving. I am not happy about it sometimes, but she doesn't give me a choice. It works with a lot of prompting. You can also try a treat, but I just stop again, hoping for more treats.

We have been all over the place with our friend, Lisa. One Sunday, we went up to the lavender farm in Arlington. Lisa took tons of pictures and sent one to KOMO News, where mom and I were featured on the dog-walking portion of the weather forecast.

On Aug. 19, the Snohomish County Council of the Blind went on the Edmonds ferry to Kingston. We walked up to the Kingston Ale House. Everyone's meal was great. We all ate on the deck. There were 33 of us that traveled there.

We then stopped at the ice cream store and had a scoop of very good ice cream. I did not get any of that good food, but mom gave me lots of treats when I was good. We traveled with four dogs. I did not have any time to get to know them, but I tried.

The ferry trip was not my favorite experience, though. It was windy and mom went out to the front of the ferry to watch the ride. She finally got cold, and we walked back to the other end to get ready to disembark.

The first week in August, we traveled to International Avenue in SeaTac for a leadership conference at the Crown Plaza Hotel. That involved a great deal of laying around for me, but my mom was hit with an onslaught of new information. We had 12 hours of training on Saturday and mom's first in-person board meeting on Sunday. My mom had a limited diet, but the food was outstanding.

Lisa came to pick us up, so we traveled all the back roads home. That trip was beautiful.

On Thursday, I laid around at my mom's old church while she changed out the bulletin board with an autumn theme. She also cleaned out the storage room, and took home old flowers and pictures. It was so hot there that afternoon. We were there for five hours before we returned home on the bus.

In September, we went to Georgia to meet my mom's daughter and her family.

This past week, we went to Fairhaven in Bellingham, by way of Chuckennut Drive. Mom's mother and her family were raised in Fairhaven. Her Uncle Gordon was featured on the mural just down from the pharmacy he owned and worked in, too. He had a museum in the basement until the store was sold many years after he retired from working at his store. That was a busy day. We also went to Boulevard Park, and Lisa took hundreds of pictures, some of mom and me.

I am learning my mom's routines now and I am laying down at appropriate times without getting treats.

We go to church on Sundays, and I have many friends there, too. I try to steal treats off the floor, but that doesn't work very often. I am getting

used to hearing the organ and choir, and I have learned how the service goes now, and stay down until it is time to go for a snack in the other room.

I am getting used to music now, because both mom and Lisa practice piano during the week.

There is much more for me to explore, so I will catch you up on my travels in the next issue of the Newsline.

## What's On Your Plate
## Every Ingredient Counts
### by Hayley Agers

I recently had the pleasure of a deep and insightful conversation with my daughter, Sydney, and a friend of hers. It tied right into the theme of this Newsline issue, so I wanted to share it with all of you.

The conversation was prompted by Sydney telling this particular friend that she would not be able to spend the afternoon with him because she wasn't feeling well. As the day went on, she began to feel a little better, and was invited by a group of girlfriends to go over and watch a movie with them. She still wasn't feeling great, but being snuggled up under a blanket in her PJs at a friend's house sounded like just the medicine she needed. The original friend found out that she was out with other friends and he got his feelings hurt. Thus, our conversation came about.

Friends are similar to ingredients you put into a pot of soup. They all serve different purposes to bring about a beautiful blend of things that leave you feeling full and cared for. You have that particular friend who always seems to make you laugh on the day you are finding it hard to smile about anything. You have another who seems to give the kind of hugs that soothe you right down to your toes. There's another still who will always listen without judgement because they know you need to get something off of your chest, and even though they have an opinion, no

words leave their mouth, they just allow you to talk. Let's not forget that friend who so lovingly finds the right words when you need that kick in the pants that pushes you out of your comfort zone and grows you oh so much. And the friend who always seems to call or show up at the perfect time, or leaves a meaningful gift on your doorstep, followed by a text that says, "Didn't want to bother you, but thought you might enjoy these and I'm thinking of you."

None of these acts are any more important than the other, they just serve different purposes on different days. It is because of all of these beautiful ingredients, aka friends, that one's life is so enriched with love, compassion, and hope. We choose the friend each day that fills a part of our heart only they can fill. It does not lessen our love for the qualities of our other friends, not at all. Just like the perfect pot of soup or bowl of winter stew, it's the perfect blend of all of the above.

The recipe below was shared with me many years ago by a very special young man. He was one of my students at the Orientation and Training Center, and I believe this was a family recipe. There are just some people who you don't forget, and Matt, if you are out there and happen to read this, thank you for being the special ingredient back then and for sharing this recipe that I have shared with so many I love.

**Cheesy Broccoli Soup**

- 3 Tbsp. flour
- 2 Tbsp. oil
- ¾ cup chopped onion
- 6 cups water
- 6 cubes chicken bouillon or 2 Tbsp. granules
- 2-3 cups cooked chicken, cut into cubes
- 8 oz. egg noodles
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 (10 oz.) packages broccoli, thawed
- 1/8 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 cups milk
- 1 lb. American cheese (Velveeta)

Cook onion in oil until tender. Sprinkle in flour. Simmer chicken in water and bouillon for 20 minutes with onion. Cook noodles separately. Add salt, broccoli, garlic, milk, and cheese. Heat until cheese melts. Drain noodles and add last.

# BRAIN FOOD

## Technically Speaking
## How to Locate and Prevent Losing Precious Data on Your iPhone
### by Frank Cuta

If you have an iPhone, you have data on it. Do you know where it is? Knowing a little about the iPhone files app, together with having a basic understanding of how information is stored and protected on your phone, can make you a stronger and safer user.

If you use a computer, you probably know exactly what folder on your hard drive contains your data files. However, most of us would have to look a little harder to find the data on our phones. For a long time, Apple tightly restricted data file access, and this kept you from performing basic file operations such as copy/paste, move, compress, or delete. But as you will soon see, all of these things are now possible with the updated files app on your phone.

All iPhone users have two different locations where data is stored; they are device storage and cloud storage. Device storage is the hardware memory that comes installed in your phone and is usually between 64 and 512 gigabytes (GB), though this can go as high as 2 terabytes. These are very large quantities, and this amount is usually adequate for most users to store whatever they want to save on their phone.

In addition, when you purchase your iPhone, Apple also gives you 5GB of iCloud storage space on their servers, to be shared between all your devices. This lets you share data with your other devices and gives you a safe place to store backup information. While 5GB is not very much space, if managed well it is enough to help you recover from a drive crash or from losing your phone.

To get started, first let's look at the iPhone settings that control what files your phone automatically backs up to this iCloud resource. You will

want to confirm that your iPhone is automatically backing up your most important files and settings.

Note: If the following steps are inadequate for your needs, it is also possible to purchase additional iCloud space from Apple. For a dollar a month, you can increase iCloud storage to 50GB. If that is still not enough, you can probably get as much as you think you need for just a few more dollars.

Speaking of managing resources, to keep this article a bit shorter, I am going to assume you are comfortable with swiping and double tapping, and I can just use simple Voiceover terminology.

First, to check your current iCloud storage allocation settings, double tap settings or tell Siri to open it, then double tap on your name, then iCloud. Under the first main heading, it will display how much of your web-based gigabytes are currently used and give you some percentages. My personal statistics are 44GB used out of 50GB, and the distribution is 50 percent photos, 29 percent backups, and 11 percent documents.

Under the subheading "Manage Account Storage," I can see a more detailed breakdown of what specific data is being backed up. Here, I have the option to disable any choices that are growing too large and might result in exceeding my 50GB limit. Since I have multiple iPhones on the same Apple ID, I can also monitor in here how much backup resources are being devoted to each one.

Note: If you have multiple iPhones sharing the same Apple ID, they all have to share the same iCloud storage, be it the basic 5GB, or the 50GB (or whatever) you have paid for.

Under the main heading "Apps Using iCloud," then under "Show All," I see that I have disabled photos. This is an option that would permit me to store all of my photos in iCloud so that I could view and share them with other online devices. However, this choice has at times put me

over my storage limits, and I am currently not backing up anymore photos in this manner.

Also, under "Show All," I have enabled online synchronization for many other apps that take up very little space, including iCloud drive, passwords and keychain, iCloud backup, contacts, messages, Zoom, Uber, music, and notes. Details of these choices are beyond the scope of this article, but you should know that the backup of “password and keychain” will be very important if you ever have administrative problems or lose your phone.

Under the heading "Device Backups," I have enabled iCloud backup, and under the heading "iCloud" I have enabled "access iCloud data on the web." Here is also where you will find "Manage Your Plan," which is where you will find the option to subscribe/purchase more iCloud storage space.

The second aspect of iPhone storage management that you should be aware of is the downloading of data from the web. If you save a lot of material from YouTube or resources such as the Audio Vault to your iCloud space, you will quickly exceed your 5GB storage limit. Unless you want to purchase a lot of extra iCloud space from Apple, I suggest that you ensure that all such downloaded data is saved in your "on device" memory, which is much larger, rather than in your limited iCloud storage.

The file downloading destination is controlled separately for each web browser, but it should be an option in the settings for your browser choice. If you use Safari as your default browser, double tap on settings, then Safari, then download. Here you can choose whether they go to a downloads folder on your iCloud drive, or into a downloads folder in your device memory. I advise the latter.

OK, now that we have covered the default settings that determine how most of your cloud based and device storage is utilized, you are ready to look at how you can access and manage your downloaded data. In

general, this is performed with the files app for the iPhone Operating System (IOS).

Double tap on the files app or just tell Siri to open it. The initial view may be a little confusing, and you may need to complete the following setup process to get the view displayed as a simple list of drives and folders. If the first control that you find on this screen is icons or grid, then you should first double tap on it to change it to the list view. You should also double tap on "more" at the top of the screen and confirm that both the "iCloud drive" choice and the "on my iPhone" choices are turned on. This is also where you should enable any other storage resources that you use, such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Double tapping on “done” at the top of the screen returns you to the basic file explorer view, but at first this also may be a bit confusing. I advise that you next go to the bottom of the window where you will find the tab bar that contains three tabs. They are labeled Recents, Shared, and Browse. Select Browse and you should then be presented with a basic folder list. Collapse any folders that are expanded by double tapping on them, then double tap on the Browse back button in the upper left until you have just a simple list of options, one of which is “locations.”

Double tap on locations, and a simple list of available drives and web storage resources will appear. From here you should be able to easily navigate to your data. The top two choices will probably be the "iCloud drive" and "on my iPhone" resources, which we have been describing. Under at least one of them, you should find a “downloads” folder full of your data files. With a long press or a triple tap on a folder or file, you can bring up a context menu that will enable you to rename your file or perform compress and uncompress operations. There are also file organization operations on the context menu, such as copy, duplicate, move, and delete. With these you can dispose of unwanted files and move other files back and forth between the cloud or the storage space on your phone.

Whether it's your photos or downloads, these tools give you the power to control how your data is saved and protected. For anything that you really care about, I advise copying it to multiple locations. One last related issue might be your music. If you have a lot of songs or albums in iTunes and do not have enough space in iCloud to keep a backup copy out there, I advise that you install the iTunes application on your computer and keep a backup copy on your computer's hard drive.

## Reg's Life-Enhancing Tips and Recent Tech News
### by Reginald George

This is not intended to be a column exclusively about technology, though you will certainly find it here. It's information and discoveries I collect along the way that might be of interest to anyone, about everything that strikes my fancy. And my fancy-detecting antenna is always aquiver.

Fun fact: The antennae of a Katydid can be from ½ to 4 inches long. That could pick up a lot of radio stations. Seriously, insect antennae serve many purposes, including sensing touch, air motion, heat, vibration, smell, taste, or helping with things like mating, rooting, swimming, and even anchoring some insects in one place. So, let's go to work.

A built-in feature of Windows is called Phone Link. And Phone Link on Windows 11 now can partially support your iPhone. This means that if you download the Link to Windows by Microsoft app on your phone, you can answer calls, and read and reply to text messages on your computer. You can also view your contacts and adjust notification settings. Press Windows I, and search for Phone Link to get started.

Two items from "Hearing Review":
OrCam is coming out with an AI-powered hearing device that will work with your iPhone to help you hear specific people in noisy environments. It works by building a signature of the voices you want to hear and screening everything else out as much as possible, and is

supposed to far surpass hearing aids. Pricing is unavailable, but it will be out later this year. Expecting that it will be quite pricey, but a subscription app called Heard offers similar functionality, and there is a free trial.

A new app called MindEar, by Odeo Tech, purports to help reduce the effects of severe tinnitus for sufferers by training the brain through a combination of cognitive and sound therapy. Tinnitus is a ringing or buzzing in one or both ears, that may be constant or come and go, associated with hearing loss. This app also requires a subscription, but is on sale for $31 a year, and there is a free trial available. I had difficulty finding it through an app store search, but www.mindear.com will get you there quite smartly.

Another idea that might provide some temporary relief is to turn on background sounds under iPhone accessibility at a very low level to help cover the noise.

Now, what else can I pull out of my trick bag?

It occurs to me that the lines between science and magic are becoming smaller and smaller. How do you cast a spell? You say something, and it happens.

Warning: Leave the area of your Amazon smart device for the following section if you don't want her to awaken.

New Alexa skills to try based on Generative AI:
If you want to carry on a conversation with your Lady A, tell it, "Open the Oracle of Light." It will instantly raise her IQ while you use it. The only hard part is getting her to shut up. This skill uses the ChatGPT 4 engine to answer all kinds of questions, create poems and stories, and so much more. Must be tried to be believed.

Another interesting one is Character.AI. It will let you talk to interesting chat bots based on historical figures, like Socrates or Albert Einstein. I want to talk to Hellen Keller, but I'm not sure if she lives in there yet. To

use the skill, just say: "Alexa, open Character.AI." Alexa then asks whether you'd like to speak with assistants, helpers, famous people, or have some fun. If you choose famous people, you are prompted with a list of some of the different characters waiting to chat with you. To really experience the power of these tools, you need to realize that they have a memory. So, ask follow-up questions. It's a game-changer for people like me who must keep asking why, with the endless curiosity of a five-year-old.

Want to create some music? No problem. Tell Lady A to open Splash Music. You are prompted to choose the genre, add lyrics, or make other changes. When you are happy with your creation, you can even send it to your phone for playback.

Here's a quick Siri tip from tech trainer, David Goldfield: "While Siri is speaking to you, it often listens for you to ask another question. Unfortunately, sometimes even just clearing your throat can cause Siri to interrupt itself, and then start listening again as it misinterprets this sound, and assumes you have something else to say to the assistant. While there's currently no option to disable this feature, you can force Siri to stop listening for a follow-up response. Just say something dismissive, such as 'thank you' or 'goodbye,' and Siri will go away. Follow-up mode will still be enabled the next time you use Siri, but at least you can force Siri to stop listening temporarily." Source: www.screenreadertraining.com

Voiceover Tutorial App:
If you want a free app to help you learn to use Voiceover on your iPhone or iPad, try VoStarter. This one has been around for a while, but has been updated with all new content and is a great teaching tool.

From the apps description: "VO Starter provides a step-by-step guide to learn to use the iPhone, while keeping lessons quick, and easy to learn."

Well, I see I'm almost out of space. More tips next time.

# Do you hear what I see?
# How blindness changes how you process the sound of movement

**by Drs. Ione Fine and Dr. Woon Ju Park, University of Washington**

Original Source: Theconversation.com.
http://tinyurl.com/5cpukss5
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The world is full of constant motion, and making sense of that movement is critical for survival. A recent study by Drs. Ione Fine and Woon Ju Park at University of Washington found that early-blind individuals excel in perceiving auditory motion amid background noise. This heightened sensitivity showcases how blind individuals adapt and become better at perceiving the world through audition and touch. This research provides a demonstration of how the brain's remarkable flexibility allows blind individuals to develop the skills that enable them to successfully navigate a visually oriented world.

You can find the research published in the journal PNAS here:
https://www.pnas.org/doi/abs/10.1073/pnas.2310156120
sound-of-movement-219378

The authors of the study are recruiting participants for their next research. If you became blind (using the definition of having visual acuity of light perception or worse) before the age of three due to damage to the eyes or optic nerve (not cortical impairment) and are interested in participating, please reach out to Dr. Ione Fine (phone: 206-685-6175, email: finelab-contactus@uw.edu). They are recruiting participants in Washington and Georgia. Participants will be compensated for their time, and door-to-door transportation will be provided.

Almost nothing in the world is still. Toddlers dash across the living room. Cars zip across the street. Motion is one of the most important features in the environment. The ability to predict the movement of objects in the world is often directly related to survival – whether it’s a gazelle

detecting the slow creep of a lion or a driver merging across four lanes of traffic.

Motion is so important that the primate brain evolved a dedicated system for processing visual movement, known as the middle temporal cortex, over 50 million years ago. This region of the brain contains neurons specialized for detecting moving objects. These motion detectors compute the information needed to track objects as they continuously change their location over time, then sends signals about the moving world to other regions of the brain, such as those involved in planning muscle movements.

The middle temporal cortex is involved in processing visual movement. It's easy to assume that you see and hear motion in a similar way. However, exactly how the brain processes auditory motion has been an open scientific question for at least 30 years. This debate centers on two ideas: One supports the existence of specialized auditory motion detectors similar to those found in visual motion, and the other suggests that people hear object motion as discrete snapshots.

As computational neuroscientists, we became curious when we noticed a blind woman confidently crossing a busy intersection. Our laboratory has spent the past 20 years examining where auditory motion is represented in the brains of blind individuals.

For sighted people, crossing a busy street based on hearing alone is an impossible task, because their brains are used to relying on vision to understand where things are. As anyone who has tried to find a beeping cellphone that's fallen behind the sofa knows, sighted people have a very limited ability to pinpoint the location or movement of objects based on auditory information.

Yet people who become blind are able to make sense of the moving world using only sound. How do people hear motion, and how is this changed by being blind?

People who are blind are better able to track auditory motion in noisy conditions compared with sighted people.

Crossing a busy street by sound alone: In our recently published study in the journal PNAS, we tackled the question of how blind people hear motion by asking a slightly different version of it – are blind people better at perceiving auditory motion? And if so, why?

To answer this question, we used a simple task where we asked study participants to judge the direction of a sound that moved left or right. This moving sound was embedded in bursts of stationary background noise resembling radio static that were randomly positioned in space and time.

Our first question was whether blind participants would be better at the task. We measured how loud the auditory motion had to be for participants to be able to perform the task correctly 65% of the time. We found that the hearing of blind participants was no different from that of sighted participants. However, the blind participants were able to determine the direction of the auditory motion at much quieter levels than sighted participants. In other words, people who became blind early in life are better at hearing the auditory motion of objects within a noisy world.

Blind participants were able to determine the position of the object as it starts and stops moving more closely than sighted participants.

We then examined how the noise bursts interfered with the ability to tell the direction of motion. For both sighted and blind participants, only the noise bursts at the beginning and the end of each trial had an effect on performance. These results show that people do not track objects continuously using sound. Instead, they infer auditory motion from the location of sounds at their beginning and end, more consistent with the snapshot hypothesis.

Both blind and sighted people inferred movement from the start and stop of sounds. So why were blind people so much better at understanding auditory motion than sighted people?

Further analysis of the effects of background noise on the ability to track auditory motion showed that blind participants were affected only by noise bursts occurring at the same locations in space and moments in time as the onset and offset of the moving sound. This means that they were more sensitive to the beginning and end of the actual auditory motion and less susceptible to irrelevant noise bursts.

When you hear what I see: As any parent of a blind child will tell you, understanding motion is just one of the many ways that blind children learn to interact with the world using different cues and actions.

A sighted baby recognizes their parent's face as they approach the crib, while a blind baby recognizes the sound of their footsteps. A sighted toddler looks toward the dog to attract their parent's attention, while a blind toddler might pull their parent's hand in the direction of the barking.

Understanding the ability of blind people to learn how to successfully interact with a world designed for the sighted provides a unique appreciation of the extraordinary flexibility of the human brain.

# HISTORY

## Did You Know?
## A Little Behind-the-Scenes History of Washington Council of the Blind
### by Janice Squires

"Did You Know?" is going to be a quarterly article in the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) Newsline. Items for this article will include a little bit of past history, some local chapter history, and remembrances of individual members' accounts of things that other people did not know even existed.

I am a 47-year member of United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC), and I have a little story to tell. When my hubby, Bob, and my two daughters and I moved back to Kennewick in 1990, my eyesight was almost totally gone. I was very reluctant to rejoin my local chapter, as I was not very confident and I was in that coping and grieving time of my life. Of course, my good friend, Frank Cuta, very kindly and slowly pulled me up by my boot strings and pointed my life in the right direction. I do not know what I would have done, nor where I would be as of right now without this wonderful organization.

Frank and others encouraged me to become an active member of the UBTC, and I jumped in with both feet. The first thing I learned was, "happiness is shouting bingo!" In 1988, Frank Cuta, Don Simmonson, and Bill Van Winkle put up the front money for us to get into the non-profit business of bingo. Did you know we ran that crazy business for approximately 10 years? It provided us with the funds, approximately $80,000 a year, to open a service center/office in downtown Kennewick. We were able to hire a part-time employee, Sue Sather, and we were off and running. We had visual aids for sale and computer classes in the old days of DOS. There was an exercise room, and a large area with a kitchen for meetings and parties. We never allowed any gift-giving, as to keep our business on the straight and narrow. Our board worked tirelessly with the feds, IRS, and Gambling Commissions to get this

business up and running. We did so much for the blindness community in our home area, but as they say, “All good things come to an end.” With the opening of the Wild Horse and Legends casinos, the demise of our bingo business began to happen. We ended up closing our doors in 1997, but as everyone says, “When a door is closed, a window is opened.” The Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired opened its doors, and as of today, we work hand-in-hand with the directors and constantly use their facility for our functions.

Please remember, I will be contacting old and new members to assist me with these articles. If you have any ideas to share, please feel free to email me or give me a call. We can work together and keep our history alive through past stories and remembrances. Contact Info: janicesqu@charter.net, 509-947-1554.

# ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

## WCB’s Ongoing Work on Accessible Voting

**by Judy Brown, Government Affairs Committee Chair**

Over the past several years, Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) has continued its efforts toward the goal of making voting in Washington state accessible to all. At the October 2020 WCB virtual convention, we passed a resolution to support the work to make voting in Washington state fully accessible to blind and visually impaired persons.

Since then, members of WCB have been active participants in various state and county committees to push forward the agenda of accessible voting. Washington is a mail-in ballot state. If you cannot see and read the paper ballot sent to you, you have a couple of options. You can have a sighted person assist you, thus eliminating your independence and anonymity. You can travel to a polling place and use an accessible voting unit. All you need to do is find transportation, arrive at a time that the polling place is open, hope the machine is working properly and if you need assistance, hope that someone has been trained to assist

you. Or you can do what many visually impaired people end up doing – not vote.

Currently, there is a bill in the Washington State Legislature, HB 1475, that would allow for secure, electronic ballot marking and submission. WCB and voting officials from several counties in Washington have been actively supporting this bill. WCB members have given testimony in Olympia. WCB members have submitted written testimony and lobbied their representatives.

But there is a huge obstacle – the secretary of state. Representatives from the secretary of state's office testified against this bill. Non-specific security concerns were mentioned but not defined during their testimony. WCB understands there are some security and verification concerns. We encourage the secretary of state to engage in more detailed conversations to help problem solve these concerns.

WCB members reached out to the secretary of state several times to discuss the issues. As a result, a Secure and Accessible Voting Workgroup was formed. The group is comprised of county election officials, members of the visually impaired community including WCB, and representatives from the secretary of state's office.

The group has met monthly since September. At the November meeting, we were informed that Secretary Steve Hobbs still does not support any legislation at this time and wants other suggestions. We suggested offering travel vouchers to assist those who need to travel many miles to get to a polling place that offers an Accessible Voting Unit (AVU). We were told there is no money in the budget for this idea. We suggested county officials offer to bring an AVU to groups of people such as senior centers and at meetings to facilitate voting. We were told there is no money and not enough personnel in some counties. We suggested reaching out to the Help America Vote grant program for funding. This suggestion is still pending action.

WCB continues to support the idea of electronic ballot marking and submission. We believe that creating a voting portal will go a long way

to help support many visually impaired voters. This type of secure portal will also help other disabled persons who have mobility and transportation issues. This method will also solve many signature validation issues that plague signed ballots each election cycle.

WCB continues to reach out to like-minded groups on this issue. We have reached out to organizations including Tusk Philanthropies and the Mobile Voting Project to discuss their “VoteHub” software. Members of WCB have been part of the testing for this software. We have worked with Democracy Live for several years to test and give input on their voting solution.

WCB will continue to actively work to find a workable solution for accessible voting for the blind and visually impaired in Washington state.

## My First Political Speech
### by Steven McCray

I recently started my political career by running for the office of water commissioner for district 10 of Spokane County for position1. Being legally blind creates several interesting experiences running for office. Fortunately, I have chosen a party that has encouraged me, as well as done their best to support my choice to run for office. I am also fortunate enough to choose an office where I am unopposed.

I decided last March to run for office and get my feet wet in politics by running for water commissioner. This is a relatively uncontentious office to run for and, thus far, it has been a pleasant experience. I have not had any negative reactions or bad attacks on me from anyone, and generally anyone I tell that I am running has been supportive and encouraging.

In the effort to run for an office, I need to seek endorsements from individuals and local organizations. This generally requires me to stand in front of a group of people and make a short speech about my

intentions for the office and take questions from those in attendance. The public speaking part has its difficulties for me since I have social anxiety and get very nervous before I start. I also suffer from the issue of having to memorize everything I want to say since I have low vision and writing the speech would require type so big that those in the audience would be able to read it better than I could.

In my first speech, I stood and delivered my remarks about the condition of our local water supply and what I intend to do to protect it and those who use it. Then came the question part of my speech. This is where the issue I had not foreseen came into play. I had not thought about how I would select who would ask me a question. Hands in a crowd of people just disappear to me. Finding this out onstage in front of 200-plus people is rather terrifying.

Fortunately, the room was a friendly crowd, and they forgave me for not seeing many hands that were raised. Most of the folks in the room knew me and had been told in the past about my lack of vision. They did, however, tell me afterwards that they had never seen me struggle with it before. I have been told many times that I do not “act blind.” I have always strived to fit in.

Being identified as a disabled person has both pros and cons. Even the most understanding people change how they treat you once they realize you are not an able-bodied person.

I work every day to live the most “normal” life I can. I do not carry a white cane because I generally am able to navigate the world without one. I have questioned this choice many times in my life. I have wondered, if I did carry a cane, would it make my life better or not?

There are many times I would like the world to know I do have vision issues. You know, like when I am crossing a street, or I stare at something trying to figure out what it is I am looking at. The staring thing can cause issues of its own when people do know you have vision issues.

I was able to receive the endorsement of the room after ending my speech (Spokane County Democrats). This was the first time I had ever been unanimously endorsed by anyone in my life. It gave me a big push on my self-confidence.

I learned from this experience and now have someone call on people for me when I am in similar situations. I am getting better at my public speaking and now look for opportunities to practice talking before crowds. I have found in the past year that there is little I can't do once I put my mind to it. I now live by ten little two-letter words: "If it is to be, it is up to me."

## For disabled people, taking Tacoma's extended streetcar line isn't always a smooth ride

**by Craig Sailor /Tacoma News Tribune**
**Nov. 21, 2023**

(Reprinted with permission from the Tacoma News Tribune)

Wanda McRae doesn't look like she has a disability. "Do I have a disability? I'm old," McRae said when asked. She's 71.

McRae serves as a commissioner on the Tacoma Area Commission on Disabilities. On a recent November evening, she and two other commissioners were about to board a Tacoma Link streetcar. The roving meeting was to assess the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access on the system which was recently doubled in length.

McRae has been a commissioner since October. It was her first time riding the trolley. Like many, McRae lived most of her life without a disability. But no longer.

"As a senior person, I have issues with even going into stores," she said. Signage and labels become a little harder to read. Disabled friends she shops with have a tough time finding parking, even with a disability pass.

“There’s always not enough parking for them,” she said. Disabled parking, though required by law, diminished or moved further away during the pandemic when stores and restaurants turned the spots into food to-go and grocery pick-up spaces, she said.

“The disabled have to park down further or around the corner, which is not accessible for them,” McRae said.

**Accessibility**

Access for people with disabilities should concern everyone, McRae said. “People don’t realize you’re going to be old one day. And you’re going to need more of these services the older you get.”

Sound Transit, the agency that operates Tacoma Link, wasn’t involved in the commission field trip but was aware of it, said spokesperson David Jackson.

“Sound Transit considers the needs of all its passengers and actively engages with accessibility advocates to hear their concerns and find solutions for meeting community needs,” the agency said in a statement to The News Tribune.

Sound Transit is conducting an online passenger experience survey. The agency said it wants to know how passengers from a wide array of backgrounds are using its system.

**Seeing the signs**

Tacoma lacks Braille. That’s the assessment of commissioner Hayley Edick. Braille, the system of raised dots that can be read by fingertips, helps the visually impaired access everything from books to street signage.

Edick and her husband, David, both visually impaired, boarded the trolley with children Matthew, 10, and daughter Emily, 7.

The trip began at the Tacoma Dome Station, the eastern terminus of the line. Before departing, the Edicks, commission chair Amin Tony Hester and several sighted people looked for Braille signage for over a minute before finding a small placard on a support column.

“It says, ‘Tacoma Dome Station. St. Joseph.’ That’s where it’s going,” Hayley Edick said as she read it.

“Would you be able, as a blind person, to better locate this sign?” Lucas Smiraldo, the city’s liaison to the committee, asked her.

Edick didn’t have any immediate solutions.

**Uniform policy**

Edick joined the commission in September. She wants to see a more uniform approach to disability access for transit riders across the dozens of agencies operating in Puget Sound.

“There’s all these avenues to talk about disability,” she said. “But it’s really important that they all talk to each other. So, we’re not reinventing the wheel and working in opposite directions.”

Disabilities come in a variety of modes: vision, hearing, mobility, sensory input and others. Not every person has the same level of severity. Correspondingly, the resources people with those disabilities use to increase accessibility can differ.

“Oftentimes, they’ll say, ‘We put it in large print. What else do you want?’ Or ‘everybody who’s blind reads Braille.’ And that’s not how it is,” Edick said.

Pedestrian crosswalk signals can give verbal directors (“wait”), countdown remaining crossing time, provide an audible beacon, and speak street names. Edick says she can encounter any combination of those — or none at all — as a pedestrian.

“And then they make a clicking noise because if you touch the arrow, it vibrates,” Edick said. “So, my deaf/blind friends can cross the street safely because they want to be as independent as possible.”

“That intersection of disabilities is often overlooked,” David Edick said. After spending a few months in a wheelchair as a teen, he became aware of narrow store aisles and the lack of curb ramps.

**Rocky road**

When the Tacoma group disembarked at the Hilltop District Station, they found the sidewalk leading to their planned meeting place at Ice Cream Social under construction and blocked off. Signage — accessible only to the sighted — suggested a detour.

“As a blind person, it’s kind of daunting,” Edick said of such unexpected challenges. “How do I get around this? If there’s someone there to help, it’s great. If there’s not, then you kind of turn around and retrace your steps.”

Instead, Smiraldo took the group to the Vietnamese cuisine restaurant Pho King for a post-trip discussion and meal.

**Findings**

Overall, McRae was happy with the Link system but found the electronic signage inside the cars confusing. It displays the last station visited long after the trolley has left that station.

“That was really confusing for me,” she said. “And so, if I was dependent on that, then I would have been at the wrong stop.”

Hester said the system could be improved with more way-finding aids. He was unsure where to find the doors of the trolley when he boarded and where to locate Braille signage.

He said King County Metro is more friendly to the blind. He thinks Metro staff is well trained in assisting disabled users.

“Down here, you’re not as accustomed to seeing visual impairments,” he said. Because people with disabilities often live on fixed incomes, Hester said, Pierce County is more likely to draw the disabled than King County.

“But progress is progress,” he said. “So, I’ll take it when I can get it.”

As the group dined, passenger Gilbert Weaver Jr. was riding the trolley to his destination that evening: St. Joseph Medical Center. It’s the end of the line for the new extension.

Weaver uses a wheelchair to navigate the streets of Tacoma and its public transport. When the trolley arrived, he pressed a button inside the streetcar that deployed a ramp, allowing him to maneuver over the gap between the car and the station’s platform.

“As far as light rail goes, it’s awesome,” he said as he rolled out into the evening air.

This article may be found at: http://tinyurl.com/2a87xkkn

# THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

## The Blind Mouse:
## Who Went to The Big City and Returned a Lion
### by Charles Marsh

There once was a mouse, who lived in his house,
Waiting for the last rays of day.
The Elders, they told him, that someday soon,
The last rays of day would fade away,
And never return again.
So he sat in his chair, his heart full of despair,
And waited.

Time started to pass, a year and the next.
The mouse he grew smaller, so even if he hollered,
No one could hear his request.

Blind they had called it,
He hated the word, it seemed so absurd,
For he could still see the light,
Yet somehow he felt, he lived in forever night.

Then along came a Lion, who had only known night,
And still got around, how he followed the sound.
He encouraged the mouse, to leave his house.
The mouse was scared, for his sight was impaired,
But he followed the Lion on his way.

The Lion, he told him, and he didn't scold him,
You can live life a better way.
Instead of waiting for the day, let's go out and play,
And so off went they,
The Lion and the mouse.

The mouse left his house, and went to the big city to play.
Once there, the mouse who lived only in house,
Met a group of mice, who were also called blind.
They all seemed so nice, and all played together,
And helped each other to learn,
To get around only listening to sound,
To go about their day.

The mouse was still scared, but he wasn't alone,
Even though, he was so far from home.

He had many adventures, we will talk about later,
But suffice it to say,
As he played with the mice… day by day…
The mouse looked one day,
To find, that even though he was blind,
He transformed into a Lion, with a loud roar and a playful dance,
He went ever on to play!

# AGENCY UPDATES

## Update on the Blind Enterprise Vendor Program from the Department of Services for the Blind

**by Dana Whitford**

COVID forced the shutdown of nearly every food service operation in Department of Services for the Blind (DSB's) Blind Enterprise Program (BEP) three years ago. With state workers mostly telecommuting, there were no customers to be seen on the state Capitol Campus in Olympia.

During this time, BEP took stock of its facilities and realized food service was never going to be the same again. They proactively commissioned a feasibility study and set out to request funding from the Legislature to upgrade these critically important establishments and create new

models with which to sustain current and potential BEP vendor owner/operators.

The major goals were to:

- Create high volume, efficient operations with modern food preparation equipment and methods, requiring fewer staff and reduced overhead costs.
- Establish 24/7 access to fresh food in the form of micro markets with self-checkout options to accommodate flexible work schedules.
- Allow for single distribution points to service multiple serving locations, as well as expand services to include catering, preorder, and delivery services.
- Provide higher-quality, healthier food options that align with state initiatives and be attractive to customers. Offer hot and cold “grab and go” food choices for additional consumer flexibility.
- Offer a more ethnically varied range of food choices to appeal to Washington’s diverse and culturally rich employee population.
- Upgrade equipment and infrastructure to meet current health code and energy-efficiency requirements.

Last month, BEP opened its first remodeled café and espresso bar at Office Building 2 (DSHS) on the Olympia Capitol Campus. Run by long-term BEP entrepreneur Robert Ott, the café now offers a 24/7 micro market, a new fresh menu, leaner operations, and a fresh look and feel. New equipment has increased the menu possibilities, and the café continues to roll out new items every week. The focus is on fast, fresh, high-quality offerings. As the population of state workers continues to increase from week to week, the timing was optimal to open the café this fall, and the customers are ecstatic.

It was no easy feat for Robert to hang in there during the downtime, relying on grants and vending revenue to help sustain him. Robert also lost all his staff; some had been with him for more than 15 years. So, he had to start over, not an easy task given the lack of qualified food-service applicants in the market today.

But Robert persevered. He rebranded the new cafe as Chin Don Bistro – after a New Jersey toast for happiness and prosperity. Robert had faith in the process and continued to learn and to see sales growth from week to week.

BEP's second remodeled campus site in the Legislative Building's Dome Deli is due to open in January for the legislative session. It's been a crazy three years, but BEP is confident that the program will be stronger and more sustainable going forward.

# WCB HAPPENINGS

## A First-timer's Exuberance is Contagious
### by Sweetpea Moubray

I put my best foot forward as I leaped into the 2023 Washington Council of the Blind convention. I received a first-timer award, which paid for the cost to attend the convention, and I'm excited to tell you about it.

My home chapter of Snohomish County Council of the Blind was hosting the convention, so my experience began even before the convention started. We had amazing people seek donations and volunteer their time to stuff goodie bags for everyone that attended in person. My chapter also bought drinks and snacks for the hospitality room, which turned out to be a great hit, with the party lasting long into the nights. My favorite part of the convention was the hospitality room where I met so many new people, and we all had at least one thing in common. It was so exciting to connect with people from all over Washington, some I've met before and some new.

The exhibit hall was buzzing with my favorite tech and resources. I was so excited to feel a map of Oregon's Guide Dogs for the Blind campus. I connected with Pacific West Music of the Blind and Washington Talking Book & Braille Library. I learned about the Lions' Knights of the Blind, and talked about their Grandpa's White Cane program, which I have been a part of, that teaches kids about blindness. I was eager to hear about jobs, arts, and travel.

I had an unforgettable time at the convention. Stepping forward, I recently became vice president of Snohomish County Council of the Blind. With my lifetime membership that I won at the convention, I look forward to attending teleconference events, as well as being an active member in my home chapter. I'm exuberantly looking forward to the next convention.

## Expectations Exceeded as a WCB First-timer
### by Robin Espinoza

As a newcomer with a handful of years of blindness myself, the First-timer Committee granted me a scholarship to attend this year's Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) convention in SeaTac, WA. Set in a beautiful hotel with a glass elevator overlooking the city, there was a fantastic group of volunteers to help us navigate the halls and find the location of each scheduled session. It was a soirée of the most perfect blend of blind and low-vision people that I've ever experienced. My room was on the third floor, and I was never in the elevator alone, as there were well over 200 people who attended this convention.

As a person with a small amount of vision, I never know what to expect when joining a group such as this. I found myself helping others with their luggage and schedules, while my kind, sighted husband was continuously leading the conga line of ladies to the restroom. The reception was welcoming and non-judgmental, and full of laughter. Numerous sighted volunteers could be found accommodating us, pouring drinks, or just enjoying the vibe that could be felt through the three-day stay. I felt welcome in this beautiful hotel, however cold in certain wings, particularly around the crowded elevator area.

The exhibit hall included well-known businesses promoting their electronic devices, such as electronic magnifiers, as well as non-profit organizations loaded with tons of information about audiobooks on a variety of subjects, artists, new technologies, jewelers, and sprouting entrepreneurs with audio apps testing Scrabble games and boxing adventures.

Each day I had breakfast with a large group of people and became less concerned about spilling my glass of coffee over the table or onto my neighbor, knowing that there were other people there who've all done the same. There were meetings that discussed current events, and the membership voted to fill open board positions to serve for the next two years. We all voted by pushing nails into a piece of paper. One hole may have represented our vote for the current leader in a position,

whereas two or three punches may have shown a decisive commitment for new blood. Our votes were counted in a professional manner and board members were elected.

On my second day, I listened to a keynote speaker Abby Griffith, who talked about her experience growing up in Ethiopia and how she had become blind from snake venom being spit in her eyes by a king cobra. She spoke about scholarships she received throughout her life, as well as her journey to America and the ways she is now able to give back to her community she grew up in.

Lunch with the Guide Dog Users of Washington State group was so much fun. They held an auction, raising money for future scholarships, and there was lively discussion among over 15 full tables of blind and low-vision people. There must have been 50 dogs sitting obediently under the tables during this time. Afterward, they were all let outside in a totally disorderly manner where the hotel had provided a very small, dedicated soil garden for the dogs to relieve themselves.

Of course, I got lost in this huge hotel several times, and I never felt alone or truly lost. I made friends with several people during the talent show, was welcomed into new groups within my own community, and met people who I would never have otherwise run into.

As the recipient of a first-timer award, I feel very appreciative and truly did not know what to expect. Evening karaoke and chatting at the restaurant bar with other attendees was a highlight, and I have continued to keep in touch with several of the people I met during this convention, including one particular gal who introduced me to the Department of Services for the Blind and its Orientation and Training Center, which is a focused curriculum on mobility and orientation training with a campus in Seattle.

Inspired by one of the sessions I attended, I have taken home some valuable information about tactile arts, and I am excited to incorporate sand and seashells into some of my own personal pieces.

The idea of attending a convention can be intimidating for those of us with low vision. However, this convention inspired me to be more independent and less insecure about my ability to incorporate myself into society as a productive person, as well as a source of knowledge and insight for others. As a professional, private practice owner and audiologist, advocacy comes naturally to me. I never expected to be a disabled person who relies so much upon the kindness and compassion of those around me. The WCB convention is a well-planned event with thoughtful and valuable information, and I am excited to attend future events.

## Convention Musings from a First-timer
### by Errika Schneider

I have never attended a convention of any kind or size, so when I was offered the opportunity to go to the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) convention as a first-timer, I was excited and nervous all at the same time. I am one of those people who likes to know how things are expected to go, where things will be, and what to expect for myself. I only knew a couple of other attendees, and my guide dog is very close to retirement. Needless to say, I drove a few folks nuts with all of my questions and worries.

I was blessed to be able to ride with friends to the hotel from our beautiful part of Washington. This lifted the stress right off my shoulders and gave me the comfort level I needed to start the weekend off on a great note. Next, we were all given a virtual map of the hotel. Yay me! I was golden. Now, to meet new friends and make connections that I hope will stay with me a lifetime.

Every aspect of the WCB convention was fun and interesting –from the business sessions to the breakout sessions, from the various meal gatherings to visiting with so many new friends. I, who have never been interested in anything leadership-oriented, found that I am, in fact, interested in going through the leadership program and getting involved in my community, as well as in several committees and other affiliates of American Council of the Blind (ACB).

Some I've already become involved with or expressed interest in are WCB Families Committee, Guide Dog Users of Washington State, WCB First-timer Committee, and BITS, which is an affiliate of ACB. I am a member of the Peninsula Council of the Blind, as well. My goal is to become not just a member in name, but rather an active part of all I am interested in and am asked to participate in. I would like to see a larger blindness presence in all Washington communities where blind and low-vision residents are interested in participating.

I met so many wonderful people over the convention weekend. The volunteers were second to none. I met a few members of my local guide dog puppy club, had dinner with friends, and made wonderful new friends with whom I hope to stay connected and maybe serve with over time. I laughed a lot with new friends who shared my love of all things absurd. I even stepped out of my comfort zone and sang for a little while at a jam session with friends old and new.

I chose to attend breakout sessions that were related to important areas of my life: my essential oils and natural wellness. I am a retired massage therapist of 25 years and an avid essential-oil user. I am also very interested in natural health and wellness. I have been working with a guide dog since 1986, so related sessions were absolutes for me. All were wonderfully informative and interesting.

I'm so grateful for the opportunity given to me as a first-timer at the WCB convention. I loved having the opportunity to meet and watch some newly-blinded people bloom and come into their own. I got to participate in and begin learning about this organization from the inside, rather than as an outsider just observing. I found a new side of myself I wasn't expecting to find and subsequent interests I wasn't expecting either. I know this is just the beginning of what will be an interesting journey in my life.

Thanks to the First-timer Committee for all of these opportunities.

**Scholarship Winners for 2023**
**by Kim Moberg, Scholarship Committee Chair**

This past year, the Scholarship Committee of Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) awarded scholarships to seven delightful individuals. All of them met the scholarship criteria.

That criterion is as follows:

- Each of the individuals are residents of Washington state.
- Each of the individuals meet the definition of legal blindness.
- Each of the individuals is enrolled in a college/university or trade/technical school for quarter 2023.

I would like to share, in no particular order, a bit about each of the scholarship winners, where they will be attending school, and the amount of their awards

**Finn Paynick**
Finn is from Edmonds, WA, and his major field of study is in music and theater. Finn has a love and passion for acting and self-expression on and off the stage. It is his way to advocate for disability rights for all. Finn will be attending Cornish College of the Arts and received a scholarship of $3,550.

**Merribeth Greenberg**
You may know her as Beth Greenberg. She is one of our convention committee chairs. Beth has a busy life. She works, goes to college and is very involved in WCB. I have yet to figure out when she studies. For Beth, online classes must be the answer. Her major field of study is Information Technology. Beth is from Vancouver, WA, and attends Purdue Global University. Beth received a Scholarship of $4,050.

**Roman Baylosis**
Roman is one of our younger scholarship winners this year. His dad is active duty and so Roman has lived most of his life in Hawaii. He has

only lived here in Washington state for a couple of years now. Roman will be attending Pacific Lutheran University and is majoring in psychology and studying art design. Roman lives in Puyallup, WA. He received a scholarship of $3,025.

**Steve Gnyp**
Steve is involved with a project to improve literacy for blind children. Steve is seeking a master's degree in special education with an endorsement so he can be a teacher of the visually impaired. Steve lives in Spokane WA. He received a scholarship of $3,650.

**Steven McCray**
Outside of school activities, Steven is very involved in the political arena in his local area. He has a wife and a four-year-old daughter, so, I'm sure finding time to study is a challenge, but he does it. Steven's major field of study is social work. He is in a bachelor's program and will continue on to his master's once he completes this portion of his journey. Steven is from Four Lakes, WA, attends Eastern Washington University, and received a scholarship of $5,100.

**Wuroud Azeez**
Wuroud is from Renton, WA. Wuroud came to the United States in 2009. She is quite an accomplished lady. She learned to speak English, which is so cool. She then took classes to earn her GED, and now she is attending college. She is studying psychology and would eventually like to be a Braille instructor. She is attending Green River Community College and received a scholarship of $2,200.

**Zach McClean**
Zach loves sports, and as a youngster was determined to be able to participate in all sports. Just because he was legally blind was not going to stop him. Zach plays college football. He says he has very supportive teammates who understand and are willing to work with him being

legally blind. Zach is studying sports, leadership and management. He is attending Pacific University in Forest Grove, OR, and received a scholarship of $3,025.

Also, I would like to give a big shout-out to those chapters who contributed to the 2023 scholarship program. Your gifts are greatly appreciated by this committee and scholarship recipients.

One other very special donation was made to scholarship, and that donation was made by the Federal Way Lions Foundation. They asked that those funds go to a scholarship person in their local area if possible, so Wuroud Azeez was the recipient of that gift.

I am excited to see what this year has in store for this committee.

## Awards Committee Convention Follow-up
**by Jessamyn Landby**

Once again the awards committee had another great successful year of presenting awards at convention. On Friday, the awards committee gave out nine chapter growth certificates to those chapters that had 10% or more in membership growth for the year.

Clark County Council of the Blind
Snohomish County Council of the Blind
Guide Dog Users of Washington State
United Blind of Seattle
Pierce County Association of the Blind
United Blind of Walla Walla
South King Council of the Blind
Peninsula Council of the Blind
Skagit & Island Counties Council of the Blind

Also on Friday, the awards committee recognized three officers and four board members for their service and time to WCB.

Julie Brannon President
Andy Arvidson First Vice President
Lisa George Treasurer
Denise Colley immediate past president
Kim Moberg Board Director
Linda Wilder Board Director
Nathan Brannon Board Director

On Saturday night at the banquet the committee gave out four of the seven awards that we ask for nomination letters each year. The four awards that were given out at the banquet are:

Linda Wilder for Certificate of Outstanding Service to WCB Award;
Judy Brown and Dorene Cornwell for Ammeter and Lieberg Outstanding Advocacy Award;
Fred Meyer in Renton for The Business of the Year Award; and
Abby Griffeth for The One World Award.

This year the Newsline co chairs Reginald George and Heather Meares gave out the Newsline Editors' Award and a new award called The Newsline Nouveau Quill Award. Zackery Hurtz received the Newsline Editors' Award for his article titled "Zack and Gramps at it Again."

Heidi Coggins and Tim Downie were presented with feathered quills to recognize new writers who made significant content contributions to Newsline in the past year.

Overall the awards committee and WCB had a very good year.

I would like to thank my committee for their hard work. Their names are Cheryl Cumings, Jeanne Jacobs, Gayle Pasi and a special thanks to Kim Moberg and Michelle Denzer for making the awards once again this year.

# Hats Off

**Compiled by Linda Wilder**
**lindasuewilder@msn.com**

We extend congratulations to, and celebrate with, the following members of Washington Council of the Blind:

- Joan Ladeburg retired in September after many years of employment from the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind.
- Marilee Richards on her 75th birthday.
- Hayley Edick on her appointment by the mayor of Tacoma for a three-year term as a board director to the Tacoma Commission on Disabilities.
- Kim Moberg for her five-year appointment by Gov. Jay Insley to the board of directors for Washington State School for the Blind, representing the 6th District.
- Joy Iverson on her retirement after 35 years with Washington State Department of Services for the Blind.
- Congratulations and best wishes to Charlie and Ruby Marsh on their wedding Oct. 14, 2023. Charlie is the newest member of Yakima Valley Council of the Blind.

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 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

## South Kitsap Council of the Blind
**by Kim Moberg**

Hello, Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) family. By the time you read this, the holidays will be behind us and the new year will be in front. I am looking forward to what this new year will bring as I reflect on 2023.

For our chapter, 2023 has been a time of recovery. We have started to gain new members, which is always exciting. We had our summer chapter picnic in August. I understand that this was, as always, a grand affair.

Gayle Pasi and Kim Moberg attended the summer leadership seminar that was held in August for WCB members. I was a mentor, teaching others about WCB and being a good leader, and Gayle attended to learn to be an effective leader.

As I write this, our Christmas party is coming up in December. It is always a great way to round out the year. The celebration will be complete with lots of yummy food and a gift exchange. A couple of years ago, we tried this fun ornament exchange. Well, I wouldn't say it's an exchange, but it is a way to get a new ornament each year. Each person that wants to participate will bring a wrapped ornament. A Christmas story will be read as we stand in a circle and pass around the ornaments. Each time we hear a specific word, for example, "Merry Christmas,’ we pass our ornament to the next person to our right. At the

end of the story, whatever ornament you have is the one you get to keep. When we did this before pandemic, it was a lot of fun.

So, that is a look into what South Kitsap Council of the Blind has been up to and the things we are looking forward to in 2024. We're hoping this year is a fun and exciting one for all of our WCB family.

## United Blind of the Tri-Cities
### by Janice Squires

The only two words to describe the United Blind of the Tri-Cities (UBTC) are “always busy.” It is with a very heavy heart that I share with all of you the passing of our loved and long-time member, Jeff Johnson. Jeff and his wife Pat were together in life for 65 years and he will be so sorely missed.

UBTC had its annual picnic in the park Sept. 5 We not only had a delicious boxed lunch from Jimmy Johns, but we also had a rousing game of beep baseball. Thanks to Frank and the Tri-Cities Delta Gamma Alumni Group for volunteering to make it such a fun afternoon.

Frank is so excited to start up the UBTC pottery class again. He has three new potters and they meet twice a month at the Edith Bishel center. We also are thrilled to begin our described play season with the Richland Players. The first play will be the Agatha Christie mystery, “And Then There Were None,” and the next play will be “Double Wide Texas Christmas.” Every Tuesday, we have some type of entertaining activity. Of course, we have our monthly lunch bunch, card game, book group, and technology group. Just in case there is a fifth Tuesday in the month, we play an enjoyable dice game entitled, “Left Right Center.”

This year, UBTC paid any of our members’ registration fees to attend the WCB state convention. This included virtual and in-person attendees. We always want to encourage all of our members to be able to participate in the conventions. We know how valuable and

educational the conventions are, not only for our long-time members but, most of all, for our new and young members.

We had a very good annual Christmas party, with good food, gift exchanges, and lots of laughter. We also participated in our yearly adopt-a-blind-child program that fills our hearts with joy. Here's wishing everyone happiness in this new year.

## United Blind of Walla Walla
## by Heather Meares

We always look forward to our holiday gathering when we wrap the gifts given to local blind or visually impaired youth. We have done this the past few years, working closely with a local TVI, Grace Dostel, who helps us select the kids and the gifts they would like. She and her husband attend our party and describe each gift chosen before they are wrapped and distributed. We each order our own individual pizza, listen to holiday music, and catch up with each other. The highlight this year was Carla Brinkley's gift to us all. She memorized and recited with dramatic joy, the entire 'Twas the Night Before Christmas story. It was such a lovely surprise and warmed all our hearts.

The new year brings a renewed focus on fundraising ideas and new-member outreach plans, as well as finding new areas in our community to help educate or facilitate necessary change for people with disabilities. It's always good to take a good look at our ever-evolving purpose as a chapter and see what is working well and where we can improve or make changes for the better. We will keep you all posted on what we find as the year unfolds and wish you all the best in your own chapters' endeavors.

## Yakima Valley Council of the Blind
### by Lisa George

YAKITY YAK FROM YAKIMA
New Year's greetings to everyone across the state from all the members of Yakima Valley Council of the Blind (YVCB).

Our YVCB leadership team is returning for 2024. Sally Mayo is president, Reg George is vice president, Howard Underwood is treasurer, and Lisa George is secretary. Our two new board directors are Amy Lauri Hildersheim and Charlie Marsh, who join current board Director Alice Klein.

Bowling continues to be our best outreach activity for membership (we anticipate a few new members in 2024). We have also participated in the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) round-Ups in Tri-Cities and Ellensburg. The opportunity to interact with Teachers of Blind and Low Vision Learners (TBLVL) was very valuable.

We were able to utilize our connection with local TBLVLs to get Christmas presents for three students in three different school districts this year, and we plan to make that an annual project. We are excited to partner with WSSB's Associate Director of Outreach Jessica Chandler to put together a beeping Easter egg hunt this year.

A few of our members are recovering from health issues/surgeries. We hope that everyone has a happy and healthy 2024.

## 2024 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.
Join WCB Coffee and Conversation Zoom call Saturdays at 10 a.m.

List of Abbreviations:

| | |
|---|---|
| BLV | Blind and Low Vision |
| DSB | Department of Services for the Blind |
| PNW AER | Pacific NW Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired |
| SRC-B | State Rehabilitation Council |
| WASILC | Washington State Independent Living Council |
| WCB | Washington Council of the Blind |
| WSSB | Washington State School for the Blind |
| WTBBL | Washington Talking Book & Braille Library |

**JANUARY**

**6** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m. (first Saturday)
**8** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m. (second Monday)
**10** – WCB Government Affairs Zoom call on accessible voting at 7 p.m.
**10** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting
**18 & 19** – WASILC meetings via Zoom from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day
**21** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m. (third Sunday)
**23** – President's call at 7 p.m. (fourth Monday in odd months)

**FEBRUARY**

**3** – 2024 Braille Challenge at WTBBL from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
**3** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.
**5** – Treasurer's call at 7 p.m. (first Monday in even months)
**10** – WCB board meeting (on Zoom) from 1 to 3 p.m.
**12** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
**17** – WTBBL Patron Advisory Council from 9 a.m. to noon
**18** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
**29** – Deadline to submit articles for the WCB Newsline Spring issue

**MARCH**
**1-5** – ACB President's Meeting and Legislative Seminar in Alexandria, VA
**2** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.
**7** – WSSB board of trustees meeting
**8** – SRC-B Zoom meeting from 9 a.m. to noon (2nd Friday each quarter)
**11** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
**14-16** – PNW AER Conference
**19** – WCB committee leaders' call at 7 p.m.
**17** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.
**26** – President's call at 7 p.m.

**APRIL**
**1** – Treasurer's call at 7 p.m.
**1** – Last day for chapters to sign up to participate in GiveBIG
**6** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.
**8** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.
**21** – WCB Tech Chat with Reg and Frank at 7 p.m.

# In Memoriam

The following are members of Washington Council of the Blind who have passed away since our 2022 convention, and who were fondly remembered with a moment of silence at the beginning of our 2023 annual business meeting.

**Marilyn Donnelly**, WCB Life member (November 2022)

**Margie Kickert**, United Blind of Tri-Cities (December 2022)

**Ron Bradshaw**, United Blind of Whatcom County

**Shirley Scharmer**, South Kitsap Council of the Blind

**Selestino Rendon**, Skagit & Island Counties Council of the Blind

**Rhonda Nelson**, WCB Life member (May 2023)

**Tracy Fejeran**, Spokane Council of the Blind (June 2023)

**Sharon Schauer**, (June 2023)

**Jeff Johnson**, United Blind of Tri-Cities (September 2023)

**Mona Reynolds**, Skagit & Islands Counties Council of the Blind (September 2023)

## 2024 WCB Officers and Board of Directors

President Andy Arvidson, Anacortes
First Vice President Cathy Wilson, Tacoma
Second Vice President Sheri Richardson, Seattle
Secretary Danette Dixon, Lynnwood
Treasurer Lisa George, Yakima
Immediate Past President Julie Brannon, Puyallup
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Board Director Heidi Coggins, Bothell
Board Director Frank Cuta, Benton City
Board Director Beth Greenberg, Vancouver
Board Director Kim Moberg, Silverdale
Board Director Linda Wilder, Tacoma

**Washington Council of the Blind**
is pleased to acknowledge donors who have generously supported our programs in the second half of 2023

# *Thank You!*

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Diane Cavanaugh, Dorene Cornwell, Rita Dilek,
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Dana Marmion, Sally Mayo, Glenn & Ursula McCully,
Girmay Micael, Northwest Pro Wrestling,
Dodie & Dakota Orlando, Penny Forward, Debby Phillips,
Bruce Radtke, Marilee Richards, Sheri Richardson,
Stuart Russell, Evilo Schwab, Cindy & Randy Tedrow,
and Steven Welch

**Those contributing toward ACB ANGEL RHONDA NELSON**
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Federal Way Lions Foundation, United Blind of Walla Walla,
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*And anonymous contributions through:* ACB Monthly Monetary Support Program, Benevity Fund, Network for Good, & PayPal Giving Fund

WCB welcomes new *Life Members*

**Heidi Coggins, Steven McCray,**
**Sweetpea Moubray, and Cathy Wilson**