**WASHINGTON**

**COUNCIL**

**OF THE BLIND**

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# WCB NEWSLINE

Spring 2024 Edition

﻿“In Your Wildest Dreams”

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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.**

**Send all content by June 30.**

**Digital cartridges must also 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**](mailto:theWCBNewsline@gmail.com), or through the contact form located at:

**https://wcbinfo.org/wcb-contact-form/**

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## President’s Message by Andy Arvidson

It’s Feb. 26 and I’m getting ready to fly to Washington, D.C., to participate in the American Council of the Blind leadership legislative seminar. With snow predicted here this afternoon, it is probably a great day to stay inside and write for Newsline.

This past Saturday, I visited the WCB King County chapter. They are ready to dissolve the chapter. In the past year, I have gone to Seattle six times to see how they are doing, and they can never get enough members to show up to do any business. Therefore, on April 22, they will come to an end.

Most of you have more than likely received an email about the WCB leadership seminar that is happening. I hope that you will consider stepping forward to become a part of this wonderful opportunity. We are looking for proactive members who would like to be in a leadership position.

Take a look in the mirror and ask yourself, “Would I like to be a committee chair, a chapter president, a board member, or any other position?” And, then sign up.

On Easter Sunday, Colette and I are going to Kennewick for a youth activity for the Department of Services for the Blind. While there, we are going to stay a couple extra days and meet with the Tri-Cities chapter and have lunch and spend a little time with them. The next day, we will drive to Spokane and do the same there. I figure as long as I am going to be in that neck of the woods, I might as well see some Washington Council of the Blind members and let them know they are also an important and integral part of this organization.

Our last WCB convention on the east side of the state happened in 2017, and our last leadership seminar there was in 2019. We did have a GDUWS(X) Guide Dog Users of Washington State Spring Fling there also in 2019. So, we need to try to do activities on the east side. We are supposed to be one WCB, more than just at the convention or in standing committees. Let’s get together more often. It is my goal to try to visit chapters in different areas when possible.

May we all walk on the sunny side of the street and come out of the darkness together.

## Letter From the Editors

Are you feeling wild and crazy, or perhaps sowing some wild oats? Maybe you’re feeling a bit more dreamy and whimsical, ready to try new things or make your wildest dreams come true.

Well, buckle your seat belts, put on your protective gear, and join us for this wild ride of a Newsline issue. We are traveling full-speed ahead, so be prepared to hear about speed bumps on the journey, roller coaster adventures, and stories of people who weren’t afraid to follow their dreams, think big, and take action. You might even learn some things about people you didn’t know before, and that’s the most fun and inspiring part. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have.

And don’t forget to take a walk on the wild side!

Your Faithful Editors,

Heather the Wild Strawberry and Reg the Dreamsicle

## 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 soon. So, stay tuned for those.

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 Friday May 31. 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 Readers’ Choice winner for our Winter issue is, “What Can We Do,” by Tim Downie. This well-written, brutally honest article takes a deep dive into his story of overcoming vision loss and how this lead ultimately to providing support to many new friends in the same situation.

Note from Beth Greenberg, author of her “Sporting Spotlight” column. In her winter article on blind hockey, she wanted to notify us about a blind hockey team in Seattle. You can write them at seattleblindhockey@gmail.com.

**Reader Feedback**

From Linda Wilder: “As always, I read every article in Newsline. It does take a few hours to read, but it is such a good relaxing time. Plus, I find the variety of topics informational, thought-provoking, and entertaining. There are so many very well-written articles, making it difficult to choose the one I think is best. I had two favorite ones, but finally chose ‘What Can We Do,’ by Tim Downie. Tim is doing so many things to help others who are blind or losing vision, and at the same time he is helping himself and his community. Tim is seeing a need and figuring out a solution.”

(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 #22 Ed Foy Brings Joy by Heather Meares

A few weeks ago, I was walking with my friend, Mike, headed downtown for a tasting at a local winery. As we walked, he asked if we could go visit a close friend of his, Ed Foy, whom he had known since they were young punk rockers with lots of attitude, growing up in Walla Walla as the ones who were different. They were strange, and wanted to create change, living under the ideology of “have an idea and do it!” And, were never afraid to be who they were. Ed had always been low vision, and was now recently becoming increasingly blind. He was agoraphobic and didn’t get out much anymore, but he really enjoyed music, art, books, writing, and poetry. He referred to himself as the most famous unknown poet, and attended the Art Institute of Seattle. Mike thought we would get along great. I was intrigued and wanted to meet him, so we headed towards his place, just a few blocks away from my house. On the way, we talked about the fact that he was our age, in his 50s, and struggling with not being able to read anymore or access so many things he used to love doing. I mentioned that I could help get him connected with life again, and I related to how he was feeling with the loss of vision and all that this can impact. For some reason, we changed our mind about stopping by because we didn’t want to be late for our appointment, and decided we would go visit Ed another day soon. Two weeks later, Ed passed away.

It’s been about a month now, and everywhere Mike and I go, he runs into friends sharing their memories of Ed and how much he will be missed in our community. He frequented one of our local coffee shops, the Coffee Perk, on a regular basis, and even started a graphic novel library exchange there. When he walked around town, he always wore a long, black duster to protect himself from the weather, as he couldn’t feel whether it was hot or cold due to a brain aneurysm and diabetes. He used a quad cane, which he did not hesitate to brandish around like a sword as he yelled at perpetrating cars blocking crosswalks. Sometimes, he would spontaneously perform a song he had written while Mike played along on the guitar.

A memorial was held with family and friends, and a couple of days later, Mike received a package in the mail. It was from Ed’s brother, Phil, and it contained a personal note from Phil, some king-size Foy brand rolling papers from the 1970s, and a button pin that said “Foy Brings Joy.”

How could so many people have known him, and yet I had never heard about him before, and didn’t remember ever hearing his name amongst our local blindness community? How did we miss him? It made me wonder how many more blind and low-vision people are right here, completely flying under the radar, slipping through the cracks, missing out on services, support networks, and life-changing technologies? A sense of failure has been hovering over me. I can’t fix the fact that I never met Ed, but I can give him what I have to offer today, a chance to really be heard, and to know that he mattered. I am sharing a piece of his writing with you, not only to honor him, but all those like him. The following is the closest thing to an interview I will ever have with him.

Edward Foy, written March 23, 2017:

We were skipping rocks watching them hop across the water

She turned and said "I love you”

But I soon will be forgotten like a whisper in the dark, a rock sinking in the ocean.

And I want to be more than a memory

And I want to be more than a song when I'm gone.

I was reading books in a very tiny store

Every book I read made me want a little more.

But the pages were all strange and all the language foreign

And when the books were closed the words were all forgotten.

And I want to be more than a memory

And I want to be more than a song when I'm gone

Write my name on the moon, write my name in tears, write my name in blood,

let it last a thousand years.

I woke at three a.m.

And all the clocks were broken.

Still I knew the time

When the sky would open because it had turned blue

And the secret word was spoken.

And I want to be more than a memory

And I want to be more than a song when I'm gone.

## What Dreams May Come by Heidi Coggins

I am a Valkyrie, riding on the power and strength of my own wings. I command the souls of those lost in battle and ferry them off to Valhalla. I am overseeing a battle of largesse proportions, and my work is long and arduous. I glide over the fields swiftly and silently, choosing those souls that have fought valiantly and bravely. While in the midst of my flight, I can see in vivid color the glow of those souls I am charged with retrieving and transporting to their final destinations.

Then, suddenly, my vision is fading and I notice I can no longer see the telltale glow of the recently fallen…wait a minute. Why is there a cat on my chest? There are no cats in my realm.

Mavis the Malicious is gently telling me it’s breakfast time by laying her entire 12 pounds on my body and rubbing her sweet kitty face on my chin.

It’s a Monday, and I am back to seeing my lava lamps twirling about my remaining eye. I have an online class soon, and my little, furry alarm has gone off like clockwork. Where is the coffee?

I realize I have yet again had a fantastic dream in which I can fly, or have some type of superpower and, of course, I can see everything clearly.

This is just one of many dreams where I see again. Sometimes, I am having conversations with those people I have cherished and lost in the path of life, and in some I am riding a dragon or unicorn. In some, I am a sea creature moving along the ocean floor to investigate whatever I discover, or I find myself simply looking through old photos of days gone by. Then, there are others that make zero sense, and I wake up scratching my head in wonder.

My dreaming life is so complete and rich with color and memory that it leaves my waking life in a shockwave. In reality, my lifelong dream is to swim with sharks in Australia. However, my husband is not a fan of this idea. He has no appreciation for a blind woman being locked into a metal cage and dropped into the ocean amongst a school of Great Whites. I mean, what could go wrong?

The travel bug has got me in its clutches. I do have to preface this by telling you that my husband’s biggest travel dreams vastly differ from mine. He would love to visit the United Kingdom and maybe Scotland. While those are also on my list, they are at the tip of the iceberg. He is not as adventurous as his wife, and feels that any cruise ship we would ever go on would result in scurvy, dysentery, and being captured by pirates.

Knowing that he has always been a cautious person when dealing with travel and honoring his wishes for me to not be eaten by sharks, I have proposed a simple and fun cruise to Alaska. This particular cruise is being hosted by Katie White, with Magical Moments Vacations, which specializes in blind and low-vision- friendly trips. We will be departing for a small trip, first to Alaska, and if all goes well, I might be able to persuade him to go to the Caribbean or to ancient Mayan ruins. Maybe we can be our own best version of Indiana Jones. In Alaska this fall, we can pretend to be mushers riding on a sled through the cold and wind at a zillion miles an hour. It may be pretty close to flying and maybe a bit safer?

My concept of big dreams has changed quite a bit in the last few years, but the wanderlust is always with me. Here’s to future travels, and maybe in one of those, I can have my own super power dreams in a different way. Skol!

(If you want to contact Katie for further blind and low-vision-friendly vacations, email her at Katie.white@mmvagent.com)

## If I Could, I Would … by Holly Turri

Well, here goes. You might want to have the truck with a net standing by. After you read this, you might want to check me into a permanent deluxe suite on “Fantasy Island.” If I could be anything I wanted, I’d be a guide dog.

With the exception of the neurotic shelty who lived with us during my teen years, I’ve always loved dogs. My favorite breed is the black lab. If I were a guide dog, that would be a tip-top choice.

Yes, being an astronaut, meteorologist, or physicist are great dreams. Not attainable ones, but amazing to imagine.

Of course, I’m extremely aware that I will never wake up and magically be turned into a lab guide dog, kind of like my childhood dream when each morning I’d jump out of bed and, dang it, I was still a girl.

To fulfill this dream, I don’t have to sport a beautiful black coat, sweet face, soulful eyes, and a kind and gentle nature. As a human, I can strive to model the traits of the dogs I so admire. For the past several months, I’ve secretly tried it, and it is not as easy as it looks. So, here are some of the things I’ve worked on and my grades.

Loyalty: It’s easy to talk about being a great friend who would give my life to someone who I cared about. Well, that’s a two-way street. Sometimes, they will let me down. The human Holly is known for yelling and taking my toys home. The lab would sit down, discuss it, and ask for forgiveness for whatever it was that caused the problem. Dogs know that no one owns right. B+

Enthusiasm: Every day, dogs awaken and think, “Boy howdy, it’s another beautiful day in the USA.” They want to share their joie de vivre with everyone. That’s the easiest part of my lab rehabilitation task. Treat each day like it is our first and our friends like it is our last. A

Controlling anger: Gentle reader, I’ve descended from a long line of screaming, yelling, bad-tempered people. Through my husband, I’ve learned that calmly listening solves things more quickly. Dogs rarely get a mad on. I would not bite either a human or a dog. B

Performing my job: In my guide dog role, I love keeping my handler safe. In my human form, controlling my world is a huge part of me. As a well-trained guide dog, that’s what I’m supposed to do. I might even get a “good dog” instead of being a criticized woman. A-

Loving: As a guide dog, I can snuggle and curl up by my handler. I can do many things to show how much I care. As a human, that is sometimes difficult. So, I’ll give myself a B.

Eating: Unfortunately, human Holly and labby Holly share a common weakness. It is agreed by most that labs are a tummy with legs. That is also said about human Holly. Both of us are trying, but man oh man, it is hard. C

Whoopee!

## Motherhood, My Dreams Come True by Hayley Agers

It was June 2001, and my husband of seven years, David, and I had just moved back to Washington state. We had just finished doing an eight-year military assignment at Dover Air Force Base. We were high school sweethearts, got married two years after graduation, and did everything we thought necessary to get our lives in order before moving back to Washington to begin this new phase of our marriage, be closer to family, and hopefully become parents.

We were living the life. David was working as an engineer at Boeing, as well as doing weekends in the Air Force Reserves, I was working as a rehab instructor at the Orientation and Training Center in Seattle, and we had just purchased our first home. So, naturally, the next step was to begin that family that I knew I’d wanted since I was a little girl.

I never could have imagined that making this dream a reality would prove to be so heartbreaking and difficult. In May 2002, after not feeling very well for a couple of weeks, we discovered the reason why. I was pregnant and thrilled beyond words. It had happened so quickly, and everything I’d ever wanted was only months away. Of course, I told as many people as I possibly could, never expecting that only seven weeks later, I’d have to tell those very same people that I had endured a miscarriage. How could this be, after all of these years of waiting, doing things the “right way,” and I was young and healthy…why?

The next two years meant two more miscarriages, each time lasting a little longer in the pregnancy, but just not long enough. I went through all of the stages of grief each time, and at the end of it, I was beginning to lose hope that being a mum would ever really happen for me.

It was at this time that David and I decided to look into adoption, now less concerned that the child we so desperately wanted to love, be biological. In July 2005, Brayden was born, and my world became a better place. We met his birth mum a few weeks before he was due to be delivered, and we knew even then that this may not happen. Not only was I having the conversations with myself that my body had failed me as far as being able to carry a child, but now I was faced with the realization that this birth mum wanted to meet us to see if she thought I’d be fit, as a blind person, to raise her unborn child. Once again, it was me, and this was a hard pill to swallow.

Well, there are such things as happy endings. On that ride home from Spokane, with our newborn baby boy in the back seat, I cried a lot. This time they weren’t tears pouring out of my eyes as a result of a broken heart and shattered dreams. They were tears of gratitude for a woman who saw me, who loved her child enough to allow another couple to raise him. They were tears of pure joy that didn’t match the amount of unconditional love I felt for this 7 lb. 10 oz. miracle, sleeping like an angel with no idea of the impact he had already made.

For the first year of our life with Brayden, David had been reactivated by the Air Force, and was living out of town most of the time. It was just Brayden and I for hours and hours on end, many sleepless nights, lots of failed diaper changes, trying to figure it all out. I remember walking into the clinic for his three- month well check, Brayden in a front pack, a diaper bag on my back, my beautiful guide, Alma, on my left side, and a baby car seat in my right hand. A nurse asked me if I was waiting for somebody, and my response being, “I waited a long time for somebody and he's right here.”

Fast forward a couple of years and one more miscarriage, and we had decided that we would begin the adoption process again. Brayden was the perfect baby, and the process had gone pretty smoothly. I decided after much soul searching that God’s plan for me must be to adopt all of our children, and so I was off to solidify that future.

In my conversation with the doctor before a procedure, I asked, “If I were pregnant, would you be able to see that?” I didn’t suspect that I was, but I thought it was a necessary question.

The procedure went well. I went home to recover and continue working on the next part of our adoption plan. Two weeks later, I wasn’t feeling well and assumed it was as a result of the surgery. During my post-op appointment, I was told that I had contracted an infection and would need to go on some strong antibiotics. I wanted to feel better, I had a life to get on with.

When two more weeks passed and I still wasn’t feeling good, I returned to the doctor. This time, what she was about to tell me would rock my world. I was pregnant, and was when I had the surgery. Immediately, I began preparing my heart to say goodbye to my fifth baby. If the other four hadn’t made it under perfect circumstances, why would this one make it after a surgery, strong antibiotics, and a body dealing with possible hormone shifts? As the weeks went on, and I showed up for check-ups month after month, I had to question, “Would this be the baby I would carry to term?”

Long story short, this special little girl, who fought to survive a surgery, endured 33 hours of a difficult labor and a C-section, and continues to be a bundle of energy, is now the Sydney who attends conventions with me and spreads love and laughter wherever she goes. I never take this gift of motherhood for granted, not one single minute of it. As a young school girl, I loved playing with my dolls. As a teenager, I was the neighborhood babysitter, I worked with children as an occupational therapist as part of my work in schools, and finally my wildest dream of having a home filled with my own children came true.

Not only did it come true, but on any given weekend now, I have a house full of teenagers and I love everything about that, especially the conversations we have about love, friendship, and life. The laughter of my children while spending time with their friends causes my heart to overflow with appreciation, and I smile from ear to ear. I even love the drama that comes with having two teens, because it is in those moments, or when we work together as a family to get through those moments, that I see the most growth in all of us.

It is in those moments that I am reminded to never give up on a dream and always trust that what’s meant for you won’t miss you. Not everything happens in the timing we want, but it does always happen when it’s supposed to.

## Que Sera by Linda Wilder

When I was a young girl growing up in rural Mississippi, I had a thick rope swing. I spent many hours swinging out over a deep gully, singing the song “Que Sera,” wondering what I would be when I grew up. Being from the South, I thought my destiny would be to marry and have several kids. As it turned out, I did get married and have three sons.

What I did not know was what my future held. I would have never in my wildest dreams think I would be blind at age 28, when my boys were only ages one, four, and seven. I did not know I would be in the hospital for four months, learning how to walk again, as I was paralyzed from the neck down, lost my hearing, sense of smell, and taste. Fortunately, I did regain my ability to walk and regained my sense of smell, hearing, and taste. However, it took two years to regain most of what I lost.

While still in the hospital, I was somehow connected to the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB). My counselor at that time signed me up for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL). Listening to floppy records on a record player from WTBBL helped me pass the long, lonely hours, while going through my recovery. That was a challenge, as I could not stop, start, or turn the record over until a nurse could assist me.

Once I showed improvement, the Red Cross was contacted and called my ex-husband and his new wife in Greece, where they both were in the Navy, to take custody of our sons. The hospital staff thought that a blind woman could not take care of children. I, too, being newly blind and not knowing one thing about being blind, went along with the plan. This was the most difficult event in my life. I was filled with guilt beyond my imagination. After all, a mother is supposed to take care of her children. It took years for me to get over that guilt.

Never in my wildest dreams did I know what I would learn as a blind person. Once I was home, my DSB counselor had me attend the Orientation and Training Center (OTC), where I learned mobility with a white cane, how to cook, clean, and shop. I also learned Braille, typing on a Royal typewriter, and how to make a leather belt, a pair of leather moccasins, and macrame. Yes, the OTC training is much more advanced now, but the training gave me the foundation I needed to be a functional blind person.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would earn a master’s degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling and work in my dream job for 30 years at DSB, where I received my initial training in blindness skills.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would marry a wonderful man. Mark and I will celebrate 33 years on May 11. My three sons came to live with me when they were 14, 16, and 19. They are married and have provided Mark and I with 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Life can throw us some difficult challenges, and sometimes through those difficult times, we have our wildest dreams come true.

## Dreams of Life: A Dream of Independence, a Dream of Success by Kyle Woodard

As a kid, I spent a lot of time dreaming of life, what it might be like one day and how I would spend my time living. These ponderings often crossed my path staring out the window of my hospital room, amidst the incessant beeping and chirping of whatever machine needed attention monitoring my vitals or pumping toxic chemicals into my veins, in the hopes that it might kill the brain tumor I was diagnosed with when I was six years old.

There is one dream of life, though, that stands out amongst all the others – my dream to attend Shadle Park High School. You see, when I was 10, after radiation treatment and being sent home for what was expected to be my last Christmas (again, and not for the last time), my family was adopted by Shadle Park High School through their Adopt a Family program. Every year, they adopted families who had kids with terminal illnesses to give them a pleasant Christmas, amidst all the heartache and struggle. They bought our family presents, and even provided funds for a merry Christmas dinner. I had never been so moved or experienced such heartwarming gratitude as I did that Christmas.

One present sticks out in my memory. It was a Shadle Park High sweatshirt I very much loved and, in fact, still have today. It seemed to encompass all the kindness and generosity that I experienced from Shadle, as well as the gratitude I felt towards them. It was upon seeing that sweatshirt that I became determined to attend and graduate from Shadle, so that I could give back in the way they gave to me. I believe it was that goal that helped me get through all the years of chemotherapy, sickness, and other medical trials that often accompany cancer.

It was also about this time when I began losing my eyesight. I had lost the vision in the left side of each eye at the age of six, when my brain tumor crushed my right optic nerve. However, I still had 20/20 vision in the right side of each eye. That all changed once my tumor started growing aggressively again after the brain surgeries and my first round of chemotherapy. My vision went down to 20/400 in my left eye and 20/1000 in my right eye, and my visual field in my right eye went from 50% to 12%. Even though I had been blind for years, other than starting to use a white cane, very little was addressed regarding my blindness because it was merely a side effect of my ever-present brain tumor. In fact, it wouldn’t be until years later, in high school, that I would begin to meet and interact with other individuals who were blind.

In preparation for starting high school, I decided on my own volition, in the summer between the 8th and 9th grade, to quit chemo. I had been on an experimental protocol of chemo for four years, with no planned completion date. For much of that time, every three weeks I would be in the hospital for a week-long chemo session, be out for three weeks, and back in for a week. So, I decided I was ready to be done. I wanted one more chemo treatment and then to be done for a bit, in hopes that I would be strong enough to go to high school.

My parents and doctor thought I was tired of living and giving up, and asked why I wanted one more treatment. As I told them, for all we know it could be my last chemo session ever and I wanted to remember it. Despite their concerns and misgivings, my parents and doctor honored my wishes and let me have my one last treatment. So, freshly off of treatment in the fall of 1998, I started the 9th grade at Shadle Park High School.

It was during high school that I began to treat blindness as more than just a side effect and learn more about orientation and mobility, assistive technology, and Braille. My real introduction into the world of blindness happened the summer between my sophomore and junior years, when I attended the Youth Employment Solutions program put on by the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind. Although I didn’t know it at the time, I met one of my best friends that summer. Thank you for being my friend, Stephanie. You rock!

I went on to graduate Shadle just as I had so dreamt. For a few years, as I entered the working world and living on my own for the first time, I wondered what next. I accomplished my life-long dream at 18; where do I go from here? So, on a lark and a whim, after giving online dating a try, I spontaneously moved to Texas when I was 21. Suffice it to say, my reasons for moving to Texas did not work out the way I intended, but in the end, I’m better off for it.

While there, I attended the Criss Cole Center for the Blind, where I got a chance to focus on learning my blindness skills.

As I was getting ready to dive into college, I got the opportunity to attend a student seminar for blind youth in Washington, D.C. I was only there for a brief period of time. The schedule was packed, so I asked myself if I only had time to visit one place, where would it be? Perhaps because of my fond memories of learning about it in the 3rd grade, I chose the Washington Monument. So, on my first day in D.C., I got up extra early, at 5 a.m., went down to the front desk of the hotel, and proceeded to get directions to the Washington Monument, which involved a walk down the street, a long, steep escalator ride underground, and then something I had never experienced before, a ride on the subway.

After getting my ticket and navigating the turnstiles, I climbed aboard the subway and got off at the green mall. It was at this point I needed to ask for directions and then proceeded to make my way across the mall. By this time, the sun was starting to peek its head out. It was sunrise when I heard the sound of the 13 American flags that surround the national monument, as they majestically rose above me in the morning light. It was quite a sight to behold, but most importantly, it marked my greatest moment of independence. It happened at the monument, in the city that most represents our country of independence.

As it would turn out, while on this trip I got a second opportunity to be a tourist. A group of us managed to squeak out a bit of time for an impromptu tour of the Capitol building. I was amazed to realize how many statues and sculptures are in the Capitol. The lady walked us around to all of them, describing in great detail and letting us touch a few. It was also quite interesting to explore the tactile map of D.C. They made an exception and showed us the room in which the State of the Union address was delivered. No one was supposed to be allowed in there, as they were setting up for President George W. Bush to deliver the State of the Union address that very night. Later that night, coming back from dinner and a second chance to ride the subway, we came up out of the subway station a couple blocks from the Capitol, all lit up in its grandeur. Luck would have it that we were standing on that street corner just as the presidential motorcade was leaving the Capitol, driving right by us. I half hoped the president would stop and say hi, but no such luck. It was still pretty incredible to have been right there.

In the years to come, I would discover that college wasn’t necessarily for me. I was much more interested in working to make money today, rather than working to make more money later. So, I spent some time working at the Travis County Association for the Blind, and then Starwood hotels and resorts, before moving back to Washington state in 2008, where I worked at the Lighthouse for the Blind at their newly opened facility in Spokane. I worked on the production floor for four years before pursuing other opportunities within the organization. I moved to San Diego in 2013, where I worked as a contract closeout specialist for the Navy for five years. Oh, how I loved San Diego and the warm caress of the sun on your skin that met you every time you stepped out the door. But that sunshine comes at a steep price. I used to refer to the high cost of living in San Diego as the sunshine tax, and for several years I was willing to pay it. But in the end, it got to be a bit much. So, in 2018, for the second time, I moved back to Spokane, where I was able to realize one of my biggest dreams of success – owning my own house. It may be a bit smaller than I would like, but hey, it’s mine. After moving back to Spokane, I was able to continue my career with the Lighthouse, at first going back to production, before being promoted to my current position of contract administrator.

Now, I dream of going on adventures with friends, both new and old. I dream of books I have yet to read and books I have yet to write. I dream of perhaps having a bigger house one day. And, I even dream of building a house one day. But most of all, I dream of standing before my king and hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Dreams are a funny thing. They don’t always come true, and don’t always come true the way that we think they will. And sometimes, even when they do, the realization of reality isn’t quite as awe-inspiring, grand, or as amazing as the dream in our head.

Sometimes, people don’t survive their battles with cancer. Sometimes, education goals aren’t met. It often takes a lot more work than we think it will to get to that desired position. Sometimes, things go wrong, relationships are broken, and people choose to pursue other dreams of their own. No matter what the circumstances may be, what position you find yourself in, stage of life you occupy, or what your idea of success is, I urge you to dream big, dream well, dream often, and never stop dreaming.

## The Imaginary Recorder of my Dreams by Reginald George

For a long time now, I have been thinking about whatever happened to the good old basic tape recorder. Sure, the tapes have disappeared; no great loss there. But why did everything have to get so complicated? Recorders used to be fun to play with and easy to use. Now, someone hands you a brick of glass to record with, or something with a lot of little buttons that make no sense unless you can read the screen. The truly satisfying, tactile, mechanical part of the experience of sheer power and spinning high-speed motors is just gone.

I understand what happened. It’s too expensive to make them the way they used to.

Everyone has their own ideas of what would make the perfect recorder. Many of us want something compact and simple, with large, tactile controls and no screen, easy to operate, with unlimited storage, a good speaker, and good battery life. Some of us just want to be able to take voice notes without waiting five or ten seconds for a recorder to start up. That’s what we used to have in the analog days. Count me in on that one.

I want something more, though. I want a machine to record my band, do overdubs and layer parts on top of each other, punch in and out wherever I want, get down song ideas, and capture the beauty of nature with pristine, stereo, built-in, adjustable microphones. My dream recorder would talk, vibrate and beep, of course. It would be fully accessible, with a large-print, high-contrast screen, and designed with a hybrid combination of vintage and 21st century technology.

That’s not much to ask, is it? I wish someone would give me a million dollars to design the perfect recorder. How hard could it be? It’s like everyone forgot what one is supposed to do – i.e., record and play stuff back. I never expected them to evolve in such a stupid way. What was I thinking? Do I sound old? Because I am sure feeling that way.

I used to have this great Panasonic cassette boombox where the whole stereo mic unit flipped up and tilted toward you at an angle, as if it might almost be interested in what you had to say.

My recorder would have amazing, detachable, wireless speakers, not Bluetooth, so almost no latency, and four tracks. It would have oodles of dedicated buttons, with detented sliders and knobs that click as you move them so you could count your way to the proper position for turning up or down the volume, setting pan, bass, mid and treble frequencies. There would be one set of these, with buttons to make them assignable to each channel, and you could press on them to push them in and out of the way. Maybe it would have graphic and parametric equalizers that would listen to the room acoustics and remove any bad frequencies from the recording that made it sound ugly. There would certainly be features like automatic hum and noise removal, and sound-on-sound recording so you could keep adding more layers as you listened, and echo and reverb. It would have a joy stick for scrubbing back and forth through recordings at different speeds, and lots of slide switches for different modes, and combination jacks for plugging in microphones and instruments galore. It would never distort, and it would have a timer, an internet radio, and a regular radio to record everything whenever I wanted. There would be a beeping record-level indicator you could turn on. There would be a big, fat Braille manual available on request at no extra charge, and a big, round button I could push to mix down my recordings to stereo automatically, or I could do it myself as I listened in real time. It would have a giant, really pretty, multi-colored light display on the front dancing randomly, that might or might not mean anything. I would name it my “Electro Mechanical Analog Digital Monster Dream Machine” -- call it EMAD for short, with everything but the kitchen sink thrown in. You can buy it right now on Amazon.com for $699.99. Hurry before the price goes up!

I won’t try to make it run on the 20 or so D cell batteries it would have required back in the day; it’s rechargeable now. And, hopefully, it wouldn’t have to weigh 25 pounds with newer technology. But you could still haul it to a party, and everyone would say ooh, ahh, and be totally impressed. Okay, end of rant.

## Life As a Senior with Vision Loss by Marilee Richards

A dream, according to the Oxford Dictionary (not related to sleep), is a wish, long-term ambition, or something you think is possible. Other words that can replace the word dream are: an aspiration, goal, hope, or plan. So, my dream has evolved over the past 60 years.

I have lived my life with extremely low vision. The unfortunate thing was I thought everyone saw the world as I did. I went to my eye doctor every year and got new lenses to correct the problem – but that was not true. School was difficult, I felt invisible, and I did not measure up to others and wondered why.

Those of us with visual impairments or blindness find a need for many special products to make life possible, such as Braille recorders, magnifiers, screen readers on computers, talking programs on phones, large-print material, and much more to complete tasks and live independent lives.

The Department of Services for the Blind made it possible for me to go to college at Everett Community College for my AAS and BA degrees. This made it possible for me to work outside the home for the first time. I worked with children in daycare and preschool, and in the mental-health field for more than 20 years, until I retired to take care of both my parents who had cancer. I was one of the lucky ones who was able to get employment. In fact, during school, at the Crisis Line, I was able to do a paid internship, which does not happen often. According to American Foundation for the Blind, the percentage of blind and low-vision students with bachelor’s degrees or higher who find employment is 65 percent. Compare that to 84 percent of students without disabilities.

As I have become one of the senior population struggling with sight loss, I am not alone. In my situation, I have processed my grief. However, it has taken my entire life to do that. At this time, the visually impaired and blind senior community have been left with no place to obtain help.

In September 2023, an article in the Braille Forum caught my attention. The article was written by Larry Johnson, with facts and figures concerning the lack of service, education, and training needed to help newly visually impaired and blind seniors maintain a productive lifestyle, or merely survive each day. This is a massively increasing population. All aging services from the Department of Aging fall woefully short on this service.

Larry reports, “There is a shockingly, woeful lack of funding and specialized service available for older adults experiencing vision loss, and the preponderance of existing programs and services for people with vision loss are focused on employment, not on the broader needs of older Americans with vision loss who are trying to navigate a community and seek social engagement and independent living outside of employment settings.”

In the same article, the Department on Aging states there are five million Americans over 65 who are classified as legally blind, and the number is expected to increase by 60 percent over the next 15 years. The AARP also reports nearly 90 percent of adults want to age in place. However, for those with vision loss, there are often major obstacles that make this extremely difficult. There is no training for caregivers working with seniors with low vision, no education to learn about their visual prognosis, no training or education for their families, and so much more that affects their daily lives.

We, as a community, need to push our agencies to increase their workforce to catch up with the numbers of older adults needing these services. There is a three-year wait in Washington state to get independent-living services for this population. There are too few workers for the numbers of seniors needing help.

My group, Snohomish County Council of the Blind (SCCB), is trying to reach out to as many of these adults as we can with our support group, but that is like putting a small rock in a huge hole. These seniors need professional help, not untrained people with ideas and suggestions to improve their lives.

This is not affecting a few seniors scattered about. This involves millions of Americans in a very confused, scary, insecure environment, with no answers and nowhere to go for help.

It seems impossible to make this dream happen, but I thought that about SCCB when we had only six members, and SCCB has grown to 32 members now and is still growing. Help make my dream come true. Can we find funds for training within agencies and report such need to the Department of Health? Are you willing to go to adult senior assisted living facilities to reach out to seniors dealing with these problems? So many questions, so few answers. What can you do to improve the lives of the newly visually impaired and blind seniors in your orbit? All it costs is some time and understanding. Thank you in advance for whatever you can do to help these lost souls.

## Rendezvous! by Heather Meares

Have you ever had that feeling about something so big you just had to try, without knowing the who, what, when, where, or why, not to mention the how? Anyone that knows me, even a little bit, knows this is common practice and procedure for me. I get what I think at the time is a fantastic idea, I dream big, and I take it on. I never know the answers to any of those questions in the beginning, but what I do know is that I need to do it. The answers will come later. And they do, usually in ways I never would have predicted.

A few years ago, I bought a bus. Not a school bus, but a 1967 Crown motor coach that used to travel between cities in Idaho. When I first discovered her, she had been sitting in a field for many years. There had been a rudimentary attempt to convert the bus into a place of residence. All the seats except for the driver’s were removed, a bathroom area was in the back, and a new stove and kitchen sink with counter were in place. Carpet was gone on the floor and upper strip over the windows, leaving her stripped down to the bare bones, with endless potential to create anything I could imagine. She has a beautiful retro, mid-century-modern style, with rivets, dome lights, stainless steel, and a whole lot of curves. On her front side, there is a round nob that you push to open the one and only door, a sign that says “Special” on it, and the number 168, which also happens to be my street address. I couldn’t have planned that if I tried, and this made me laugh when I first discovered it. On the back end, which is probably my favorite part, she has lights in the shape of little rockets, a super cute round window, and a double curved bumper. There are large compartments on both sides that were used for luggage or whatever else needed to be stored, and the Cummings diesel engine is housed in the middle of the undercarriage, accessed through panels in the main floor. Her name is Priscilla, by the way.

You’re probably wondering, “What on earth is someone who can’t see, or drive for that matter, going to do with this bus?” When I bought her, I had several different business ideas and was open to figuring that out later. What I knew at the time was that she spoke to me, saying, “Bring me back to life, and I will bring you a better life.”

I thought about how much businesses have to spend renting a building or space to do business, and it made sense to me to just own this space and create whatever business I wanted out of it. It also made a lot of sense, as a non-driver, to have people travel to me in a convenient location of my choice, rather than dealing with the constant struggle of finding transportation to someone else’s not-so-convenient location. Some of my original ideas included an air B&B, a small apartment rental, a vintage dress shop, a recording studio, and a blank space people could rent for events.

Then, I decided on the concept of a mobile gallery space that could literally be used for anything, anytime, and anyplace. I will do a lot of art shows, featuring all types of artists and partnering with local businesses in a variety of locations for different shows. But all of my original concepts can still be done, as well.

For about the past three years, Priscilla has resided in Montana, where I purchased her, in a truck center, having the brake system and several other things replaced, so that I could get her to Walla Walla, which is about a seven-hour trip. I was beginning to wonder if that was ever going to happen, as many obstacles came up along the way. I went through about three different mechanics, had to spend money I had intended to use for repairs on hauling her to the truck center, and then delays on repairs due to COVID, missing parts, and so on. I wondered if this had been a giant mistake, and was doubting I would ever get this bus to Walla Walla. Original funds had dwindled and costs had skyrocketed since the beginning of this massive project.

But then, this past November, she came home. The best part of the trip was all the waves, smiles, and honks we got along the way, even a conductor of a train waving frantically as we traveled together across the countryside. This made me smile so big and filled my heart with joy.

The past six months, I have been working with my handyman, Jose Montano, who has done an amazing job creating my vision for the interior space. First, we removed the stove and sink, as I needed the space more than those items.

Side note: Jose took that stove for his own RV project, along with my lavender distillation equipment from one of my previous grand adventures, as barter for the work he did. Bonus for me. We installed original hardwood flooring salvaged from my next-door neighbor’s Victorian house, created black wall panels with white trim for the area under the windows, and added a 10-inch strip of corrugated metal above the windows that mimics part of the outside design of the bus. There are still a few things I will be working on in the next phase, but the transformation so far is stunning.

The next step will be replacing the electrical outlet on the back, as it is so outdated you can’t even find an adapter that will fit to plug in access to exterior power. I will have the lighting all checked to make sure it can be used without the bus actually being on, and the interior outlets, as well.

My wildest dream came to fruition on April 20 this year, when I hosted my first event, partnering with Shatzi’s, a vinyl records and vintage-clothing collector, needing a place to sell, which worked out great for both of us. This set-up will remain here for about a month, opening for business on weekends, hosting different styles of music events along the way, and just finding a fun groove with people. This event was in my driveway, and has been a huge success. So much so, that I earned enough income to pay for my vehicle license, and my mobile venue can now actually be mobile.

I am calling the business “Rendezvous!” because it will be a different place and style of event every time she goes out, but will always be an exciting experience for people to gather and enjoy their common interest together. I already have a few more people ready to do events, including a couple of local artists, a winery, and a possible speakeasy type of event. The wheels are turning so fast I can hardly believe it’s happening, but I’m enjoying the ride and can’t wait to see where we rendezvous next.

# LIFESTYLE

## Book Chat Not So Wild a Dream by Alan Bentson Reader’s Advisor Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

It’s not a very wild dream, but here’s a daydream I often use to put myself to sleep or pass the time on my 60-mile bus ride to work and back.

I’m working away at the desk one day and in comes a fellow who says he has a gift for me and wants to talk to me for a minute. “Well sure, I’m going on break right now,” says I. He says, “My name is Michael Anthony Jr. You may remember my father who went around giving away a million dollars to various strangers on behalf of his employer.”

“Well, I remember that show, but that was on a long time ago.”

“It’s true, both those guys are long gone,” he says.

“So, do you have a million dollars for me?”

“No, when Mr. Tipton died, his affairs were in a mess. There were taxes to pay, and relatives who came out of the woodwork all wanting a share of the estate. Turned out he’d given away a few too many of those million-dollar checks. But I’m carrying on the tradition, best as I can. So, Mr. Tipton Jr., I can offer you about $50,000. Would that change your life?”

I said, “Of course, I’ll retire today!”

So, I walked out of the library, never to return.

After all the negotiations and arrangements, my wife Viola and I end up in a medium-sized town somewhere with a nice climate, not too hot or too cold. It’s a place not so big as to be a major city, but not so small as to have none of the amenities. We move into a little house, just room for us and the cats. There’s a convenience store on the same block, and a nice bar in the next block where they play music most nights, but nothing very loud, lots of folk and jazz and some classical thrown in for variety. The neighbors are all friendly but not intrusive, and always willing to help with things like taking care of the yard or reading the mail. There’s a nice bus that stops just down the street to take me to the middle of town where the big supermarket and other stores are. There are sidewalks everywhere, of course, and no roundabouts.

One of the neighbors is an older fellow, about my age, and we often go to the bar together to talk. He tells me long stories of his world travels; he’s something of an old hippie who has run into lots of interesting people.

One night he says, “Alan, you’ve been so patient to talk to me and listen to my long stories, which most people aren’t interested in. I’d like to do something for you.”

“Well, I don’t really need anything.”

“I can make you an offer. I picked up some great magical herbs in a remote part of the Himalayas you’ve never heard of. I can use it to restore your sight. Don’t get so excited, there’s a catch. Just like with all magic, you have read lots of fairy tales, haven’t you? You can have your sight. But, only for three days, and after that this stuff will kill you deader than these empty bottles of beer in front of us.”

Well, of course I tell him to bring it on. There’s a charming article by Helen Keller called “Three Days to See,” which appeared in The Atlantic Monthly in 1933, but you can read it in “Helen Keller, Selected Writings,” (DB 61696), or it’s available on Google.

However, there’s a book about Michael May called “Crashing Through,” (DB63747), also in Braille, who gained back sight due to an operation at age 43. In her work of imagination, Helen mostly talks about objects, people’s faces, and mentions wanting to read books. It’s moving, but Michael tells us that trying to learn to “see” is very difficult, and it takes a long time to try and recognize objects, distinguish letters on a page, or learn to know people by their faces. Even learning to travel is a major effort. Seems that people who have historically gained their sight back often find it disillusioning or even traumatic.

I recommend two other books that talk about the perils of sight restoration. One is “Scattered Shadows,” by John Howard Griffin (db58675). The other is “For the Benefit of Those Who See,” by Mary Mahoney (db#77851). Both these books are also available in Braille. All of these books are informational rather than inspirational.

So, I will take the neighbor’s powder, but with low expectations. I am who I am and what my genes and my environment and my senses have made me, and I am content to be so. I will sit in my yard that, of course, will be full of trees and flowers, and enjoy the colors and light brought by vision and be content to leave after the three days, enjoying one last gift life had to offer.

Keep on reading. Have a great spring!

## The Inner Groove A Brief History of My Fascination with Vinyl by Michael Waiblinger

When I was told about the theme for this issue, I instantly thought of the Moody Blues song, “Your Wildest Dreams.” In particular, the line “When the music played, I heard the sound I had to follow” deeply resonated with me. Speaking of the Moody Blues, anytime you heard “Nights in White Satin” on the radio in the old days, before computer-generated radio, it meant the DJ wanted a bathroom or smoke break. Having worked as a radio disc jockey, I know in oldies radio that “Nights in White Satin” and The Doors song, “Light My Fire,” were the songs you had the longest time before you had to be back at the board to start the next song.

When I started my musical journey, I had no idea where it would lead me. In my wildest dreams, I wouldn’t have thought that music could save my life and help me become the person I want to be. To think back to all those nights I spent with the old ‘70s earpiece stuck in my right ear, the all-consuming joy and excitement for sounds comes back to me like an ebullient memory. I learned what that word means from the title of a Dizzy Gilespie record, “The Ebullient Mr. Gilespie.”

Music goes back as far as people having two lips, two lungs, and one tongue. But recorded sounds started with a recording of these words, “Au clair de la lune mon ami prete pierot,” by Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville, on his phonautograph, recorded March 25, 1857, in France. It was not a recording by Alexander Bell, which most people believe to be the first recordings. Bell was not the first, he just had more money to promote his invention that was remarkably and strikingly similar to Scott’s.

The first records to be produced were not vinyl. They were shellac, which is a product made by the fend lac bug and deposited on trees, later to be scraped off and used as a manufacturing product. The reason it was used for record purposes was that it was relatively cheap and water resistant. The speed for these sound suppliers was 78 rpm’s, which means revolutions per minute. Initially, they were 10 inches, not 12, and only contained one song per side. One of the early songs that was released in this popular record size was Bull Moose’s “My Big 10 inch,” and was later covered by Aerosmith.

In the late ‘30s, the standard record size got bigger, a whole two inches. The bigger size accommodated a bigger sound. Two years after the end of World War II, in 1947, vinyl was created. It was made from the same material PVC pipes are made of. When Peter Goldmark and Columbia Records joined forces, in 1948, vinyl records were introduced, with the new standard speed of 33 ⅓, with microgrooves that extended the optimal playing time per side to 21 minutes.

On March 15, 1949, RCA Victor introduced the 7-inch single that played at 45 rpm’s. Not only was the single a new speed, but it also had a larger hole that needed an adapter to be played on a standard turntable. This, and the fact that RCA only had seven releases for their new 7-inch format, were reasons for poor sales initially. But the 7-inch single introduced colored vinyl to the market. Also, one of the first ones released was Arthur Big Boy Crudup’s “That’s Allright Pretty Mama,” which was later covered and made a huge hit by Elvis Presley. The 7-inch single became increasingly popular throughout the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, until the invention of the Sony Walkman in July 1979 that made the cassette tape a popular music format in the ‘80s.

In 1982, the compact disc was invented and dominated the music market. But, alas, streaming music arrived next and killed the physical format of music – that is, until the re-introduction of vinyl records in the early 2000s.

Having worked throughout these changes in the music industry as a radio DJ, concert promoter, record store employee, and record store owner, not to mention being an avid vinyl collector since I was about seven years old, I never, in my wildest dreams, would have imagined such a huge resurgence of my favorite listening experience – the vinyl record.

## Pacific West Music of The Blind by Brent Boon

Hi there, I am Brent, conductor of Pacific West Music of the Blind (PWMB). This nonprofit has achieved a one-year-old status, and we are having a wonderful time.

PWMB is striving to provide music lessons to visually impaired and blind students throughout Washington state. I am looking for music teachers who can teach face to face, or if there is a distance match for the student and teacher, lessons can be taught virtually, as well. Some teachers can do this voluntarily, yet, depending on the teacher's status, some may need to have their fees paid.

PWMB has a recurring jam session. I run a monthly Musicians Interest Meeting (MIM) in which visually impaired and blind musicians play or sing parts of songs or entire songs. Some have backing tracks, and others do it a cappella. There have been a couple of duets so far, and latency on the Internet has been miraculously missing. What a technological blessing. Please contact me directly if you want to join this MIM. You can attend virtually just to listen if you want. It is quite astonishing and pleasing to hear beginning musicians who thought they would never sing or play an instrument and those with a bit of practice who could "knock it out of the park" and sing at popular public venues.

One of our regular MIM attendees, Mira, is a singer and piano player. I sent one of her singing files to the Aquasox Baseball organization several weeks ago, and she was approved to sing the national anthem in Everett at the Aquasox game on Saturday, June 29, at 7:05 p.m. How thrilling! Please come if you can to this game and listen to her sing.

Another long-term project is to form a marching band or drum line to march in a future parade. These background tasks are in the making, and I am looking for beginner or experienced percussionists. This is going to take some practice and is going to be fun.

Again, I am still looking for students and teachers to join us relating to vocals and most all instruments.

Thanks!

Brent Boon

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## My Goal Ball Experience from a Guy with Vision by Brent Boon

After I signed up for the Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) convention as an exhibitor, I placed my name on some of the other activities, including Goal Ball. I then sought input from a few people about this game. I thought to myself, I have not heard of anyone dying from this activity. So, I rationalized to myself, what could possibly go wrong? I then received a few chuckles and caveats that I was not anticipating, yet decided to stick with my initial registration for this event.

I remember telling myself I wanted to be fully immersed in this environment and committed myself to wear the blackout eye covers for a full hour. My anxiousness did not help, and so, I did not put on the eye covers until I was comfortable with the gymnasium.

After seeing where some of the lines were for one side of the Goal Ball game, I placed my knee pads on, then placed the goggles over my eyes, and then it began.

I thought to myself, why didn't I touch the boundary lines for the entire one side of the Goal Ball court? I turned too quickly to try and find one of the raised lines, but it was at a diagonal. I had fully anticipated bumping into it perpendicularly. I then turned again so I was at a 90-degree angle, but what side was forward, and what side was towards the side for out of bounds? More confusion and disorientation on my part ensued.

Being in a flurry of trying to find my bases and turning around at least one more time, I then found myself alone. The two people around me were nowhere in my immediate area. Where did they go? I whispered their names. They were not there. Ugh. Silence. I was alone. Yet, there were several conversations happening in and around the gym. I felt my heart pound a bit harder and just a bit faster. Who was around me?

I did have a sighted person from the stands take me by the elbow and guide me to the side of the gym with my other teammates, Carter and Jill. I still do not know who Carter was. Yet, Jill, who was on my team and who I have had several conversations with over the past couple of months – I could not recognize her voice. I was shocked at myself for not knowing her by ear.

The game started with the other team rolling the ball first. I remember touching the out-of-bounds line for the right side for out of bounds. Then after hearing a subtle bounce, I heard the ball ominously come toward us. My body tensed up, and I wanted to squeeze up into a ball myself. Yet, for the team's sake I had to open and stretch full length to make sure the ball would not get past me. My previous four ear operations I had as a youngster came back to me with full fright. I now could not see, and now I worried if my ears could be relied upon. I was in full terror mode and ready to blurt something out, even if a fly landed on my nose.

The first couple of balls rolled our way and were not in my direction. What a relief. Jill and Carter were doing great and not allowing any goals so far.

Uh oh, this ball was not going away to the other side. It was coming AT me! I held my breath. I could hear my heart pounding in my ears. BOOM. As if my body was not already tense enough, it took on a dizzying frozen configuration I had never felt before. Then it happened. BOOM! What I thought was a freight train coming at full speed was a rubber ball hitting me at 3 miles per hour. I quickly got up from my defensive position to track down the ball and secure it, sweeping my hands in a fast motion but softly enough not to knock it away. After 5 or 6 swipes, I did retain the ball. Whew! What a relief.

I think the game ended with a 3-3 tie. It was a good experience for me either way. A Goal Ball professional I will never be. Yet, from this and I hope future controlled experiments like this, I hope to become more aware of what full blindness tastes and feels like.

## Sporting Spotlight Extreme Sports: Skateboarding by Beth Greenberg

Skateboarding has been around for 60-plus years. It started out that surfers would take their shortboards and attach wheels to them. Today, the skateboard deck is made of seven layers of maple wood that you stand on, 12-16 inches long, an inch thick, and about 5½ inches wide.

On the bottom are what they call trucks. These consist of ball bearings, wheels, and housing that connects them all to the board. The wheels are made of urethane and have a diameter of 50-70 mm. They also have a softness level from 78A-100A. The article I read said that the larger and softer wheels are more forgiving and absorb impacts better. Grip tape is the sandpaper type surface you feel on the top of a skateboard that you stand on. It helps grip the shoe when you stand on the board.

My sister and I used to ride skateboards when we were teens. I can’t imagine doing it now some 30-plus years later. But, some of the videos you can find on YouTube are of blind skateboarders who are 25-35 years old.

From what I know of skateboarding, you can choose which foot would be better to stay on the board, and which one would be used to push. Most put the right foot on the board and use the left leg to push. Once you get up to a certain speed, you will put your left leg on the board, too. Most do 3-5 pumps or pushes before putting your left foot on the board. If you feel like you are slowing down, you will use your left leg to push a few times more. To turn right, you will lean to the right and to turn left, lean to the left. Even these leans can be touchy. If you do too much leaning one direction or the other, you may be turning too hard and can fall off your board.

On the underside of the board, where the wheels and hardware are attached, the wood is painted with an image.

Skateparks are great places to go if you want a flat and even surface. The park is made of concrete, not asphalt like streets. At the park, you have ramps, bowls, and rails to ride on. A ramp is a curved slop, with the height ranging from 5-8 feet. A bowl is like it sounds. Imagine the shape of your cereal bowl in the ground with flat cement surfaces around the top of it. Rails are a metal rail, most are hollow, and it is encased in the cement. This is what the skateboarder uses to grind on. With these areas at the skatepark, the skateboarder will learn to do tricks. Some they have seen or even create. They will practice for hours, just like any other athlete.

Some people use a skateboard for cheap and easy transportation. A skateboard is $30 or more. They are lightweight. You can carry it and stow it at your desk and not have to worry about locking it up. Most skateboarders do it for recreation. I have to say the majority are youth under 18.

Some blind skateboarders have started making a living out of skateboarding. They post videos on YouTube. A few are doing tours with other extreme sports like bicycle motocross (BMX bike racing). Dan Mancina, a blind skateboarder, is raising funds to build an accessible skatepark.

If I got on a skateboard again, I definitely would go to a skatepark. My balance is not the best, and I feel like I would get less bruises and scrapes than I would out on the streets. Hopefully, I would not break an ankle, but anything is possible with sports.

## It’s a Dog’s Life, Chapter 6 by Marilee Richards

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Where is that pitter-patter coming from? I hear it all day. Oh yeah, that is my cute little Taryn, trying to get me to play with her. It sure isn’t her wanting to go for a walk. I hope to get more help getting her to just take a nice walk around the block. She does fine working for me away from home, but turns into a statue when I try to take her for a walk in my neighborhood.

Since the convention that had us running from one event to another, things have slowed down for us a lot. My health has not been good, and that keeps us inside more than I would like. At times, I had problems getting her out to relieve herself, but my roommate took care of that for me.

I wish you could see the precious expressions on her face when she is around folks she knows, or those she senses might need an extra kiss, or just get to pet her when she is not working. I hope to take her down to the Veterans hospital one of these days for social interaction with the veterans, giving them the opportunity to pet, love her, and receive love, too. I can do this with my dog because I have enough vision that it is not dangerous for me. I give a long explanation about WHY you cannot do this with blind folks walking their dogs.

Some of those expressions I love are her raised eyebrow, her staring at me until I give her an extra carrot, rolling on her tummy to get a tummy rub, going in circles when it is time to eat, and bringing every toy from her toy box to me just to have a little attention. I know it is old-hat stuff to most of you, but it is all new to me.

Guide Dogs for the Blind are coming up next week to work with us. I hope they can give me some good pointers with her walking problem and help with sitting and laying her down on the bus or van, and lying under a bench.

She does great helping me with curbs, stairs, finding doors, the mailboxes, and elevator. I have not fallen since I got Taryn. She is a strong dog, and that keeps me on my toes, so that means more training for both of us. When she wants to see someone she is fond of and is in a hurry to greet them, she moves way too quickly, and it’s unsafe for me to handle. I have reworked that behavior with her in all but one person at my apartment.

This winter, since I haven’t been out a lot, our entertainment has been indoors. We have watched several of the big football games in the community room with a bunch of women football fans. It is not my favorite thing to do, as I can’t see the football in play. I just enjoy the banter among the women that know their stuff.

I have discovered that a dog’s life is whatever the owner’s life happens to include. I don’t know what I did without Taryn in the past. I do know that I fell often, and felt insecure in my travels. She has changed that for me. These guide dogs (or any dogs) are truly a human’s best friend.

## What’s On Your Plate the Next 50 by Hayley Agers

In June, I will be celebrating my 50th birthday, and while for some this may feel like halfway to death, I really feel like my life is just beginning. I’ve enjoyed the rollercoaster ride of the first 50 years. Many wonderful things have come into my life, and there have also been some really challenging times that, had I not had an amazing support system, could have resulted in very different outcomes.

I love looking back at those 50 years and contemplating what lessons I learned, or should have learned, from specific situations. I didn’t always make the best decisions, but I made decisions that were right with what I knew at the time, and in alignment with the growth that was supposed to occur. Do I have some regrets based on who I may have taken on the rollercoaster with me? Sure, but I know that all of those decisions, good or bad, have made me into the woman I am today.

I did a lot of growing in those 50 years, and it’s now time to take off some of the baggage I’ve been carrying, along with some of the physical weight. I hesitate to say this out loud, but I need the accountability, so here goes. I am training for an over-50 power-lifting competition. It’s not going to happen tomorrow. I’ve put this body through a lot of abuse, but I am taking one day at a time to make this particular “wildest dream” come true. Each step forward is a step in the right direction.

I wanted to share with you a few of the recipes I am enjoying in the mornings to get my necessary protein after a spin class, or a strength-training workout with my trainer. I hope you will give them a try.

**Overnight Oats**

* ½ cup old-fashioned oats
* ½ cup nut milk or other dairy milk
* ¼ cup plain Greek yogurt or pure pumpkin
* 1 Tbsp. Chia seeds
* 1 Tbsp. maple syrup or sweetener of choice
* 1 tsp. vanilla extract

This is the basic recipe: Place all items in a pint-sized mason jar, put on the lid and shake to combine. Place in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning, you can give it a stir, eat it cold or warm it slightly in the microwave. Then the fun begins. Add toppings of your choice, such as chopped apples, berries, chopped banana, chopped nuts, granola, unsweetened coconut, mini chocolate chips, and a pinch of cinnamon.

**Muffin Tin Egg Bites**

* 10 large eggs
* ½ cup cottage cheese (helps the eggs from becoming spongy or rubbery as they cook)
* ½ tsp. salt
* ¼ tsp. pepper
* 1½ cups add-ins, such as grated cheese, finely chopped onion, finely chopped bell pepper, finely chopped ham or bacon, sausage crumbles, spinach, finely diced potatoes or pre-packaged hash browns.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Finely chop or shred any of your add-ins. Add 2 Tbsp. of your add-ins to a 12-cup muffin tin that you have sprayed or greased with butter or oil. Add eggs, cottage cheese, salt, and pepper to a blender and mix until smooth. Pour the egg mixture into the muffin tins, covering your add-ins, filling them almost to the top.

Bake for about 18 minutes or until they set up and are barely golden around the edges. You can insert a knife into the center to make sure they are no longer runny. Allow them to cool in the tin just until you are able to handle them. Remove and place on a wire rack. Enjoy them warm or refrigerate until ready to eat.

# BRAIN FOOD

## Technically Speaking Science Fair Award Winners Feature Blindness and Eye Related Technology by Frank Cuta

For several years now, I have had the pleasure of being a judge at the Mid-Columbia Science Fair. The purpose of this competition is to provide every student with a motivating educational experience. This year, I was judging projects in the physical and life sciences that had been submitted by senior high school students. Students are encouraged to get help, but not too much help, with their projects. By the time they get through the initial qualifying rounds and arrive at our top-level show in the Columbia Center Mall, they are completely on their own.

Most of the judges are scientists and engineers who tend to be impressed more by creativity, good procedure, and understanding of principles than by a lot of memorized facts. But this article is not about the judging process or the judges. It is about the students.

Here are some of the top award winners in this particular science fair. Remember that all of these students are only 16, 17, or 18 years old. (Please note: some of the project titles listed below may not be word-for-word accurate, but all are generally descriptive of the work presented).

#9028: Eye Disease Detection. This young lady learned that there are unique retinal patterns associated with the identification of many common diseases. She analyzed some of the more common ones and wrote a program in Python that uses artificial intelligence to automatically associate each disease with its pattern. She then built an inexpensive handheld optical tool that could be fastened to a smart phone to allow a person to take the necessary picture of their retina. She is a grand prize winner, and will go on to the national science fair competition, as will the next two of these winners listed here. I expect there will be subsequent awards for many of them.

#9035: Magnetically Suspended Tires. This young woman believes that superconductivity and magnetic levitation holds great potential for making automobiles more efficient. Understandably, she did not have a full-size vehicle at the fair, but she had an operating model prototype. Since the wheel never actually touches the axle when in motion, there is virtually no friction in this system except, of course, where the tire meets the road. She then took this concept a step further, proposing an efficient drive mechanism consisting of rings of permanent magnets within the tire that are subjected to low-power electric pulses.

#9056: Tactron Tactile Graphic Display for the Blind. This young man from Walla Walla demonstrated for us an operational prototype of a device that he built himself out of inexpensive off-the-shelf parts. There are better devices on the market now that have higher resolution than his prototype, and are faster, but they cost tens of thousands of dollars. His device has only a 30-by-30 array of pins that are popped up by a computer-driven table salvaged from a 3D printer. The table runs around beneath the pin array, pushing up the appropriate pins one by one. The device may be a bit slow, but it was built with less than $200 worth of parts. He was inspired by a fellow student in his school who is blind.

#9050: Bioplastics - Rethinking Waste. This young man has developed a chemical process for creating plastics from banana peels. This is advanced chemistry, way above what I learned in my high school chemistry class, but he admits that he got “a little help” from his dad, who is a chemist.

Some of the other great projects that I feel deserve honorable mention include "Crickets as Crops," "Fingerprint Visibility," "What is the Best Way to Cook a Potato?" (answer: boiling), "Making Slime from Various Home Products" (hint: baby oil works best), "Toothbrush Humidity Effects on Bacterial Growth," and "Effects of Oil Spills on Aquatic Organisms."

Every year that I have judged, I have been impressed by the awesome skill, intelligence, and creativity demonstrated by these students. But this year is the first time I have seen projects directly related to blindness and low vision.

## "Double Tap to Send,” Navigating Texting Tools and Trade-offs with Three Essential Tips by Everett Elam

My day typically starts at 4 a.m. when I put on the coffee and give my mom a call. That may seem extreme, but we like to get a few actual words in before the chickens wake up. After putting on the coffee, I sit down in my secondhand rocking chair and ask her, “How are you?” I listen, and then she asks me the same question.

This is called a “conversation” and we are having less and less of them as time goes by. Keep reading, and by the end of this article I will have you convinced.

After my mom-versation, I engage in a routine of sending brief texts to friends or family who are also early risers. These texts, typically 30 words or less, serve as informal check-ins, what I like to think of as "howdy texts," aimed at fostering connection with loved ones.

I never turn lights on during these early hours, and my screen always stays completely black. This is not because of concerns about running up the electric bill, but because I am blind. As an eyes-free, hands-on VoiceOver user and teacher, screens don’t really work for me the way they do for those with working vision. Screens serve fully sighted folks as input and output avenues. Information enters via their eyes, and they input a response via the screen. For me, screens are solely input, meaning that I essentially receive my texts and tweets through my ears.

VoiceOver, the iPhone's screen reader, revolutionized accessibility upon its 2009 debut with the iPhone 3GS. It remains one of the top choices for mobile screen readers. By touching the screen, users hear spoken descriptions of on-screen items, enabling navigation and interaction without relying on sight. Any on-screen item a user with sight touches once opens a menu. For blind users, you touch an item once to hear what it is and twice to select that item.

I specialize in teaching fellow visually impaired individuals how to navigate their phones or computers effectively. My role requires proficiency in two main areas: teaching the iPhone's features, and effectively communicating with individuals of diverse personalities and skill levels. Texting, a fundamental iPhone skill, is among one of the initial lessons I impart to new users.

The outline for sending a text from an iPhone as a blind person typically follows these steps:

1. Swipe up with one finger from the bottom of the screen to unlock the phone.

2. Hold the sleep/wake button until Siri, the iPhone’s onboard assistant, chimes to indicate she is listening.

3. Say "send text message.”

4. When Siri asks to whom the message should zoom, say the recipient’s name.

5. Listen to Siri repeat the message and say "send it" to send.

6. Siri will ask to confirm that the message is to be sent to the person, often announcing the first and last name to confirm.

7. Say “yes” to confirm.

However, this seven-step outline is a radical oversimplification, particularly for beginners. Siri often interrupts even the most proficient users with unrequested responses, complicating the process. The iPhone screen will also cause VoiceOver to jabber incessantly if bumped accidentally, and when four hands are exploring a phone – mine plus the student – it can become quite the adventure. Hands are not like eyes. They can be incredibly detail-oriented, but the reality is that hands take exponentially more time than eyes do to receive information.

Blindness can stem from various causes, including conditions affecting the eyes or cognitive impairments. These often accompany symptoms such as fine-motor difficulties, making tasks involving precision challenging. Therefore, ensuring technologies like Siri on the iPhone are user-friendly is crucial for individuals facing visual or motor challenges. As the instructor, I must gently explain how to modify the phone to prevent such issues while calmly guiding the student through their first text. Maintaining focus is paramount, as the student is bombarded by my voice, Siri's voice, and other external factors.

Teaching the process for sending an email or engaging in longer-form communication presents additional challenges. It doubles the teaching time and steps required, and the student must also learn to eventually break away from Siri, further raising the stakes for frustration or giving up.

Despite these complexities, I do not aim to discourage new iPhone users. Rather, I find myself reflecting on the rationale behind choosing texting over the time-honored tradition of calling someone and uttering that simple yet profound word: Hello?

The deeper question is whether we are using the right tool for the right task. A text message, no matter its conciseness or clarity, is not an e-mail. It is a short-form message, a howdy text. When, and more importantly why, did we start using a tool meant for “howdy” as a replacement for “how are you?”

We use texts because they are easy. We use texts because everyone else uses them. We use texts to abridge communication and we lose relational muscle every single time we send a “howdy” when a “how are you” is better. When we use a text, we send a snack when the savory meal of a conversation is best employed.

Here are a few tips I have gleaned from teaching and learning with my students.

**3 Tips for Avoiding Conversational Slips**

If it is more than 100 words, just e-mail it when you get to your computer. At least grab a Bluetooth keyboard or Braille display to type your message. The smaller screen is rife for opportunities for errors, and VoiceOver on iPhone is not a rock steady solution for careful text entry, at least in my experience. It is close, but it is a mobile screen reader meant for use on the go.

Right place, right time. If you are on the go, you’ll be distracted by your friend’s funny joke or a barking dog, and you will lose mental bandwidth for input and output. If you are using your ears for both talking and walking, even a well-adjusted focused blind individual will inevitably make a potentially risky mistake.

Avoid putting a name in the “To” field. If you have a long text to write, odds are it is important. Send it to yourself, then read it as though you were receiving it from another person. You can copy and paste it to the person later after reviewing.

As we navigate digital communication, texting, while convenient, may not always be the best choice, especially for those with visual impairments. Beyond technical fixes or buying the next new and shiny phone, we must prioritize meaningful communication over convenience, opting for email for longer messages or deeper conversations. By choosing the appropriate medium, we ensure our messages are not only sent, but truly understood. Now, call someone, and ask them: “How are you?”

## Opinion: Apple’s iMessage & Siri Processing Complicates Access for Voiceover Users by Reginald George

I recently discovered something that I did not know about text messaging. I thought I knew it all. To me, the following is more proof – if anyone ever needed any – that texting anything more than a “thank you” or a “see you real soon” is the absolutely worst possible way for humans to communicate. However, often when humans decide to shut down or become deeply upset and unresponsive, and either will not or cannot talk to each other at a given moment, texting becomes your only option to express yourself in a hurry.

The issue is that when messages are directly copied or forwarded, there is often no way to tell if Siri or VoiceOver has only provided you with part of the information.

Another time when a person might need to do this is when trying to clarify a negotiation where a lot of discussion has happened over text, or if there is some type of emergency or legal problem. Maybe you are being harassed by someone and you need to collect those messages to prove that it’s happening. So many people communicate over text in small groups when making arrangements. It’s quick and easy, but it can so quickly get out of control.

After a somewhat traumatic experience that I am not going into, I recently sent the following feedback to accessibility@apple.com. I wanted to share it with the community, partly to determine if this bothers anyone else, or if I’m making a big deal out of nothing.

I wrote: “Even when reading long messages with Siri or VoiceOver, the small arrows that indicate messages have been truncated are not spoken. The person receiving the message gets no indication that text has been hidden or left out. Nor do they know how to expand the rest of the text in order to be able to read the entire message. A related issue is that there is no indication when messages I sent have been automatically divided or truncated. Often VoiceOver will read the entire message, but on the receiving end they see only a part of it, and no one realizes that half the content is hidden or missing until it’s too late.

It happens in all versions of iMessage on the phone, iPad, and Mac. Please escalate this if possible, as it is an accessibility issue.”

Am I wasting my breath? Baying at the moon? Barking up the wrong tree? Should I just give up and go to sleep? Probably.

It was much worse in the old days before iMessage. Even now when you send a long text message to people with older phones, it gets divided up into multiple messages. Often, they’re put in the wrong order. It just takes one misplaced word to sabotage all the time and effort you put into carefully communicating your thoughts in a kind, considerate way. Even iPhone users with sight who are not of a technical mind often do not realize that the message must be expanded to show the entire content. These little arrows need to be made larger, voiced, vibrated, labeled in Braille with the words “tap to expand,” and a small sound provided so that those who are low vision, deaf, or blind will be made aware that something important is missing.

This is only one small example of a much broader problem. Siri intentionally leaves out much vital information that appears visually on the screen. Many of us who use Siri are unable to use their screens at all. There needs to be some indication that this has happened so that everyone will have equal access. Should we not be demanding the same level of access from our phones as our sighted peers?

Under accessibility settings, Siri gives a person the ability to select the level of spoken feedback they desire. When Voiceover is running, this setting defaults to “Prefer spoken responses.” Anytime Siri reads half the weather forecast, says “the business address is here” without voicing what’s on the screen, or leaves out information that others can access, we are being discriminated against. Not just blind people, but quadriplegics, audio learners, non-readers, and anyone who can’t conveniently see or navigate the screen.

An example of the problem is when you ask for the weather. Often Siri says something like, “temperatures will hover around 45° today.” But it won’t tell you that the low will be 28, and the high will be 60. It does this randomly and intermittently, thereby cutting out important information that you might need to know to plan your day. This might seem like a minor inconvenience, but inconveniences pile up and become major challenges to our freedom and independence. They are unnecessary, human-created barriers that need to be conquered.

If you ask your voice assistant “what is the total predicted snow accumulation for the day,” it won’t tell you. But a graphic may simultaneously appear on your screen with hour-by-hour precipitation amounts. How do you even know it’s there? You could be missing important data that could save your life.

In this case, my wildest dream would be that when you tell Siri to speak everything, that’s what it does, until you tell it to stop. Apple, and all these voice assistants need to step up their game in this area and provide us with equal access, regardless of our abilities. Imagine a world where companies give everyone a universal, fully customizable user interface that gives a person what they need based on their preferences and abilities – not just what’s easiest to program for Apple.

The Siri that has literally changed the world for more than 10 years, and that we know so well and love to hate, is likely on its way out and might soon be replaced with a much more robust and capable artificial-intelligence-driven solution. I don’t have a crystal ball. However, it seems to be the trend. Whether they choose to call it Siri or Big Bob, it will be an entirely different animal. I hope that they will keep these things in mind in the future so that their products will continue to set the bar in the area of universal access for everyone. Maybe it’s not such a wild dream after all.

## Podtastic Casts To Listen or Not to Listen by Stephanie Mellor

I always ask that question – to listen or not to listen – and it seems funny that I ask whether you should listen to something and I haven't even touched on why you shouldn't. Today, I am talking about a very short podcast I recently listened to, all about my personal favorite, coffee. That's right, I love my morning cuppa joe and I, too, have a podcast in which I constantly mention that I'm drinking a cuppa coffee, so much so that it's become a bit of a joke. I'll take it, though, because life is simply too short not to laugh at yourself occasionally.

Back to the podcast, I say to listen or not to listen because if you are brand new to podcasts, “A History of Coffee” may feel more manageable to start off with. It has about six episodes, which feels doable to me. When I first started listening to podcasts, some had thousands of episodes, and I felt so overwhelmed that I didn't even know where to begin. For those of you who may not be entirely sure where to start, and who may or may not drink coffee, this doesn't feel as overwhelming with the six episodes and could be some fun, random information for you.

I came across it while searching for topics to write about. This podcast explores the history of coffee, how it is a stimulant, and what effects it may have on each person. Many enjoy coffee for its stimulating effects. For some, though, adverse side effects can be experienced along with the extra boost of energy, such as a headache or an upset stomach, none of which sound appealing. And, of course, for those like me who choose to indulge in the drink, one may start to get headaches once they've stopped drinking coffee for a while.

The podcast that has thousands of episodes may be incredibly excellent. However, it may also feel a bit overwhelming for you. It's different for every individual, and if it feels like it's too much, this would be a not-to-listen event, at least not yet. So, check out “A History of Coffee” wherever you stream your podcast, if you'd like to look at six episodes, and learn something while you're listening.

I also enjoy that they talk about coffeehouses and coffeehouse culture. I love a nice, calm, relaxing, but fun place to drink my cup of joe besides my own home. I've met friends there, colleagues new and old, strangers, and heard their stories. Who have you met at a coffeehouse?

Going out to a coffeehouse and having that cuppa joe could start something that you never thought would happen in your wildest dreams. Life is fantastic and works out in some funny ways. So, next time you're in the mood for a mug, head on over to your local coffee establishment and while you're at it, check out an episode or two of a podcast.

# HISTORY

## Voices: Our Untold Story Finding My Wildest Dream Voice by Chris Coulter

I must confess that I have lived most of my life in familiar surroundings, and with the desire to be left alone. This may surprise some of you who know how I speak with strength once I get the courage. However, I do have a few wild dreams. Some of you may know what those dreams are, and others may not.

I remember that at about six or seven years old, I began to play with my voice. I would try to imitate the voices of children my age, and I did my best to imitate singers on the radio.

A few years later, one of my sisters wanted me to read to her. I obliged with no hesitation. I made my voice imitate everything from dogs to lions, the mysterious sounds of frogs, and my own interpretation of a witch.

Someone asked me if I had ever considered voice acting. By that time, I had grown up and was married. I researched ways I could break into the business and extended that research by learning how to keep my throat healthy and found out what amount of money I could expect. People kindly told me that I would need to go to conventions for voice-over, and I was confronted with a huge array of difficulties. How would I pay my way to get on a plane and go to the conventions, which were mostly in California? Could I even find a class that would coincide with the schedule of rides going back and forth?

I had recently begun listening to an online radio show called “Books and Beyond.” Bonny Blowse was a woman who interviewed authors from all walks of life. She called on many people to begin each announcement.

Jon, my husband, and I lived in a fairly small apartment and didn’t have a home studio. On top of that, there was a lot of traffic on the streets around us, and that posed a problem. I did the best I could to record my announcement. I took my very small Olympus recorder and crawled into the back of my closet and closed the sliding door. I scrunched up with my feet and legs crossed as I faced the wall and made my announcement, hiding behind a bunch of thick sweaters. I knew that someone would have a hard time editing my crude attempt at getting rid of the background noises. When I listened to my voice, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that most of the background sounds and echoes were gone, leaving a polished sound.

Bonnie gave me several chances to lend my voice to “Books and Beyond.”

Then came the Great Recession. Jon and I were scraping by as best we could. I kept finding ways to use my voice in ways that would not only earn some money doing an interesting job, but that I would have the pleasure of letting my voice make its own music. I still sing, as I have for years, but I have a deeper love for talking and for storytelling. The new discovery in my life is finding out that I can be funny, now that my shyness has gone away.

I have been away from our wonderful WCB Newsline because I have had a massive writer’s block. One of these days I’ll talk or write about that. Just suffice it to say that for a while, I was overwhelmed. I’m back now and I’m sorry I couldn’t be there for the pot of stew.

# ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

## Chronicles Of a Happy Warrior #15 In Your Wildest Dreams by Mark Adreon

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that all your purchases, from groceries to cars, could be done from your home and on your smart phone?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think a rainbow of people would merge around shared dreams and provide unified support for universal inclusion?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think it would snow in April?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that your next Uber would not have a driver?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that employment rates for people who are blind would still be unchanged or worse, with an economy that has under 4% unemployment, businesses with hundreds of unfilled jobs, record numbers of new business startups, and more programs for persons with disabilities to succeed?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that if you were a diabetic type I or II, that you could have a small chip inserted by a shot that would send all your sugar-level readings to an app on your phone and another device would provide the appropriate dose of insulin?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that your freedoms could be taken away by a group of nine people known as the Supremes?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that as a person who is blind, you would have a robot guide full of sensors to get you where you want to go and get you there safely?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think that persons with disabilities would not support nor understand the plight of discrimination or lack of inclusion for other disenfranchised communities?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think physical money would be an oddity?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think you would find a life partner?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think you would find contentment or happiness?

In your wildest dreams, did you ever think someone would pay $400 for a pair of sneakers?

## Taking My Oath by Steven McCray

In the spring of 2023, I made the decision to embark on a new and exciting journey by running for my very first public office. After carefully considering my options, I chose to pursue the position of water commissioner, a role that I believe will allow me to make a meaningful impact in my community by ensuring the proper management and distribution of one of our most precious resources.

I was fortunate enough to win the election for the office I was running for in November. However, even after winning, the swearing-in ceremony and taking office usually happens after the new year. So, despite my win in November, I had to wait until Jan.16, 2024, to finally take office. It was a long wait, but it was worth it to finally begin my new role and serve the people who elected me.

As this is my first office with real responsibility, I was thrilled to assume my new position. I invited several friends and individuals who had supported me during my campaign. However, when I arrived at the event, I was handed a piece of paper containing my oath of office. Upon reviewing the document, I realized that the font size was only 11, making it difficult to read. Most books use size 11 font for printing, which creates an issue for me, as I am legally blind.

When I had to read my oath in front of everyone, I tried to use my cell phone camera as a magnifying device. Although I am an educated person, and consider myself to be intelligent, it was very embarrassing for me to start and stop while reading in front of people, as I had to re-find my spot when moving from one line to the next. Using a cell phone for this purpose works well when reading to myself, but not in front of others. I had a tough time reading a short statement containing only one paragraph. It took me almost two minutes to go through it, and this experience ruined what should have been an amazing day.

Even though I try not to let it affect me, I couldn't help but feel embarrassed by how I sounded. It made me appear as if I had poor reading skills. These difficulties have made it challenging for me to carry out my responsibilities effectively, and I am constantly searching for ways to overcome these obstacles.

Invisible disabilities are prevalent in our society, and my disability is not apparent to most people. It motivates me to work harder to ensure that the world is accessible to everyone. Ableism may not always be intentional, but it can have a significant impact. Therefore, constant and intentional education about its effects is necessary.

## Accessible Medication Labels Update by Judy Brown and the Advocacy Committee

The Washington State Pharmacy Commission is still working on a report to submit to the Code Reviewer’s Office. This is taking longer than expected because financial impact statements need to be compiled as part of the submission for the code reviewer.

Public comment will be needed again after the rules move from the Code Reviewer’s Office. We will notify everyone when comments are needed.

Meanwhile, anyone has the right to ask their own pharmacy for accessible medication labels.

**Online/Mail Order Pharmacies:**

Accessible Pharmacy is a mail order service that offers accessible labels and in languages other than English. Their phone number is 888-633-7007.

Amazon has started an online pharmacy. This is a mail order service. When called, they state that they offer accessible medication labels.

**Retail Pharmacies:**

Costco can provide large-print and audible labels. At this point, they require at least three days or more to get those labels on your medication. This can mean that you run out of your medication before you get your medications labeled appropriately. Once the rules are passed, this type of delay will no longer happen.

CVS Pharmacy is now offering their own proprietary talking label. This label can be read on a phone app or with a free-standing reader.

Rite Aid will provide ScriptTalk audio labels. Many local Rite Aid stores will initially deny they offer talking labels. Keep asking! Rite Aid has a relationship with ScriptTalk.

American Council of the Blind has engaged Lainey Feingold to once again craft a structured settlement with Walgreens regarding accessible labels. This process is in the early phases.

Walmart offers same-day ScriptTalk labels. No waiting.

## Accessible Voting Update and More by Judy Brown, Government Affairs Committee

Members of the Government Affairs Committee have been participating in monthly meetings with a representative from the Secretary of State’s Office and other stakeholders to work on the issue of accessible voting in Washington. These meetings have not produced any tangible results. The Secretary of State sent direct messages to the committee that Sec. Steve Hobbs will not support any legislation and that there is no funding to assist with potential travel vouchers to the polls. Several members of this ad hoc group, including Washington Council of the Blind, have written a letter of protest to Sec. Hobbs with specific recommendations for short-term and long-term solutions to accessible voting.

We had a meeting scheduled to speak directly to Sec. Hobbs on March 27. During this meeting, we planned to discuss the topic of electronic ballot submission as an additional step to accessible voting. Currently, five states allow electronic ballot submission for disabled voters: Maine, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, and North Carolina. All of these states use a portal (usually the existing military voting portal) for ballot submission. Accessible voting units are still available to those who wish to use those devices. Paper ballots are printed out by voting officials after the ballots are electronically submitted.

American Council of the Blind’s D.C. Leadership Seminar was held in early March in Alexandria, VA. Dr. Lynne Koral represented the Government Affairs Committee.

The 2024 ACB legislative Imperatives are:

* Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act
* Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act
* The Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits Act
* The Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act

The podcast about these imperatives is in the ACB business podcast feed. This short podcast is an invaluable tool for understanding these imperatives and communicating them effectively to our congressional legislators. It can be played and/or downloaded directly at this link: https://tinyurl.com/yc3zz2he

## Press Release: Governor Inslee signs Nothing About Us Without Us bill, upholding disabled voices by Disability Rights Washington

Editor’s Note: It is with great joy and hope for the future that we bring you this public press release announcing progress for all people with disabilities in Washington State. An unstated aim of this legislation is to provide the option of direct compensation to those with lived experience who choose to serve on these work groups.

Image: A large group of people stand and sit in wheelchairs gathered around wooden tables with a seated man signing a piece of paper in front of a white marble-walled room.

In a landmark decision, Washington legislators have passed HB 1541, known as the "Nothing About Us Without Us” Act, marking a monumental stride towards inclusivity and representation for marginalized communities. Governor Inslee signed the bill into law on March 26th, 2024. Championed by Representative Darya Farivar (D-North Seattle) and driven by a diverse coalition of organizations and community members across Washington State, the bill enshrines the fundamental principle that people with lived experience should be architects of policies that directly impact them.

Representative Farivar commented, “Our duty as lawmakers is to elevate every voice in governance. True progress emerges only when our decisions reflect the experiences of those most directly impacted.

With the passage of this bill, we affirm our commitment to inclusivity and representation – this is what it means to lift every voice."

The Nothing About Us Without Us Act represents a collaborative effort to amplify the voices of marginalized groups in policy-making processes. It requires that any statutory entity – like task forces or workgroups – established to address an issue "directly and tangibly" impacting an underrepresented population include at least three individuals with direct lived experience. The idea for the bill took root when self-advocates were excluded from a workgroup formed to create recommendations on services for individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

Four years later, the bill cleared the Senate with a resounding 40-9 vote, mirroring the robust support it received in the House, where it passed 83-14. Advocates and supporters of the bill believe that its passage will set a precedent for other states and jurisdictions to follow, fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to governance. The Nothing About Us Without Us Act signifies a step towards a future where policy decisions authentically reflect the needs and experiences of all Washingtonians.

In addition to the membership requirements, last year’s legislature allocated funding for the Office of Equity to consult with state boards and commissions to identify barriers to participation and develop a toolkit on best practices for supporting the meaningful engagement of people with lived experience. Mechanisms will be implemented to monitor and assess policy impact on underrepresented communities, holding decision-makers accountable for their commitments to inclusivity and equity.

A group of women posing for a picture

Description automatically generated

Left to Right: Representative Darya Farivar, Sunshine Cheng and Elizabeth Gordon (executive director of the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment) in front of the Capitol Rotunda, celebrate the signing of HB 1541.

Sunshine Cheng from Disability Rights Washington (DRW), a leading advocate for disability and social justice and long-term champion of the bill, explained, “Including people with lived experience in policy-making processes is not just a matter of equity, but a matter of efficacy. We recognize that people hold invaluable insights into their own lives, and that those closest to the problem are often the best equipped to find solutions. By prioritizing people with direct lived experience at the table, we increase the likelihood of getting things right the first time.”

DRW remains committed to working alongside policymakers and community members to ensure the effective implementation of the Nothing About Us Without Us Act, and to further the pursuit of a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Disabled leaders are at the center of DRW’s work to create systemic change, whether advocates, class members in a lawsuit, community organizers, or our new Executive Director, Carrie Basas.

Join us in seeding a new world, with dignity, equality, and self-determination for people with disabilities by making a contribution today. Your donations power our work to make change.

# THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

## Family Connections by Heidi Coggins and WCB Families Committee Members

The Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) Families Committee kicks off the year with a bang. I am thrilled to assume the role of chair for this dynamic group. We welcome aboard Errika Schneider and Suzanne Winkler as new members. We aim to expand further in the coming months.

Our focus remains on serving Washington state's youth and families by offering vital resources and engaging events, and fostering connections. Each quarter, this section will feature event highlights written by our determined committee members representing WCB Families along with previews of upcoming activities.

Our mission is clear: to unite families with their local communities and strengthen partnerships with organizations such as Department of Services for the Blind, Lions, Northwest Association of Blind Athletes, and more. If you are keen on joining our cause or wish to share local events in your area, do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to support and collaborate with you every step of the way.

**TVI Roundup in Spokane**

My name is Roberta Fencil, and I attended a Teachers of Visually Impaired (TVI) Roundup at the Lighthouse for the Blind on Feb. 23. I represented WCB Families and Lions.

I have been a part of WCB over two years. I explained who we are, what we do, and what it means to be a member, including how it benefits blind and low-vision learners. The most important aspect that I talked about is making connections with other blind and low-vision members so we can build our confidence and self-esteem. It makes us, as blind individuals, feel we have a purpose in life and that we are somebody. I also talked about my experiences with WCB and how being a member has enhanced my life and has given me purpose. WCB has allowed me to grow. If I had not become a WCB member, I would not have learned about Sports for the Blind. This organization has given me the opportunity to participate in many diverse types of sports that I was not allowed to participate in when I was a child. Sports for the Blind has given me the self-confidence to participate in any sport.

The other organization that I talked about was the Lions Club. My image of Lions was that the club was about glasses and hearing services. Once I became a member, I learned that being a Lion was so much more than being about service in the community. I talked about the service that I have been involved in throughout the community like volunteering for CAPA once a month bundling diapers and sorting baby wipes, which is a Catholic Charities volunteer opportunity. Also, helping with the food sorting with Second Harvest, volunteering for Salvation Army stuffing backpacks and the distribution of them to kids going back to school and helping with the Christmas Bureau bagging toys for kids at Christmas. I am proud to be a Lion, and I love and enjoy what I do. I also quoted Helen Keller’s challenge quote, which is, “Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much.” I passionately believe in that quote because I feel that the more connected we are and the more of a community we have, the more of a difference we can make to our kids and their families.

**Grandpa’s White Cane Project**

by Heidi Coggins

Colette Arvidson and I attended the Grandpa’s White Cane event Feb. 26 at Our Lady of Hope in Everett. Stephanie Mellar from the Snohomish County Chapter and Becky Gibbons from the South-Central Lions were in attendance. We presented Grandpa’s White Cane to the third- and fourth-grade classes, reaching a total of 34 students. We gave out alphabetic Braille bracelets and Braille alphabet cards and spoke on cane-use technology available to the blind community. The children took a little walk down the hallways of their school with smaller versions of white canes. Then, they spent some time asking excellent questions about how we interact with the world and how they should interact with a person with blindness or low vision.

Bob Cavanaugh participated in the Grandpa’s White Cane project in January at Truman Elementary, reaching 80 students. In February, he worked at Vancouver Arts Elementary, reaching 24 students. Bob has upcoming events at Lincoln Elementary for two different sessions. Bob has been leading the way in this outreach program in our south end schools and continues to thrive in providing this much-needed outreach to our communities.

Overall, this was an overwhelming success, and we hope to return on a yearly basis.

**Braille Challenge at Washington Talking Book and Braille Library in Seattle**

Haylee Edick, Snohomish County Chapter

The Braille Challenge was attempted by nine awesome students who covered each level of this challenge. As a scorer of these tests, I did not have a lot of time to interact with the families as usual, but I got the opportunity to be part of the collaboration that went on in making sure that all tests were scored accurately. Each of us scorers utilized some of our strongest skills to get the job done quickly and we had fun seeing students win prizes in the drawings at the end. Every student was a winner by attempting this challenge, and I hope to be part of this activity next year.

## How Charlie the Blind Mouse Met Randy the Opossum by Charles Marsh

This is the story of Charlie the blind mouse who left his house and went to the big city and met a fellow blind mouse who transformed into an opossum named Randy.

Charlie the blind mouse, who felt so small and thought he had nothing to offer anyone at all, sat in front of the big, big building to the apartments he would live in while he stayed in the big city. How was he ever going to find his way around the big building? It was in this big building that he met and found other blind mice who had to come to play and learn in the city.

They all met at the door of the apartments the first day so they could all walk to school together. They were all so different and yet they all had one thing in common. They all came to the city to learn to get around listening only to sound.

Some mice had white canes like Charlie and some used walking canes or wheelchairs or even walkers. Every mouse was different. Some could see more and some could see less. Some were big, some were small, and some were just right. But they all walked to school together to learn to play and how to get around using the sound.

So, on this first day, Charlie walked beside another blind mouse who could see even less than Charlie. Charlie learned that his name was Randy. Over time, Charlie noticed Randy walked more and more behind him.

Charlie knew Randy was having a hard time getting around without a white cane. So, when Charlie found some obstacle or problem with his cane, he would tell Randy, “Be careful, here is a crack. Don’t trip and fall.”

Randy seemed to appreciate the warning, and Charlie grew happier because it started to dawn on him that maybe he wasn’t such a useless little mouse.

Charlie grew a little bigger that day. He still was a small mouse, but even though Charlie couldn’t tell just yet, he began to transform at that moment.

What Charlie could see was that Randy began to be transformed. Randy began using his white cane along with his other cane. Charlie noticed Randy was standing tall and lithe and was getting it! He was learning to get around using only the sound. Randy needed to follow Charlie less and less. Over time, Randy began getting around so well that he even helped get medicine for other people who needed it.

Charlie was proud of Randy and happy to see him transform into an opossum. Charlie thought opossums were super cool, awesome, and amazing. They helped with the environment and were very helpful to everyone.

As Charlie and Randy got to know each other, they realized they lost their vision for similar reasons. They both lost their sight because their brains had been injured and now Charlie didn’t feel so alone.

Charlie and Randy had many adventures, but we don’t have enough time to talk about all of them. Let’s suffice it to say that Randy was a big part of Charlie realizing what he wanted to be when he was all grown up. He wanted to help other blind mice to be transformed into their real selves and become the animals hidden within, and how to get around using only the sound.

Later, I will tell you about other blind mice who were transformed into other animals but for now let me leave you, my blind mouse, with this thought.

You, too, have an animal hidden within waiting for you to be transformed. Will you be willing to allow yourself to be transformed? And what animal do you think you will be?

# WCB HAPPENINGS

## Where Are They Now? by Kim L. Moberg and Scholarship Committee Members

Who are they now? Where are they, and what are they doing today? The "they" refers to past scholarship winners. Have you ever wondered what happened to "them?"

The Scholarship Committee is looking into all this and more, like what accomplishments have they made after receiving a scholarship from Washington Council of the Blind (WCB). We are going to make an entry in each Newsline as we find and follow and check in with these individuals.

So, for this first entry, we are going to present two past scholarship winners and update you about them.

Lily Clifton received a scholarship from WCB in 2011 and again in 2012. At the time, she was attending Boston College, where she was studying political science with a minor in environmental studies. Today, she continues to live in Seattle.

Lily's studies served her well. She is currently working for King County Executive Dow Constantine in government relations. Lily says she loves her job, and that every day is different.

Our second entry is Christi Sobieski. Christi received a scholarship in 2020. At that time, she was headed to college to be a medical assistant. As time and life changed for Christi, so did her interests. She continues to work with individuals but in a slightly different way. She is now a licensed home care aid. She has been working with her client since she became licensed. Christi grew up in Alaska and currently lives in Lake Stevens, WA. She is very active in her local WCB chapter. She has also taken part in the Families Committee. Giving a scholarship to someone is a treat, but when they become a member, that is a bonus treat for all of us.

## Is College in Your Future? by Yvonne Thomas-Miller

Is it in your plans to attend college starting in the fall of 2024? If so, you should consider applying for the Washington Council of the Blind 2024 scholarship. This is for legally blind students attending college/university or a technical/vocational school in the fall of 2024.

We have awarded up to $5,000 to an individual student in previous years. You can use the award dollars for things like books and tuition, or transportation or adaptive equipment. In other words, you can use the money for just about anything as long as it will assist you with your educational pursuits.

Complete the online application by going to www.wcbinfo.org. Applications must be received by June 15, 2024, along with supporting documents to be considered for a scholarship. Interviews will be conducted during July and August as part of the application process.

Qualifications:

* Are you a resident of Washington state?
* Are you enrolled or have you been accepted to an accredited college/university or vocational/technical school for fall 2024?
* Are you legally blind?

If so, then you are encouraged to apply. For questions, contact the scholarship chair, Kim L. Moberg, 360-981-9944, [awardscholarship123@gmail.com](mailto:awardscholarship123@gmail.com).

## WCB First Board Meeting Highlights by Linda Wilder

All board members were present at this virtual meeting except for one. Plus, a number of members joined in to hear Washington Council of the Blind (WCB) happenings. Some of the highlights are below.

Our new president, Andy Arvidson, reported on some of his activities since taking the gavel in January. Andy attended the Braille Challenge, and took the opportunity to tell parents the benefits of joining WCB. He also attended the 15th anniversary of the 405 Act, recruited three new WCB members. All WCB committees are now up and running, and he has had several meetings with chapter presidents. His future calendar is filling up quickly with a trip to Washington, D.C., for an American Council of the Blind (ACB) leadership seminar to encourage members to reach out to their legislators to support accessibility issues.

Lisa George was happy to report that Shay Tigner has stepped up to do work on the database and is excited about it. All chapters have submitted membership documents. The database records will be completed soon with the expectation of having over 400 members again this year.

Frank Kuta made a short, poignant report on the ad hoc Policy Committee, saying they reviewed WCB notes from 1990 to 2000. The goal was to glean information to make a comprehensive policy document. Their conclusion is that many policies were referred to, but could not be found. Their thought is it is not the most constructive use of their resources. The Policy Committee is recommending using the materials as a springboard to develop a comprehensive draft with new language to be approved by the board to update the old policies and fill in where needed. A discussion ensued, and members agreed.

Kim Moberg, pinch-hitting for Dannette Dixon, First-Timer Committee chair, reports that they have created a new Google application process with detailed questions. There is now a scoring spreadsheet similar to the one the Scholarship Committee uses.

Only one qualified person will be selected to attend the ACB convention in Jacksonville, FL, July 5-12. Deadline is April 28. Look for an email in the next week or two detailing qualifications and where to find the application.

Julie Brannon, Leadership Committee chair, has new and exciting process changes planned, such as stronger emphasis on training leaders to focus on what they can bring to WCB as new leaders. The committee will be looking for strong leaders within WCB to be mentors. The committee will be spending more time choosing the leadership training topics and materials. The actual leadership training will start in September and will have an in-person meeting in April 2025. At this time, the committee is meeting weekly to focus on ways to put all of the above in place. The committee is “thinking out of the box,” to encourage the new leaders to take a leadership role in WCB.

Sheri Richardson reports good news for the Diversity and Inclusion ad hoc group, starting at the WCB convention in October, with positive support and enthusiasm for the development of a committee. They recently added three new members. A suggestion was made to add accessibility to diversity and inclusion.

Tim Breitenfeldt reported on the Youth Development ad hoc progress, saying the group has 10 members who are interested in working toward an affiliate. The Youth Development group is reaching out to all chapter presidents and the Families Committee to increase members between 18 and 40. A constitution is in process.

Linda Wilder asked for one or two more WCB members to join the Membership Committee. The main work, according to the bylaws, is to increase WCB membership and to assist in developing affiliates. The past three years have been spent trying to start a Community at Large affiliate. We are called Community at Large because the members are in various states across the U.S. This fact is one of the main reasons an affiliate has not yet been formed. Also, we need 12 consistent members to attend. We meet every other month on the fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m. We have a variety of topics, special speakers, and projects.

All WCB members are always encouraged to join the WCB board meetings to keep up with all the great happenings.

## Hat’s Off Compiled by Linda Wilder

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

* Heidi Coggins on her graduation from the Orientation and Training Center in Seattle
* Frank Cuta on his 75th birthday
* Andy Arvidson on his 65th anniversary of living with diabetes
* Lynn Coral for being chosen to be a board member of the Evergreen Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration
* Colleen Smith’s son, Michael, on achieving his Eagle Scout rank at age 20. Michael achieved this honor even though he has multiple disabilities, including being visually impaired. In March, there will be a ceremony to award Michael his certificate, pin, and several other items to signify his accomplishments.

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

The following are reasons for inclusion in this column:

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

# AROUND THE STATE

## Clark County Council of the Blind by Bob Cavanaugh

Although it's been relatively quiet over the past six months, we're ramping up for a summer of activities here in Clark County. In the next couple months, I plan to get in contact with Superintendent Scott McCallum at Washington State School for the Blind so we can tour the new transition center.

The chapter has also been talking about being in the Hazel Dell Parade of Bands, which will be the third Saturday in May. I am not yet sure what that will mean for our meeting that month, but that will be determined soon. We are also talking about being at the Vancouver farmers market in early June.

That's all for now, but I hope to have a major fundraising update next month.

## Guide Dog Users of Washington State by Vivian Conger

Guide Dog Users of Washington State (GDUWS) has its board meeting, which is open to all GDUWS members, on the third Monday of the month. As your president, I urge you to attend the board meetings so that you have an active part in running your organization.

This year, I am going to activate some of our committees, which have been inactive for a very long time. Please see emails that come to the GDUWS listserv for more information as it comes.

Also, I would really like our listserv to be more active, as it is for our members, and shouldn’t just be an announcements list. I’m hoping for discussion on lots of GDUWS guide dog topics or whatever folks wish to post related to dogs.

## Pierce County Association of the Blind by Linda Wilder

Pierce County Association of the Blind (PCAB) started this year with several new members. Some join us by Zoom as they live out of state, and a few desire to be involved, but for health reasons are unable to attend in person. We are happy to have them all join us.

We have a special speaker every month. In January, we had a wonderful person named Janeen Olson who had many years of experience working as a nurse and, later, worked as a first responder at a fire department. Janeen trained us in first aid. She showed us, as first responders, how to make sure we were safe and had no injuries. She showed us how to put gloves on and how to remove them without getting blood on ourselves. Janeen put a large amount of chocolate on our gloves to simulate blood. She then showed us how to properly take care of open wounds. Janeen gave each of us a kit with sterile bandages, gloves, and a sling to keep injured areas stable.

She came back in February to teach CPR. We practiced on a dummy how to resuscitate a person who is not breathing. Janeen also demonstrated how to use a defibrillator. Unfortunately, the defibrillator is not accessible. Janeen is determined to make all first aid, CPR, and the defibrillator accessible. She hopes that the Washington Council of the Blind Advocacy Committee can assist in this endeavor. PCAB is looking forward to a great year, and we hope the same for all of you.

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

Since our last update in Newsline, we have had the election of officers, a Christmas party, and two meetings. We might be a small group, but we are a mighty group.

Jess Landby was re-elected president for a second term. Chris Brame was re-elected secretary. Congratulations to both of you. You will both do a wonderful job as always.

Our Christmas party was one of the best we have had ever. There was so much delicious food, nobody should've gone home hungry. The gift exchange, Steal a Gift, is always fun. We had at least one new person at our Christmas party. Erica Scheinder, we are very happy to have you join us.

We had so much fun doing the gift exchange that we almost ran out of time. Carol Brame does have a fun ornament exchange deal that is becoming quite popular in our chapter. She reads us a Christmas story, and we all have a Christmas ornament that we have brought wrapped for this event. As she reads the story, she will insert the words left or right in various places throughout the narrative. So, if she says “ho ho ho, pass to the right,” then you pass your ornament to the right, or if she says “ho ho ho, pass your ornament to the left,” that's what we do. We do this until she's done reading us the cute little story she has selected. The ornament you end up with is the ornament you get to keep.

We have a couple of members who need to be held up in prayer if that is something you do. Pat Whitlow has broken her wrist, and for it to heal properly, it will require some kind of wrist /hand cast. Gayle Passy is having some health issues and also needs our prayers.

On the upside, my son John Moberg has now worked at the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind for 16 years.

This year in our chapter, our main focus will be finding ways to grow our membership. We have a couple of ideas in the works. So, let's see what happens. I am excited for us to do things to let this community know that we are here and that we are willing to share with others.

## Snohomish County Council of the Blind by Marilee Richards

Where has the time gone? We are already into the second month of 2024. Our affiliate is as busy as usual. We have four new members this month, but have lost four, too.

Our calendar stays full of outside activities where members are getting together for lunch to encourage and fellowship. In February, we came together to support and cheer Nancy Lind and Louise Erwin as they bowled two games, while William helped them on the alley. Nancy does so well but Louise gives her a run for the prize. Ha ha! They both are outstanding for giving it a try.

Heidi Coggins was graduating from the Orientation and Training Center of Department of Services for the Blind at the same time so we had her on Zoom, and gave her a big shoutout as a group before we left for home.

This past December, we had a Christmas party at the church of one of our members. We had a potluck with more food than we could eat. We had a white elephant gift exchange, too.

At the convention this fall, the whole group kept busy making sure door prizes were delivered (the youth group sure got their share this time), refreshments sent up to the hospitality room, a day spent putting the gift bags together before convention, and cleaning up the room after everyone had an evening of fun and music.

I would like to put the spotlight on some of our chapter members who do outstanding things for Washington Council of the Blind (WCB). WCB Newsline created a new award that went to two of our members for their great writing contribution to each edition this past year. They are Tim Downie and Heidi Coggins. The award is the feathered quill. I am so proud of them. Tim also won the Readers’ Choice article of the year for his story about his trip to Ohio and back. He had great competition from Hayley Agers and yours truly to compete with for the honor.

Don’t forget to tune in over Zoom for the monthly support group at 11 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month. Have a great year, everyone.

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

January not only brought in the new year, but also the ice and snow. No matter what the weather, we still adventure out to our lunches, card-and dice-playing game days, book reading groups, and pottery and technology classes.

We celebrated our long-time member and fearless leader, Frank Cuta’s 75th birthday at the Red Lobster on Feb. 6. We will be attending our next Richland Players audio-described play on March 24, entitled “Curious Savages.”

Sherry Dubbin organized a trip to the Hanford High School’s production of “Hello Dolly.” It was so fabulous that we would definitely like to go it again. Frank Cuta is working with the school to see if we will be able to include audio description.

Frank Cuta, Bernie Vinther, and Vanessa Pruitt, (our Ben Franklin Transit Citizens Advisory Board members), are keeping us all updated on a bad situation with our Dial A Ride service. Many of our members attended the latest Ben Franklin Transit Board meeting to stand in solidarity with our Dial A Ride service and our drivers. The transit management is freezing the hiring of any new paratransit drivers and will be using a subcontractor to pick up the overflow. What will happen in the end is the service will eventually be run by a private company, and we definitely do not want this to happen. We are going to remain diligent in our fight against this proposal and stand behind our great transit service and our well-trained and vetted drivers.

Here is hoping for an early spring.

## United Blind of Walla Walla by Heather Meares

This spring, the United Blind of Walla Walla seems to have found new energy and excitement. Committees have been re-established, goals are being set, and now it’s time to start taking action on those goals.

After much discussion, it is clear that a few things are important to the group to focus on this year: fundraising, community outreach, increasing our membership, and getting Audio Description in our local performance theaters. All of these goals are interdependent on each other to accomplish the big picture. So, yes, we have our work cut out for ourselves as a chapter, but we are up for the challenge.

We finally found the rest of our tie-dyed, jersey sleeve T-shirts and distributed them to members, so now we can wear them proudly at events in our community and really be noticed. And little bags of chocolate-covered coffee beans have been making the rounds at our meetings, being purchased by our members as gifts for people they know, or just for personal consumption. No wonder we have new found energy.

Washington Council of the Blind President Andy Arvidson visited all the Eastern Washington chapters recently, and it was our pleasure to meet with him and his wife, Colette, over lunch. It’s been quite some time since a state president made it to one of our chapter meetings over here on the east side, and it was great to be able to sit and talk back and forth about things we felt were important. Thank you, Andy and Colette, for making the trip and spending time with us.

## Yakima Valley Council of the Blind by Lisa George

YAKITY YAK FROM YAKIMA

Happy Spring to everyone across the state from all the members of Yakima Valley Council of the Blind (YVCB).

Now that we’ve completed our annual member record verification, we’re pleased to welcome two new members to our chapter – Colene Gere and Carrie Harris. Both ladies found us through our weekly bowling outreach, and we’re happy to have them with us at the alley and at our meetings.

We’re also sad to report that Ginny Kohl, the wife of past YVCB president Bud Kohl, passed away last August. We hadn’t been able to reach her, but finally were able to contact her daughter. Our condolences to her family.

YVCB is looking forward to our online fundraising opportunity, GiveBIG 2024, in May and we’re excited to reach more people and share with Washington Council of the Blind.

# WCB Calendar of Deadlines and Events by Lisa George

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

**MAY**

**2** – WSSB Board of Trustees meeting

**4** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.

**4** – WCB Board Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. (on Zoom)

**7-8** – 2024 online GiveBIG fundraiser

**13** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**16** – WSSB Track Meet

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

**31** – Deadline to submit articles for the WCB Newsline Summer issue

**JUNE**

**1** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.

**3** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**10** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

**14** – WSSB Commencement & Board of Trustees meeting

**14** – SRC-B Zoom meeting from 9 a.m. to noon

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

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

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

**24** – Presidents call at 7 p.m.

**JULY**

**5-12** – ACB Conference and Convention at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel in Jacksonville, FL

**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.

**AUGUST**

**3** – BLV Technology Meetup at 11:30 a.m.

**3** – WCB Board Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. (on Zoom)

**5** – Treasurers call at 7 p.m.

**12** – WCB Diabetics call at 7 p.m.

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

**31** – Submission deadline for WCB Newsline Fall issue AND last day to donate scholarship funds to be distributed to this year’s recipients

**Washington Council of the Blind**

is pleased to acknowledge donors

who have generously supported our programs

in the first quarter of 2024

**Thank You!**

Anonymous

Edmonds Lions Club

International Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women – Le Droit Humain

Bruce Radtke

Schoenfeld-Gardner Foundation

South Everett Lions Club

And anonymous contributions through:

ACB Monthly Monetary Support Program,

Benevity Fund, FrontStream, Give Lively Foundation, and PayPal Giving Fund

WCB would also like to welcome

**Debra Lessin**

as a new **Life Member**